



Galway Green Leaf Biodiversity Trail



Rusheen Bay and Silver Strand (RED Route)

Description: This is a paved and easily accessible route and one of the best locations to appreciate wildlife, as well as a good sea breeze, on the outskirts of Galway City. The route starts at Rusheen Park, where the well-maintained trail takes you on a short loop which hugs the edge of Rusheen Bay and provides opportunities to observe a range of birds and insect life, with



Ruth Hanniffy

Route distance 2.5km

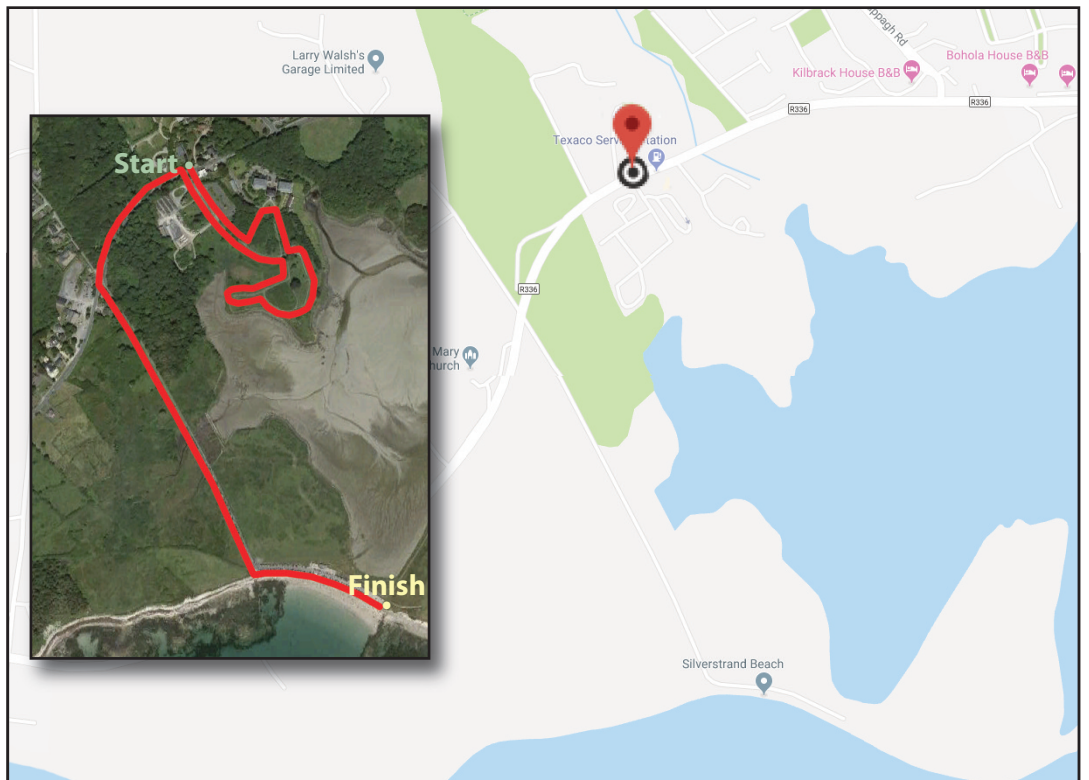
Route difficulty

Difficult

Route info This route is mostly paved (or gravel trail) and is all on even ground.

Access warning

At Silver Strand, only the car park and beach should be accessed. All other areas are out of bounds as the lands are private and there are several associated hazards which include unstable footing and cliff edge, loose falling rock and risk of rising water along the shore at high tide.



Access: Car park (53.25138, -9.12635).
Free parking, 24 hours.

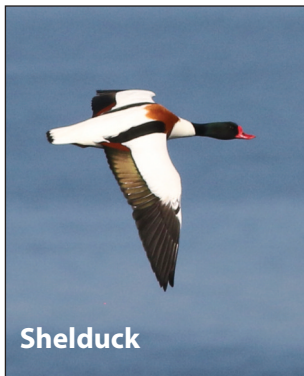
Bus route (412 or 414 bus) See **HERE**.
Bike stands available.





Whitethroat

excellent views over the sheltered tidal waters and mudflats of Rusheen Bay and across the narrow channel to Barna Woods. The route then leads down the road to Silver Strand which offers stunning views over Galway Bay, where you can see the city nestled in the inner reaches of the bay and across to the Burren on a clear day. This coastal route takes in a diverse range of habitats and merges from broadleaf woodland to open farmland interspersed with hedgerows and scrub along the road to Silver Strand, and then onto the beach and rocky shoreline at Silver Strand. There is a wealth of flora and fauna to observe from rare flowering plants, butterflies and nesting birds in spring and summer to large flocks of waterbirds which feed and roost at Rusheen Bay in autumn and winter.



Shelduck



Redshank



Dunlin



Stonechat

Start and Finish Start at Rusheen Park car park and finish at Silver Strand car park (or return to Rusheen Park).

What to bring Boots, warm clothes, rain gear.

What to look for In Rusheen Park there are many small pockets of habitat in close proximity to the trail, from young broad-leaved woodland to areas of open grassland, reedbed, and pockets of bramble and scrub. It is a good location for butterflies and songbirds, particularly migratory warblers. The Common Whitethroat is a summer migrant that nests in Rusheen Park, which is one of the best places to observe and listen to this species within Galway City.

The colourful Stonechat also nests here every year and can be seen singing and characteristically flicking its tail, while perched on gorse or bramble. Shelduck can be observed in the bay, feeding in the sandy mud with a wide variety of other shorebirds such as Curlew, Dunlin and Redshank. Peregrine Falcon and Merlin are occasionally visible and Sparrowhawk can often be seen close to the woods just across the narrow channel.

Grey Heron have nested in the woods here for over 50 years and this is an ideal observation point to watch them raise their young in spring and early summer and listen to their characteristic loud 'clacking' calls. One of most elusive of Irish mammals, the Stoat, has also been regularly seen in Rusheen Park, so keep your eyes peeled!

Bullfinch



Look and listen for a range of birds as the road runs adjacent to the edge of the woods en route down to Silver Strand. Jay can be seen (or heard) here, as can Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff in spring and summer and Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Treecreeper, Goldcrest, Bullfinch and Chaffinch all year round. As you leave the woods the terrain changes to open farmland, with good hedgerows and pockets of gorse and bramble. This is an excellent place to watch and listen to birds in the early morning, with Wren, Robin, Stonechat, Linnet, and Common Whitethroat all regular in summer. Grey Heron and Little Egret can be observed fishing in the shallow pools and the stream which runs under the road and Badger and Fox have been seen along the road and in adjacent fields here in the early morning.

Flag Iris



Peregrine Falcon



Skylark



Common Blue Butterfly

From the car park at Silver Strand, a diverse mix of habitats can be viewed. These include fen and calcareous grassland on the slopes of the glacial drumlin. Flowering plants include the enchanting Spring Gentian, conspicuous Yellow Flag Iris and Mountain Aven. Common Blue Butterfly can be seen fluttering among the Birds-foot-trefoil along the drumlin. A wide range of birds use Rusheen Bay in autumn and winter which include large flocks of waders such as Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Lapwing, Dunlin and Ringed Plover. These can attract raptors including Peregrine Falcon and Merlin. Several duck species including the dapper Shelduck, Teal, and Wigeon as well as flocks of Brent Geese. In the autumn and winter Hooded Crow and Jackdaw gather just before dark to roost for the night. Grey Heron nest in the nearby woods overlooking Rusheen Bay and can be seen in the bay and fishing along the open coastline all year round, as can the more elegant and exotic looking Little Egret, which is a smaller white heron. On the hill, Skylarks sing in early spring. Listen for the beautiful metallic calls of Linnet from the gorse and scrub. In summer nesting Sand Martins arrive from Africa each April and excavate their deep burrows into the cliff face, and they can be watched feverishly foraging for insects to feed hungry young chicks tucked deep inside the nesting cavities. On a low tide, life in the rock pools can be explored on the shoreline at Silver Strand beach and look out for Oystercatcher, Grey Heron, Cormorant, Great Northern Diver, Common Terns and Sandwich Terns feeding along the coast and beach.