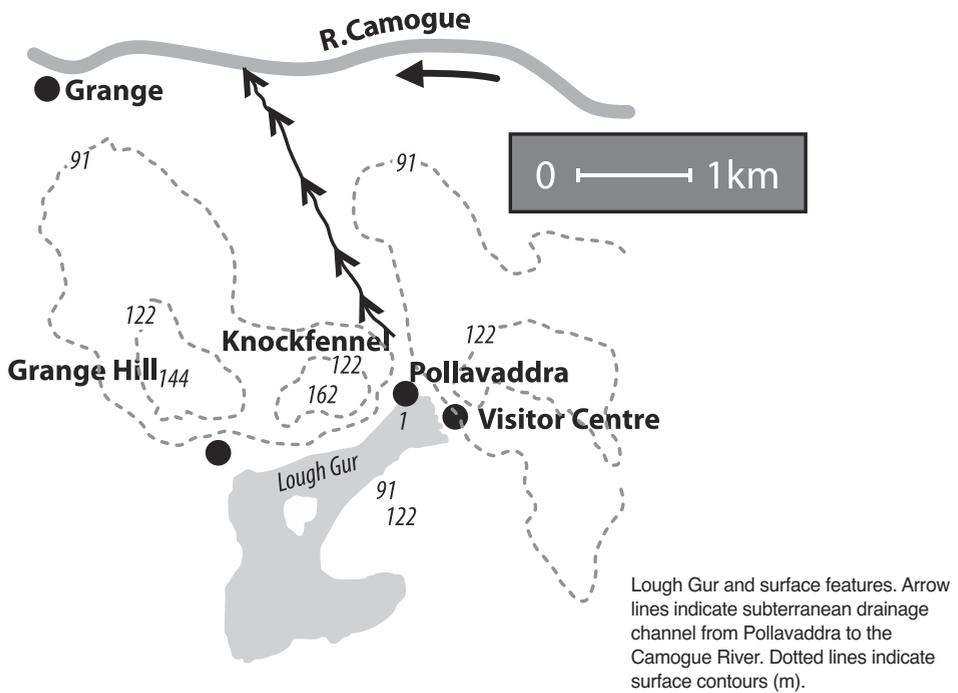




Lough Gur frozen over.



THE JEWEL THAT IS LOUGH GUR

Compiled by Tommy Hourigan

Lough Gur is a magnificent lake and amenity. It is much revered and enjoyed by the people of Grange Parish, as it is indeed by the people of neighbouring communities and from beyond. A large proportion of the lake perimeter is contiguous with lands in Grange Parish, roughly from Knockfennel to Holycross via Upper Grange. A number of important monuments and archaeological sites are located on parish lands, near or close to the lake. However, what has just been stated is of academic significance. The communities that reside in the parishes that are adjacent to or near Lough Gur tend to regard the lake, its environs, associated amenities and archaeological sites as a single entity to be enjoyed, respected and protected by all.

The purpose of this article is to provide the reader with reasonably high-level information regarding Lough Gur and its environment with particular reference to location, bird life, fish life and invertebrates with just a very basic reference to archaeology. My intention is to bring a number of distinct dimensions together in a single article.

Perhaps this ‘toe in the water’ account may encourage those who have an interest in a particular aspect to pursue more in-depth information and understanding through authoritative sources, of which there are many. *Lough Gur & District Historical Society Journal* is an excellent local source, but information can also be found in other publications. The *Lough Gur Heritage Centre* and its [website](#) is a tremendous source of information and enjoyment, of which additional information is provided later in this article. Of course, one has only to google “Lough Gur” to be presented with numerous sources of information on several topics: history, folklore, archaeology, wildlife, fish, fauna, flora, environment, religion, tourism and so on. It is acknowledged that many readers of this article possess depths of knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, or of particular aspects, which go well beyond levels presented herein.

Lough Gur has held a life-long fascination and attraction for the compiler of this article, having grown up in Grange and spent almost the first thirty years of his life living there – returning there and to Lough Gur frequently over the thirty plus years that ensued. Not being an expert in any of the dimensions covered in

this article – indeed being very much a novice – I have relied predominantly on a number of sources to assemble what follows.

The first and major source is the *Report on Lough Gur Environmental Management Study, February 2009*. The *Report* is within the public domain, available on the Internet. The Study, upon which the *Report* was based, was commissioned by Limerick County Council. The Study involved other Agencies and the *Report* acknowledged *Michael Quinlan* with regard to its *Lough Gur Social History Text*. The reader is encouraged to read the said *Report* in full, as it provides a breadth of scope and level of detail that is not intended in this article. Importantly, it comprehensively raises, discusses and makes recommendations regarding the protection and enhancement of the Lough Gur resource in a broad context. The Environmental Management Study was intended to provide an overall framework for the consideration of issues relating to the natural, archaeological, water quality, tourism and community aspects of the area, leading to a general management framework and importantly, the identification of specific actions and projects to be addressed or implemented in both the short-term (5 years) and the longer term (5-15 years). This article will not review the status of implementation. The *Report* has been used by me, solely as an authoritative source to assemble factual, historical and more recent information regarding Lough Gur and its environs.

The second source is the *Lough Gur Heritage Centre*, its multi-media presentations, literature and [website](#). There is an astounding volume and quality of information available and the multi-media presentations at the Centre are most impressive.

The third source is the *Water Framework Directive Fish Stock Survey of Lough Gur, September 2012*, published by “Inland Fisheries Ireland”. This *Report* is also within the public domain, and available on the Internet. Data from the *Report* of the 2009 survey are also used here. It is understood that a more recent survey will be the subject of an upcoming report.

The fourth source is [Geoff Hunt](#), *Biodiversity Consultant*, who has been kind enough to provide detailed and fascinating information and insights into wildlife.

The fifth source is the wealth of information that is available on the *Internet*.

Sixth, but not least, *Michael J Quinlan*, [author](#), historian and archaeologist provided me with pointers to several interesting aspects and details that I mention.

The Importance of Lough Gur

Lough Gur is an outstanding heritage and natural resource of international significance. It is the most important water-based recreational resource in County Limerick and one of Ireland’s most important archaeological sites. Its appeal largely lies in the highly scenic location of the lake and the large number of ancient sites and monuments, ranging from Neolithic to modern times, which are clustered around its shores. Lough Gur and the adjoining Red Bog possess a diverse range

of terrestrial and aquatic habitats for both flora and fauna. The area is internationally and nationally important for migrant wildfowl species and is designated as a “Natural Heritage Area” and a “Wildfowl Sanctuary”.

Museums and collections from all over Britain and Ireland contain pieces from this area. Inhabited for over 6,000 years, the zone contains over 130 listed sites ranging in date from late Neolithic/early Bronze Age through to post-Medieval times. Surviving monuments include stone circles, ring forts, standing stones, megalithic tombs, holy wells, churches, and castles.

Location and Surroundings

Lough Gur is located in the mid-west region of Ireland, approximately 20 kilometres south of Limerick City, and at the heart of Ballyhoura country. The lake is set within a highly attractive landscape of rolling limestone hills which rise abruptly above the surrounding Limerick plain. The lake comprises a small horseshoe-shaped water body (79 hectares approximately) with associated bog and fen. It occupies an unusually high topographic location and is visually enclosed on three sides by the higher hills of Knockfennel, Ardaghlooda and Knockadoon, which rise abruptly above the lake level. Gearoid Island is located towards the centre of the lake and tends to visually divide the water into two parts. The shores of the lake are gently sloping and mostly fringed with reeds.

The lake is shallow, varying from 3.75 metres in depth in the northern basin to 2.1 metres in the southern basin. The lake level was lowered in the 1840s with the construction of a channel to the west of Lough Gur, which discharges to the Camogue River. It would appear that the water level dropped about eight feet as a result. There appears to have been no natural surface water outflow from Lough Gur prior to this; the lake only drained to a groundwater system. The channel outlet which passes adjacent to Grange Churchyard and under both the Old Road and the main Limerick-Kilmallock Road, may have been designed to drain the area of reed swamp immediately to the east (*King and O’Grady 1994*). Red Bog, south of New Church, was formerly far more extensive and drains into the main lake. Apparently, a map from circa 1687 shows the lake almost surrounding the hill of Knockadoon, embracing the current lake and Lake Bog (*O’Kelly and O’Kelly, 1978*). Both bogs contribute considerably to the variety of landscape and colour, as well as providing important natural habitats.

As regards natural drainage of the lake, a subterranean channel from the northeastern end of the lake drains into River Camogue somewhere close to “Garveys” in Lower Grange. “The original outflow, which still discharges, is by way of a swallow hole, Pollavaddra, at the northeastern end of the lake. This subterranean discharge emerges to the north of Knockfennel” (*O’Kelly and O’Kelly 1978*). *Irish Fisheries Investigations – Series A – Freshwater No 37 1994 – Aspects of Limnology of Lough*

Gur – JJ King and MF O’Grady – the sketch that appeared in [this report](#) indicated that the outflow is entering River Camogue at a point about 1.5 kilometres east of Grange Village – Lower Grange. Limnology is the study of inland waters – lakes (both freshwater and saline), reservoirs, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater – as ecological systems interacting with their drainage basins and the atmosphere.

(*Association of the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography – Dr Robert Wetzel, 2003*)

It is worth reproducing the following as stated in the said [King/O’Grady Report](#) (1994)- “The first Irish record of the flatworm *Bdellocephala punctata* (Pallas) was reported from Lough Gur (McCarthy 1973) and appears to be confined to this locality” (McCarthy pers comm). This may be of interest to some people.

Surrounding Hills

The dominant topographic features are the limestone hills of Knockadoon and Knockfennel, which rise dramatically above the level of the lake. Formerly, the

Aerial view of Lough Gur showing algal blooms (*Limerick County Council Environmental Report 2009*).



lake almost surrounded Knockadoon, except near Black Castle and Bouchier’s Castle. The eastern slope above Bouchier’s Castle is steep and craggy while much of the north-west side is cliff-like. The summit is divided into two hills, offering panoramic views of the surrounding landscape.

There are numerous rock outcrops and boulders throughout the lower slopes. The eastern slopes are heavily wooded with mixed deciduous trees. Whereas it is likely that Knockadoon would have been more densely wooded in the past, most of the hill is now open grassland, grazed by cattle. To the eastern side of the hill lies the Red Bog.

Knockfennel defines the northern shore of the lake, rising steeply to +160 metres [531 feet] OD (*ordnance datum* or ‘sea-level’) with cliffs and steep slopes to the east. It is grass-covered, apart from a few isolated thorn bushes, and used for grazing. The same characteristics occur in the Carraig Aille and Killalough hills to the

south and east of the lough. To the west is Grange Hill, which has well-wooded lower slopes and the settlement of Upper Grange. To the north, flanking Knockfennel, the dominant limestone has been penetrated by volcanic rocks which form Grange Hill and the rounded hill area of Knockroe. Both the limestone and volcanic rocks were used locally for building.

The south-western areas of the lake are generally flat agricultural fields, subdivided by some mature hedgerows and stone walls.

Vegetation

Lough Gur is characterised by a variety of vegetation types in a relatively small land area, including reed beds, fen and bog, scrub and woodland, together with the open grasslands of the hills.

Mature ash-dominated woodland occurs on the slopes of Knockadoon Hill, especially along the eastern side adjacent to Lake Bog, intermixed with oak, hazel and occasionally sycamore within the canopy. The understorey is mostly sparse, due partly to grazing which has caused poaching and includes elder, hawthorn and bramble. On the wetter parts of the lake shore, there are stands of semi-mature alder-ash woodland, with occasional sycamore and willow. Scrub occurs on the steeper slopes of Knockfennel, dominated by hawthorn, elder and willow with frequent ash. Hedges to the south and west of the lake are mostly whitethorn.

Visual Aspect

The visual character of the area is defined by the enclosing circle of limestone hills, forming an intimate environment that is complemented by the serenity of the lake. The hill summits offer impressive panoramic views of the agricultural plains in all directions. Low-level views across the lake are for the most part unspoilt and distinguished by the backdrop of the hills and their reflections in the water. To

the south of the lake, views are generally restricted by high hedges, mostly of thorn and set on low stone walls.

A major visual landmark around the lake is Bouchier's Castle (15th century) which, together with Lake View Farm and Lough Gur House (formerly the centre of the Count de Salis Estate), represent later examples of the continuous habitation and agricultural use of the area up to the present day.



Upper profile of Bouchier's Castle, seen through woodland.

Archaeology

It would be impossible to do justice to the renowned archaeology of the area in this article and, so, I will not even attempt to be comprehensive. I will confine observation to very high-level references, referring the reader to the [*Lough Gur Heritage Centre*](#) for expert guidance and information. A separate article to be found in this book deals with Grange Stone Circle.

The lake and its immediate surroundings is an archaeological area of outstanding significance. Over 130 listed sites and monuments are distributed around the wider area, ranging in date from Neolithic to Medieval times, and many more may have originally existed. Surviving monuments include stone circles, dwelling places, field systems, standing stones, ringforts, crannogs, castles and megalithic tombs.

Within the Lough Gur area, there are 33 national monuments in State care (*ownership or guardianship*), including habitation sites at Knockadoon, Carraig Aille and at The Spectacles, a wedge-shaped megalithic tomb (*Giant's Grave*) of the Neolithic times, large and small enclosures, stone circles of various types, standing stones and hilltop cairns. Other prominent sites in public ownership include Grange Stone Circle, the artificial islands or "crannogs", Bouchier's Castle, the remains of Black Castle and the ruins of New Church.

Bouchier's Castle (*Lough Gur Castle*) – this 15th-century tower house is generally in good repair. It was one of the chief seats of the Earls of Desmond and after the defeat of the Desmond rebellion at the end of the 16th century was granted to Sir George Bouchier. The tower was constructed in two parts with a stone spiral staircase in the north-east corner and a set of small rooms on five floors forming one part, and a set of main rooms on four levels forming the larger part. The levels of the floors in the two parts do not coincide. There are vaulted stone ceilings at ground floor and top storey levels, and wooden floors to the intermediate levels. In the main room at first-floor level, there is a fine fireplace and interesting corner 'windows' ending in narrow slits.

The castle was altered in the early part of the 20th century by the then Count John de Salis to form a shooting lodge. Bouchier's Castle and the families who owned it and enormous estates over the centuries is a subject that has received attention in the article to be found in this book regarding Lough Gur House.

Lake View Farm, subject of Mary Carbery's [*The Farm by Lough Gur*](#), was built by Michael O'Brien, probably in the last decade of the 1700s. It fits into the traditional Golden Vale strong-farmer, four cell, lofted farm house and was probably thatched when built and slated at a later date. It forms one side of a delightful cobbled rectangular farmyard with stone buildings – cow byres, stables, piggeries, fowl house and two dairies and a pump and large stone trough at the centre. The male servant quarters were there also. At the entrance gate stood "Beechwood Cottage", a gate lodge, now demolished.

Eutrophic Status of Lake

The Lough Gur catchment is unusual in that it is perched in the centre of a group of hills above the surrounding drainage system (Ball, 2004). The catchment is, therefore, relatively small and is limited to surface water run-off from the surrounding hills, which are predominantly used for agriculture. There are no rivers or large streams flowing into the lake that could flush the water through the lake or dilute or refresh nutrients in the system (Ball, 2004). This lack of flushing contributes to a build-up of nutrients within the system, increasing the eutrophic status and contributing to algal blooms. Large algal blooms frequently occur in spring and autumn. The term “eutrophic” (of a lake or other body of water) means it is rich in nutrients and so supporting a dense plant population, the decomposition of which kills animal life by depriving it of oxygen.

The diversity of landforms surrounding the lake provides an equally diverse range of terrestrial and aquatic habitats for both flora and fauna. Although the lake itself is eutrophic, with only narrow bands of marginal plants, it has a substrate rich in invertebrate life [*do not possess a backbone, including insects and worms*], and supports fish stocks of predominantly rudd and pike. The reed beds, fen and bog, scrub and woodland and the grassy uplands provide varied conditions for a wide range of indigenous flora representative of these habitats.

Bird Life

Lough Gur has been known as an important site for birds since at least the 1960s. It has a breeding bird community that is typical of the wetland and woodland habitat types present and a total of 36 different wetland bird species have been recorded. This number may have altered over more recent years. Warblers feed and roost in the reedbeds and scrub woodland while ravens and peregrine falcons frequent the upland crags. Some nationally rare species are also known to breed here. The wintering bird populations have been well monitored since the 1960s, with indications that overall numbers have decreased.

Breeding Birds – There has been no systematic survey of breeding birds at Lough Gur although it is known to support a representative selection of wetland species. Hunt (2006) recorded that tufted duck, mallard, mute swan, grey heron, coot, moorhen, great crested grebe and little grebe all breed here. The woodlands around the castle have breeding greenfinch, bullfinch, chaffinch, coal tit, great tit, blue tit and long-tailed tit. Barn owls are regularly seen around the castle at night and are quite likely to nest in the old building. Stonechat and reed bunting are common around the edge of the lake. The reed swamp and fen in Lake Bog supports water rail and sedge warbler along with some of the other water birds mentioned above (Hunt, 2006). All of the above species are relatively common in similar habitats in Ireland, with

the exception of barn owl, which is considered to be a species of high conservation concern (*Newton et al, 1999*). In the 1970s, pochard (duck) was recorded breeding at Lough Gur (*An Foras Forbartha, 1971*) but its present status is unknown. Pochard are described as breeding sporadically in Ireland in very small numbers (*Hutchinson, 1989*).

Winter Birds – Lough Gur has been considered of regional to national importance for its wintering bird populations. *Hutchinson (1979)* recorded maximum counts of 1,300-1,800 wintering waterfowl in the period 1971-1975. In the mid-1980s wintering birds peaked at over 3,000 (*Sheppard, 1993*). In recent years (prior to 2009) there were declines in most of the wintering birds here, especially diving duck. In the seven winters ending in 2006/07 the average peak count was only 1,147 birds (*Crowe, 2005*). This was especially marked in January 2007 when a mid-winter count (normally the highest population) revealed only 367 birds on the lake. The reasons for this decline are not known precisely, but it is thought to be related to the continuing eutrophication of the lake. A comparison of the peak winter counts for surface-feeding and diving ducks reveals a steeper decline in the latter species. This suggests that the reduced transparency of the lake due to algal blooms is limiting the feeding potential for these ducks.

Whooper swans have used Lough Gur as a winter roost at night, flying out each morning to feed on nearby farmland. The most important feeding areas for the Lough Gur whooper swans are in three areas, namely the Morning Star River Corcass, the Fedamore Corcass and Herbertstown on the Camogue River. They were studied intensively here over five winter seasons from 1997/98 to 2001/02 (*Murphy, 2003*). The peak number of swans in the Lough Gur area during this period varied from 68 to 151 (mean 106). The swans almost never use the lake during daylight, presumably because the feeding elsewhere is more favourable for them. In recent winters (prior to 2009), they sometimes did not leave the feeding grounds and used the lake less frequently. Fifty Whooper swans were counted in Fedamore on 20-03-2014 (*G Hunt note to the author*).

Lough Gur has, in the past, been a site of national importance for birds with good winter bird populations and at least two nationally rare breeding species (pochard and barn owl) and an important population of whooper swan. Recent information suggests that the reduced water quality has had a negative impact on wintering wildfowl and that the whooper swan population is no longer using the lake consistently. The status of the breeding birds is presently unknown.

A list of birds to be found at Lough Gur appears at the end of this article.

Lough Gur Wintering Birds

I was delighted to receive a note (2015) from *Geoffrey Hunt* on Lough Gur wintering birds, which is reproduced in full, as follows.

“The wintering birds at Lough Gur will soon be departing for their breeding grounds. The ducks include Wigeon that come from Iceland. They graze on the grass near the shoreline and sleep on the water. Their Irish name is *Rualacha* meaning red duck. The drake is mainly grey bodied with a red-brown head and a buff forehead. There were over 250 at Lough Gur this year.

“Teal is Ireland’s smallest breeding duck and generally remains well hidden. A small number stay and breed in Ireland. When they are frightened, they spring into flight to make their escape. This year there were around 250 Tufted duck that are black and white and constantly dive under water to catch the creatures below. There are also a number of Shoveler duck that cannot dive and are known as dabbling duck. They have a green head with a white, brown, white body. [Dabbling duck – a type of shallow water duck that feeds primarily along the surface of the water or by tipping headfirst into the water to graze on aquatic plants and vegetation – <http://birding.about.com/od/birdingglossary/g/dabblingduck.htm>]

“Some of the trees on Garret Island are dead because of the Cormorants that nest on them. Over time, their droppings eventually kill those trees. This then benefits the bird as there are no small branches or leaves, making it easier to land.

“Recently, I saw the return of the Great Crested Grebe, which breed at Lough Gur. They have a beautiful plumage and will soon start to perform their annual reed dance. Pairs will head shake in unison with each other while he will present her with a gift of weeds.”

Bat Habitat

The woodlands and lake area are frequented by at least five of the ten known Irish bat species and offer commuting, foraging, mating and roosting potential. The Lough Gur area provides refuge and foraging habitats for these species. Roosts are certain to be present in tall mature trees, trees with crevices and loose bark and trees with heavy ivy cover. Potentially, there may be bat roosts within decaying trees on site also. Much of the woodland has been unmanaged for many years and as such is an ideal habitat for bats. Historical structures on site also offer potential roosting sites for these animals. The woodland contains a mixture of broadleaved and coniferous species and there is good light penetration to allow secondary plants to prosper. The lake is attractive to insects and hence bats and its sheltered nature would further enhance its importance for these mammals. The needs of bats are well met on site as the habitats are frequented by a range of species.

All Irish bat species are protected under the *Wildlife Act (1976)* and *Wildlife Amendment Act (2000)*. Also, the *EC Directive on The Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive, 1992)*, seeks to protect rare species, including bats, and their habitats and requires that appropriate monitoring of populations be undertaken.

Lough Gur Butterfly and Dragonfly

Is there anything as beautiful or as seasonal to behold as a butterfly of any hue or size in fluttering flight or at rest? Well, *Geoffrey Hunt* can tell us about those handsome creatures, and what follows is a note that I received from him on the subject.

“Late spring sees the emergence of our invertebrates including butterfly and dragonfly. Some of the butterflies, however, have been hibernating throughout the winter as adults and it is generally these that you might see first. A warm sunny day brings out the Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. The first butterflies of 2015 that you are likely to see around Lough Gur would be the Green-veined White, Orange Tip or Speckled Wood. As the season progresses, other butterflies emerge coinciding with the flowering of their host plant. When the flowers become plentiful providing a food source of nectar and pollen, this is the time when the butterflies are most active. At this time of the year, it is also the breeding season for birds and all these invertebrates provide much-needed food for their young.

Dragonfly and Damselfly start to emerge in late April depending on the weather. It can be well into May before they are seen in numbers around the edge of the lake. The Hairy Dragonfly is the first dragonfly to appear in small numbers. Damselfly include the Large Red, Blue-tailed and Azure.”

I discovered from Geoffrey’s notes that the very attractive Ladybird may be found in three types: 7-spot Ladybird, 14-spot Ladybird and 22-spot Ladybird. So, the next time you notice a Ladybird in your garden, check which one you have seen!

Fish Stocks and Fishing

The Report (2009) on the Environmental Study stated that the lake supports widely fluctuating algal crops and an abundance of rigid hornwort in the open water. This presents a problem for anglers and may hinder fish movement. Rudd is a shoaling fish, which would travel extensively within the lake. Shoal movement may be hindered by the excessive cover of rigid hornwort.

The same *Report* concluded – It may be suitable to develop the lake as a “put and take” coarse fishery. Development of the fisheries potential of the lake would require consultation and planning with the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board. A fisheries survey of the lake would be required to find out the current stock type and density. The main area of concern will be in relation to the outlet from the lake, which will have to be adequately screened to prevent escapes to any downstream waters. Consideration should also be given to the impact of introduced fish species on macro-invertebrate populations.

The following information was taken from the *Inland Fisheries Ireland Reports* that followed the Fish Stock Surveys of Lough Gur in 2012 and previously in 2009. The lake was previously surveyed by the Inland Fisheries Trust in March 1978 (*IFT*,

unpublished data) and by the Central Fisheries Board between December 1988 and October 1989 (*King and O'Grady, 1994*). These surveys revealed that a relatively large stock of fast growing rudd and pike were present in the lake. During the 2009 survey, rudd was found to be the dominant species present. Pike and eels were also captured during the survey.

A total of four fish species were recorded on Lough Gur in September 2012, with 180 fish being captured. This number was made up of 137 Rudd, 33 Perch, 5 Pike and 5 European eels. During the previous survey in 2009, the same species composition was recorded with the exception of perch, which was present during the 2012 survey but were not captured in 2009. The reason for the introduction and source of the perch is unknown.

Anglers often transfer fish from water body to water body without any authorisation in the hope of improving their local angling amenity. However, the unregulated movement of fish by anglers from one water body to another contravenes current Inland Fisheries Ireland policy and the Fish Health Regulations. Unauthorised movements of fish from water body to water body carry a significant risk of disease to resident fish populations in the receiving water.

Rudd captured during the 2012 survey ranged in length from 5.5cm to 35.9cm, while those captured during the 2009 survey ranged in length from 6.0cm to 37.5cm. Perch captured during the 2012 survey ranged in length from 9.4cm to 20.6cm (there were none captured in 2009). Pike captured during the 2012 survey ranged in length from 18.5cm to 47.0cm, while those captured during the 2009 survey ranged from 15.2cm to 39.1cm. Eels captured during the 2012 survey ranged in length from 39.1cm to 79.4cm, while those captured during the 2009 survey ranged in length from 52.0cm to 75.0cm.

The reader is directed to the *Inland Fisheries Ireland 2013 Report* ([online availability](#)) for scientific analyses based on the survey of Lough Gur in September 2012. The results of previous surveys are also available.

No More Large Pike, it Seems!

Without a doubt, pike fishing in Lough Gur has deteriorated significantly over the decades. During the 1960s, it was not unusual to catch pike of 7/8 pounds weight and heavier. Much heavier pike were caught in those times. A fish, weighing over thirty pounds was caught by Jimmy Robinson from Limerick. This specimen was preserved and was on show for many years at the Red Cellar Pub, run by the Ryan family. I understand that this specimen was subsequently taken overseas.

In May 1964, just a few weeks before his thirteenth birthday, David Sheahan of Holycross, while fishing with his brother, Mike, hooked and landed a 32-pound pike after a titanic struggle that lasted forty-five minutes. The catch was an expert one, requiring patience and a cool head, as the fishing line was only eighteen

pounds breaking strain. As David recalled, Mike was jumping around and praying while he ‘played’ the fish to a state of exhaustion, before landing it. The brothers sold the fish for the princely sum of £1 sterling – David returned two shillings to the purchaser, who set off to Limerick City on his motorcycle in search of profit!

A personal observation is that fishing for rudd/perch appears to have increased significantly in recent years. Perhaps the economic recession coupled with the influx of immigrants to Ireland has contributed to fishing at Lough Gur becoming a more popular leisure activity, a phenomenon that would not be unique to Lough Gur. Perhaps more of our younger people are now taking an interest in fishing, a trend that should be welcomed. During the summer months of recent years, I observed that not only were rudd/perch being caught in good numbers at the lake, but that many of these were being taken, rather than being returned to the waters. Sensible coarse fishing behaviour, largely for leisure and sport, needs to be practised at any fishery, to maintain viable stocks. Unscrupulous taking of fish from the lake is to be avoided so that fishing will be protected into the long-term, for the equal enjoyment of visitors and local people.

Lough Gur Heritage Centre

The Lough Gur Visitor Centre (Heritage Centre) is located at the north-eastern end of the lake, at one of the most scenic areas, and with direct access to both the lake shore and the adjoining hills and monuments of Knockadoon and Knockfennel. The Centre is housed in a thatched replica of a Neolithic dwelling.

The Centre tells the story of pre-Celtic Ireland dating back to 4000 BC. The Centre provides a fascinating interpretation of the sites associated with Lough Gur. Visitors can find out about the rich heritage of Lough Gur by visiting the interactive multimedia exhibition that brings to life over 6,000 years of archaeology and history. Highlights include listening points, audio guides, archaeological dig, Neolithic Pot model, audio-visual presentation and interactive touch screens. There are many information panels including a [Hunt Museum](#) panel. Two of the panels are mounted on the side of the display cases and give information on archaeological research in Lough Gur. A further six panels provide information on the geology, botany and zoology of the area and Celtic Festivals and Lough Gur Folklore. Another panel deals with the social history of Lough Gur including famous local emigrants such as the parents of ‘Honey’ Fitzgerald ([Rose Kennedy’s father](#)), Boss Croker and his influence on New York politics and Standish O’Grady, a barrister.

The Heritage Centre at Lough Gur was re-opened in June 2013 after extensive refurbishment. The Centre now boasts a five-star state of the art facility and has most notably received the “Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence Award for 2013”. The Centre is managed by Lough Gur Development, who took over in 2011.

Birds Found at Lough Gur

*Res – Resident; Win – winter; Sum – summer;
Mig – Migratory; O – Occasionally*

WATER BIRDS

Mute Swan – *Res*
Whooper Swan – *Win*
Greylag Goose – *Res*
Pink-footed Goose – *Win/O*
Cormorant – *Res*
Great Crested Grebe – *Res*
Little Grebe – *Res*
Black-necked Grebe – *Win/rare*
Moorhen – *Res*
Coot – *Res*

Mallard Duck – *Res*
Wigeon Duck – *Win*
Teal Duck – *Win*
Shoveler Duck – *Win*
Gadwall Duck – *Win*
Pochard Duck – *Win*
Goldeneye – *Win*
Shelduck – *Win*
Tufted Duck – *Res*
Ruddy Duck – *Win/O*
Ring-necked Duck – *Win/rare*
Pintail Duck – *Win/O*
Ferruginous Duck – *Win/rare*
Long-tail Duck – *Win/rare*
Grey Heron – *Res*
Little Egret – *Win*
Green-wing Teal Duck – *Win/rare*
Pied-billed Grebe – *Win/rare*
Water Rail – *Res*
Scaup Duck – *Win*

SONG BIRDS

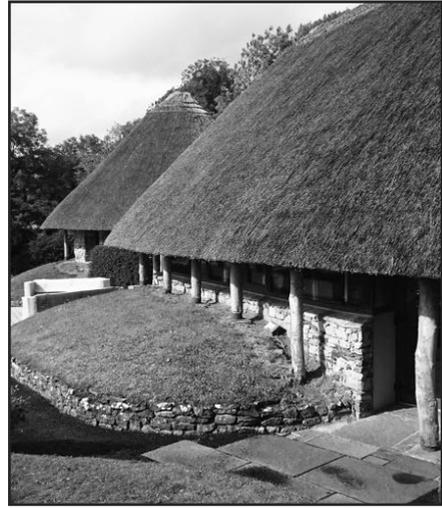
Wood Pigeon – *Res*
Collared Dove – *Res*
Pheasant – *Res*
Kingfisher – *Res*

Swallow – *Sum*
Swift – *Sum*
House Sparrow – *Res*
Reed Bunting – *Res*
House Martin – *Sum*
Sand Martin – *Sum*
Skylark – *Res*
Meadow Pipit – *Res*
Dunnock – *Res*
Pied Wagtail – *Res*
Grey Wagtail – *Res*
Wren – *Res*
Sedge Warbler – *Sum*
Whitethroat – *Sum*
Willow Warbler – *Sum*
Chiffchaff – *Sum*
Blackcap – *Win/Sum*
Stone Chat – *Res*
Spotted Flycatcher – *Sum*
Robin – *Res*
Fieldfare – *Win*
Blackbird – *Res*
Redwing – *Win*
Mistle Thrush – *Res*
Song Thrush – *Res*
Starling – *Res*
Long-tail Tit – *Res*
Blue Tit – *Res*

Great Tit – *Res*
Coal Tit – *Res*
Treetreeper – *Res*
Gold Crest – *Res*
Chaffinch – *Res*
Goldfinch – *Res*
Greenfinch – *Res*
Bullfinch – *Res*
Redpoll – *Win*
Siskin – *Win*
Grasshopper Warbler – *Sum/O*
Wheatear – *Mig*
Linnet – *Res*

BIRDS OF PREY

Barn Owl – *Res*
Hen Harrier – *Win*
Merlin – *Res*
Kestrel – *Res*
Peregrine – *Res*
Sparrow Hawk – *Res*
Long-eared Owl – *Res*
Buzzard – *Res*
Marsh Harrier – *Mig*
Hobby – *Mig/rare*



Lough Gur Heritage Centre neolithic house style.

WADERS

Lapwing – Win
Golden Plover – Win
Curlew – Win
Redshank – Win
Common Sandpiper – Sum
Jack Snipe – Win/O
Whimbrel – Mig
Dunlin – Win
Snipe – Res

GULLS

Black-headed Gull – Res
Lesser Black-back Gull – Win

CROWS

Hooded Crow – Res
Jackdaw – Res
Raven – Res
Magpie – Res
Rook – Res
Jay – Win

References and Notes:

- (1) Mesolithic Times: 8000 – 4000 BC.
- (2) Neolithic Times: 4000 – 2500 BC.
- (3) Bronze Age, Copper and Bronze Age: 2500 – 500 BC.
- (4) Iron Age: 500 BC – 400 AD.
- (5) Medieval Times, or Middle Ages, from 5th to 15th century.
- (6) The word “megalithic” describes structures made of such large stones, utilising an interlocking system without the use of mortar or concrete, as well as representing periods of prehistory characterised by such constructions.
- (7) The term Crannog refers to small islands often artificial, remains of them can be found on many of Ireland’s lakes, the name is derived from the old Irish ‘crannóc’ from crann, tree. These islands in most cases were fortified and lived on by people as recently as the 17th century; some may have been constructed on wooden poles inserted in the lake bed. Crannogs have been used by man probably as far back as 4,000 BC.
- (8) [The Report](#) “Lough Gur Environmental Management Study, February 2009” acknowledges that the Text on Social History of Lough Gur from 1700 onwards was gratefully received from Michael Quinlan.
- (9) Eutrophic – (of a lake or other body of water) rich in nutrients and so supporting a dense plant population, the decomposition of which kills animal life by depriving it of oxygen.
- (10) The Sedge Warbler is a small, quite plump, warbler with a striking broad creamy stripe above its eye, and greyish brown legs. It is brown above with blackish streaks and creamy white underneath. It is a summer visitor, and winters in Africa, south of the Sahara Desert. Its song is a noisy, rambling warble compared to the more rhythmic song of the reed warbler.
- (11) Pochard – The common pochard (*Aythya ferina*) is a medium-sized diving duck. Shows a preference for large shallow eutrophic waters, particularly those with well-vegetated marshes, swamps and slow flowing rivers.
- (12) The Whooper Swan is similar to Bewick’s Swan, but larger, with a longer neck. Yellow and black bill, with the yellow projecting below the nostril. Whooper Swans wintering in Ireland and Britain are predominantly Icelandic migrant populations.
- (13) Information on the Lough Gur Heritage Centre is taken largely from the Lough Gur website, Loughgur.com.
- (14) Geoffrey Hunt, [Biodiversity Consultant](#).



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