



PARTICIPANT

Jim Cussen.

9MWW+VV Galbally, County Limerick, Ireland

SITE VISIT CONDUCTED BY

Albert Nolan.

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This 'Plan for Nature' has been produced through The Hare's Corner initiative of Burrenbeo Trust. All recommendations are made with the intention of benefitting Ireland's biodiversity and the native, flora and fauna in your local area. For more information on The Hare's Corner, please visit www.theharescorner.ie.

Property with or close to: nature designations, recorded monuments or protected structures no

Area of site (hectares): [enter area]

SUMMARY & KEY ACTIONS

[short summary here]

The club house building would be the ideal place to erect bird and bat boxes. The kids involved in the club could be involved in putting up the boxes.

The National Pollinator Plan has detailed recommendations on managing Sports grounds for pollinators including alternatives to spraying and the benefits for nature.

The GAA also has a green Flag award for clubs that take actions to protect their local environment. This is called the green clubs programme and already there are nearly 200 clubs involved and all taking actions to protect their environment.

Early spring is a hungry time for emerging queen bees as they have to lay eggs and restart their colonies. Flowers can often be scarce at this time of the year, but you could plant pollinator friendly bulbs along the bank. Snowdrop, crocus, bluebells and grape hyacinth will all naturalize along the bank and provide colour for people and food for bees.

Galbally Ecological Park.

Recommendation. Scots pine is one of our native conifer trees and grows well on wet land. It produces abundant pinecones, and the seeds are eaten by birds and also by animals like red squirrels.

Recommendation. Do kick sampling in the stream and record the different species present and these can be used to monitor water quality.

Recommendation. The vertical surface of the bordering wall could be utilized to grow wildlife friendly climbers. Honeysuckle, Jasmine and ivy will all provide shelter, food and nesting locations for birds, insects and sometimes even bats.

SITE MAP





LEGEND

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|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Practical Conservation Workshops. | 2. Bird and Bat Boxes. | 3. Nature Mural by GGA Junior members. |
| 4. Alternatives to spraying. | 5. Natural Hares Corner. | 6. Benefits of seed saving. |
| 7. Grassy bank front of GAA Club. | 8. Creating a moon garden for moths and bats. | 9. Roadside verges. |
| 10. Ecological Park. | 11. Planting Scots pine and bee hive. | 12. Community Nature Habitat. |

YOUR PLAN FOR NATURE

- 1 Habitat. GAA Club Grounds. Practical Conservation Workshops.** This is a spacious and well-kept community amenity with dramatic views of the Galtee Mountains. On the day of our visit the club house was a hive of activity with a meeting of young farmers taking place. There were some interesting conversations around the Hares Corner Project and a lot of interest from these informal chats around biodiversity.

Benefits. This will encourage more people to take positive actions for nature in their own homes and business.

This could help more members to your tidy towns group and the workshops could be used to carry our projects withing the community.

Tips Hold a monthly meeting with a guest speaker to chat around practical sustainability and biodiversity projects that need doing in your community. This could be practical demonstrations around seed saving, planting a pollinator friendly bed or container or making a bird or bat box. This will help raise awareness and encourage positive actions that can be taken within your community.



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- 2 Habitat:** Bird and bat boxes. The walls of the GAA clubhouse would be an ideal [place to put up bat and barn owl boxes.

Benefits: Bats are very misunderstood creatures and do a brilliant ecological service by eating over 3500 insects each night and many of them are mosquitoes. This helps keep many farm pests under control and bats will readily use boxes as temporary roosts.

Tips: Barn owls are also farmers friend and catch hundreds of mice and rats each year and eat them themselves or feed them to their growing chicks. This is a free pest control service that does not relay on dangerous poisons.

To put up a barn owl box, mount it at least 3-4 meters high in a quiet location with a clear flight path and a clear view of open foraging land. Choose either an interior placement in a barn or an exterior placement on a mature tree or building. Ensure the box is positioned away from prevailing winds and areas with a lot of disturbance.



Location and orientation

- **Height:** Mount the box at least 3 meters (10 ft) high, preferably 4 meters (13 ft).
- **Proximity:** Place it within 1 km of rough grassland or open country for easy hunting access.
- **Visibility:** Ensure the entrance is visible from a distance and has a clear flight path to the box, both to and from the box. Avoid placing it in dense foliage.
- **Wind and disturbance:** Position the box away from prevailing winds and out of areas with high human activity or loud noises.
- **Safety:** If installing outdoors, choose a mature, isolated tree or a building with a suitable location. If using a pole, ensure it is stable and can support the box weight.

Installation

- **Indoor (barn/shed):** Use galvanized steel banding or other secure methods to attach the box to a wooden beam or truss. A permanently open entrance to the building is necessary, ideally large enough for an owl to fly in and out easily.
- **Outdoor (tree/wall):** Securely mount the box to a tree branch or wall. Make sure the tree is mature and can support the weight.
- **Safety precautions:** When working at height, use appropriate safety measures such as a fall arrest system, harness, or a pulley system to lift the box. Do not work alone and use ladders that can support your weight.
- **Finishing:** Place a thin layer of untreated wood shavings or bark on the floor of the box as bedding.

To put up a bat box, choose a high location that receives 6-8 hours of morning sun, with a clear flight path to and from the entrance. Mount the box at least 3m (10 ft) to 12 ft (3.65 m) high on a tree, wall, or pole, preferably near a water source and diverse vegetation, and away from bright lights.



Site selection

- **Height:** Mount the box at least 10 feet (3.65 m) high to give bats a clear drop for flight.

- **Sun exposure:** Face the box to get 6-8 hours of morning sun. A south or southeast facing direction is often ideal.
- **Flight path:** Ensure there are no branches, trees, or other obstacles directly in front of the box entrance. Bats need a clear, unobstructed flight path.
- **Predator protection:** Place the box where cats cannot easily reach it. Mounting on a pole in an open area can provide more security from predators than on a tree or low wall.
- **Proximity to water:** Locate the box near a water source like a pond or stream, as this will attract insects, which are food for bats.

Tips. Protecting bats from light pollution.

- Use warm, low-UV light: Opt for lights with a warm colour temperature (2700K or below) and ensure they have no UV output, as white, blue, and UV light are most harmful. Amber or red lights are the least disruptive.
- Full cut-off luminaires: Choose light fixtures that prevent light from being emitted upwards or sideways. Shields, baffles, and deflectors are essential to prevent light spillage and back spill.
- Direct lights downward: Ensure all lighting is aimed at the ground and not used for decorative uplighting.
- Reduce light levels: Use the minimum amount of light necessary and avoid over lighting.
- Use low-level lighting: If possible, use lower height luminaires so that bats can fly over them.
- Shield and baffle lights: Add shields, cowls, or deflectors to control light spill.
- Use dark materials: Consider using dark-coloured materials like black tarmac for pathways instead of bright ones, as these reflect less light.

Operational controls

- Turn off unnecessary lights: Switch off lights when they are not needed, especially ornamental or security lighting, by using timers or motion sensors.
- Use sensors: Install motion-activated lights with timers to ensure they are only on when a person is present.
- Close curtains and blinds: Prevent light from spilling out of windows, especially at roosting sites.

Habitat and roost protection

- Protect roosting sites: It is illegal to intentionally disturb a bat roost in Ireland under the Wildlife Acts. If you know there is a roost, you should take extra care to avoid lighting near it.
- Plant bat-friendly plants: Create habitats that are good for bats by planting hedgerows and other bat-friendly plants.
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To make a bat box use untreated timber to cut pieces for a box with a narrow bottom opening. Rough up the inside surfaces with saw cuts for grip, assemble the box using screws, and mount it at least 3 meters high in a sunny, sheltered spot with a clear flight path. Do not use any paints or preservatives on the boxes as these can poison the bats.

Materials and tools

Untreated rough-sawn wood (e.g., 15cm wide by 1.1m long, 1.5cm thick)

Screws or nails

Pencil and tape measure.

Saw.

Hammer.

Construction steps

1. **Cut the wood:** Measure and cut the timber into the necessary sections according to your chosen plan. A typical design will include a back, front, roof, and base.
2. **Create the interior:** Saw narrow grooves about every 1cm into the inside surfaces of the front and back panels to provide grip for the bats.

3. **Assemble the box:** Nail or screw the pieces together, ensuring the joints are airtight. The opening should be at the bottom, with a narrow slit for entry.
4. **Finishing touches:** Avoid any chemical treatments or paints. The wood should be left natural, as treated wood can poison the bats.

Installation tips

- **Height:** Mount the box at least 3 meters (10 feet) off the ground.
- **Location:** Choose a location on the side of a house or on a large tree. The ideal spot is sheltered from strong winds and receives sun for part of the day.
- **Orientation:** Position the entrance to face between southeast and southwest, and ensure there is a clear flight path to and from the box.
- **Attachment:** Drill holes in the back of the box to secure it with screws or plugs to a wall. For a tree, use adjustable ties to avoid damaging the tree as it grows.
- **Maintenance:** Do not disturb the box once it is installed. Legal regulations in Ireland protect all bat species and their roosts, meaning it is illegal to disturb them without a licence.

Where to find more information

- [Bat Conservation Ireland](#) has detailed guidelines and sells bat boxes.
- [BirdWatch Ireland](#) provides a printable guide and has a shop with bat boxes.
- [People's Trust for Endangered Species](#) offers a step-by-step guide on their website.
- [The RSPB](#) has a guide to building a bat box.
- [Bat Conservation Trust](#) provides plans and information for building bat boxes.

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- 3 **Habitat: Nature Mural and herbs in pots.** The wall of the club house could be used for creating a beautiful and interesting nature mural. This could tell the story of wildlife in Galbally and steps you are taking to conserve and enhance nature. The junior and senior members of the club could be involved in painting the mural. Herbs could be grown in pots around the mural showing what plants are beneficial for feeding bees, butterflies and moths.

Tips: You can start herbs from seed, but this takes time, and they need a lot of heat to germinate. You could ask the student body and associated wider community if they have established plants of rosemary, lavender etc you can ask them for a cutting. Place in a pot of good compost with a little grit for drainage and the following spring when it has rooted you can plant in its permanent position.

Other herbs like basil, coriander and rocket will grow from seed on a sunny window. Some a pinch of seeds each week and this means you will have a succession of herbs throughout the summer.

Tips: Potting and soil

- **Drainage:** Use pots with drainage holes and place a tray underneath to catch excess water.
- **Compost:** Use an organic potting compost or homemade compost.
- **Sunlight:** Place your pots in a sunny, sheltered spot, as many herbs require good sunlight.
- **Repotting:** In spring, you may need to pot up your herbs into a slightly larger pot with fresh compost to prevent them from outgrowing their container.
- **Mixing plants:** Group herbs with similar needs together in the same

Watering and care

- **Watering:** Water when the top 1.5 cm of soil is dry, and be careful not to overwater. Water the soil, not the plant itself, and aim for early morning or evening.
- **Winter care:** Potted herbs, especially those indoors, can dry out quickly in winter. Be mindful of soil dryness and avoid placing them near a heat source.
- **Deadheading:** Deadhead blooms after they finish flowering to encourage more blooms and energy for the plant's life cycle.
- **Overwintering:** Allow leaves to die back naturally after flowering to provide shelter for insects during the winter.

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- 4 **Habitat: [Alternatives to Spraying](#).** On the day of our visit, we noticed that parts of the car park had been sprayed. There is an opportunity here to manage the car park in a way that keeps it safe for people but also protects nature. The All-Ireland National Pollinator Plan was developed to not only halt the decline in our pollinator populations but also to develop simple recommendations around how we can make our community spaces more friendly for bees, butterflies and moths.

Benefits. The [All-Ireland Pollinator Plan](#) provides guidelines for sports grounds to become more [biodiversity-friendly](#) through simple, cost-effective actions that support pollinators. Key management strategies include creating pollinator-friendly areas like wildflower meadows or strips, reducing mowing frequency, planting native trees, and leaving some areas undisturbed for nesting and shelter. These changes create a network of safe habitats and can be implemented on a variety of grounds, from pitches to surrounding areas.



Benefits: Key management strategies

- **Reduced mowing:** Mow off-pitch grass less frequently (e.g., every six weeks) to allow plants like dandelions and clover to flower and provide food for pollinators.
- **Establish wildflower meadows:** Mow an area just once a year in September and remove the cuttings to reduce soil fertility, allowing wildflowers to become more established over time.
- **Create paths:** Cut paths through wildflower areas or leave short, mown borders to demonstrate management and allow for continued use of the space.
- **Plant native trees:** Plant native trees such as hawthorn, willow, and rowan, which provide food and shelter, and ensure a range of species that flower from spring to autumn.
- **Leave undisturbed areas:** Maintain undisturbed areas on the grounds to provide safe nesting sites for pollinators.
- **Communicate with users:** Inform club members and the community about the changes to alleviate concerns that the new management style is a result of neglect. Signage can also be used to explain the purpose of these areas

Benefits for sports clubs and the environment

- **Cost-effective:** Many of these actions, such as reduced mowing and leaving areas unmown, are free and require minimal resources.
- **Creates habitats:** Sports grounds can form an important network of safe places for pollinators across the landscape.
- **Supports biodiversity:** These management practices help combat the decline of species like wild bees, which are threatened with extinction.
- **Evidence-based:** All actions are based on scientific studies that show they have a positive impact on pollinators.

Tips. The National Pollinator Plan has detailed recommendations on managing Sports grounds for pollinators including alternatives to spraying and the benefits for nature.

<https://pollinators.ie/search/sports+grounds+>

Recommendation. The GAA also has a green Flag award for clubs that take actions to protect their local environment. This is called the green clubs programme and already there are nearly 200 clubs involved and all taking actions to protect their environment. <https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/community-and-health/green-clubs-sustainability>

What is the Green Club Programme?

The Green Club Programme was established to support Gaelic Games clubs in taking simple and effective sustainability action in their grounds and activities. The Programme is structured around the themes of Energy, Water, Waste, Biodiversity and Travel & Transport and is designed to promote sustainability awareness and action in GAA clubs and communities.

Phase 1 of the Green Club Programme ran from 2021 to 2023 with the participation of over 30 clubs from across Ireland. These trail-blazing Green Clubs established Green Teams, carried out club audits and engaged in exciting sustainability partnerships and projects. The experience and input of the Phase 1 Green Clubs led to the development of the GAA's first-ever [Green Club Toolkit](#)

What is the Green Club Toolkit and where can I find it?

The GAA Green Club Toolkit was launched in December 2022. It contains resources, advice and guidance, tailored especially for GAA clubs and members, in the areas of Energy, Water, Waste, Biodiversity and Travel & Transport. The Toolkit also contains inspiring, practical case studies from Green Clubs from across the island of Ireland.

Tips. The Toolkit is available to all GAA, LGFA and Camogie clubs and members at: <https://learning.gaa.ie/greenclub>



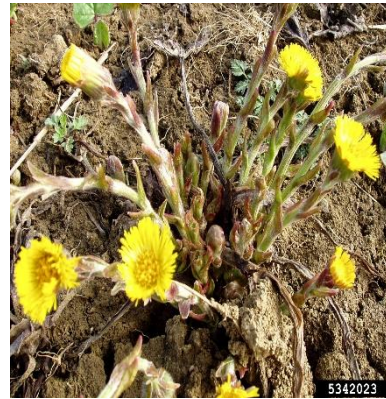
Trampled ground. This is places that a lot of people walk on, and this has its own unique and hardy community of plants. Broad leaved plantain as its name suggests has broad oval leaves and if you are bitten by an insect the juices in the leaves provide some relief.

Coltsfoot is an early spring flower and unusual the flowers appear first followed then by the horse shaped leaves. It was once used to treat chest complaints.

Broad Leaved Plantain.



Coltsfoot.



Ox eyed daisy is a tall native flower that grows on grassy dry and gravelly soil. There was a fine display of ox eyed daises along the high bank bordering the GAA Pitch. They large daises are visited by bees, butterflies, moths and other insect species.

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- 5 **Habitat:** One corner of the pitch bordering the car park has been left uncut and this has developed into a natural **Hares Corner**. We found several plants and grasses that all support insects by providing pollen and nectar and seeds.

Benefits. Meadow buttercup, Coltsfoot, Ox eyed daisy, Daisy and Narrow leaved plantain are all native flowers supporting wildlife. The native grasses are eaten by the caterpillars of butterflies like the Meadow Brown and Ringlet. They fly over the grasses and drop their eggs and when they hatch their larva feed at night.

This small wildflower corner had lots of interesting insects. We found the red and black **cinnabar moth**. This is a day flying species and its bright colours warn birds that it is unpleasant to eat. Their caterpillars feed on Ragwort and are black and amber in colour.

Cuckoo spit. People once thought that this was caused by the cuckoo as it appeared at the same time as the cuckoo started calling. All of that calling and bad manners made the cuckoo spit on plants. This is a great story, and the cause is a tiny insect called a frog hopper. This sucks the sap of plants and in the process, it creates the spit.

Zombie fungus is like the title of a B rated horror movie but for flies it is a very real nightmare. The fungus infects the brain of the fly and makes it fly up to the top of tall grasses. Here the fungus kills the fly and its fruiting bodies grow out of the fly. Because it is high up the spores are easily caught by the wind. Pretty cool and amazing.

Cinnabar moth.



Cuckoo spit.



Zombie fly fungus.



Tips: Download a sign for the National Pollinator Website saying that this area is managed for nature.

- 6 Habitat: Seed saving. Ox eyed daisy** is a tall native flower that grows on grassy dry and gravelly soil. There was a fine display of ox eyed daises along the high bank bordering the GAA Pitch. They large daisies are visited by bees, butterflies, moths and other insect species.



Recommendation. Seed Saving is a brilliant way to save not only money but also collect from plants that have adapted to your local microclimate. Pick a dry day when the seed heads are nearly ready and place in brown bags to dry. The seeds can be stored till next spring when they can be sown directly into the ground or started off in seed trays (use any container from butter to ice-cream as long as it has holes for drainage) and planted out in groups when they are strong enough.

Benefits: Seed Saving is a brilliant way to save not only money but also collect from plants that have adapted to your local microclimate. To save seeds for pollinators, collect ripe seedheads on a dry day, let them dry further in a warm, airy place, and then separate the seeds from any remaining chaff or pulp. Store the seeds in a cool, dry, and airtight container for future planting, which helps preserve your favourite plants and creates a more resilient garden ecosystem. Easy plants for beginners include daises, sunflowers, marigolds and borage.

Tips: Pick a dry day when the seed heads are nearly ready and place in brown bags to dry. The seeds can be stored till next spring when they can be sown directly into the ground or started off in seed trays (use any container from butter to ice-cream as long as it has holes for drainage) and planted out in groups when they are strong enough.

Collecting and drying

- Collect ripe seedheads on a dry day, when they have changed color from green to brown or black, but before they open and release the seeds.
- For plants like sunflowers, wait until the back of the head is yellowed or brown, and the seeds are hard, as indicated by their black colour beneath the petals.
- If a seedhead is prone to "exploding," place a paper bag over it and shake gently to collect the seeds inside.
- Lay the collected seedheads out to dry on a greenhouse bench, warm windowsill, or in an airy cupboard. You can also place mesh bags over plants to catch seeds as they mature.

Extracting and cleaning

- Once dry, gently crush seed pods or capsules to release the seeds.
- For fleshy fruits, mash them and rinse them in a sieve to separate seeds from the pulp.
- Clean any chaff, or dried plant material, from the seeds, as it could cause the seeds to rot or harbour diseases.
- Dry the cleaned seeds on a cotton towel or screen, not on paper towels, as the seeds can stick to the paper.

Storing

- Keep seeds in an airtight container to protect them from moisture and pests.
- A cool, dry, and dark place is ideal for storage. A refrigerator or a dry shed can work, as long as the seeds stay dry.

- Label containers with the plant name, date, and location of collection for future reference.

Planting

- Some wildflower seeds, like those from [Yellow Rattle](#), need a cold period to germinate, so they are best sown in the autumn.
- Saving seeds can help ensure you have plants that are adapted to your local soil and climate, making them more resilient.

- 7 Habitat: Bank front of Gaa club.** There is a long high roadside bank bordering the GAA grounds. This is probably the remains of a field hedgerow, and it contains a rich community of plants. The only tree was an ash tree and this healthy with no visible signs of ash die back.

Benefits. We also found Dandelion, Cinquefoil, Cow parsley, Meadow buttercup, Ivy, Narrow leaved plantain and Germander speedwell. All of these produce pollen, nectar and seeds for insects and birds.

Dandelions have a long flowering season and are one of the best flowers for insects.

Ivy flowers late into the Autumn and is one of the last sources of food for insects like queen bees and wasps before they go into hibernation

Recommendation. While it is important to keep the edges cut so that vegetation does not fall out onto the path the sides could be managed more sensitively for wildlife. The sides and top could be left uncut, and this would allow flowers to flourish providing food for insects. This would create a long pollinator corridor along the entire length of the bank, and this is one of the key recommendations under the National Pollinator Plan.

Tips. Early spring is a hungry time for emerging queen bees as they must lay eggs and restart their colonies. Flowers can often be scarce at this time of the year, but you could plant pollinator friendly bulbs along the bank. Snowdrop, crocus, bluebells and grape hyacinth will all naturalize along the bank and provide colour for people and food for bees.

Recommendation. The top of the bank could be planted with a low edible hedge. You could include gooseberries, black and red currants, lavender, rosemary and flowering currant. This will be another pollinator corridor and also a community resource for fresh fruit and herb.



Old Stone Wall. Many old earthen banks were reenforced by a stone wall. This added stability but was also a handy method of using up any stones that came out of the fields during ploughing. The stones have a lot of colourful lichens, and these are really interesting plants. They are a symbiotic

relationship between an algae and a fungus. The fungus provides the main body of the lichen and absorbs minerals and nutrients from the stones. It hosts the algae that can create energy from the sunlight.

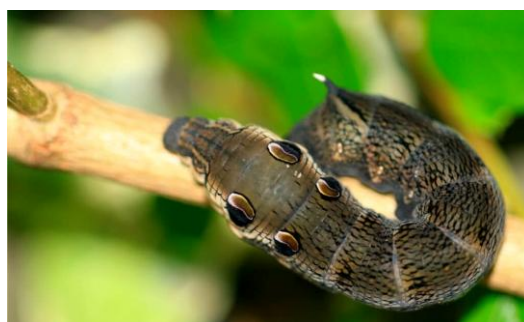
Recommendation. Lichens are a part of your wildlife that are very understudied. It would be worthwhile doing a survey of the lichens in your community and having a photographic record of all of the different species.

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Habitat: Moon Garden for moths and Bats. The small bed in Connolly Park is been planted up with begonias now but there is an opportunity here to create a moon garden for moths. These are plants that attract night flying insects like moths and mosquitoes these then provide food for foraging bats; they can eat up to 3500 insects in one night.

One of the easiest ways to make your garden better for moths is simply to stop working so hard! Moths and their caterpillars need fallen leaves, old stems and other plant debris to help them hide from predators, and especially to provide suitable places to spend the winter. It's very helpful to delay cutting back old plants until the spring, rather than doing it in the autumn, and just generally be less tidy. If you want your garden to look tidy in the summer, try leaving some old plant material behind the back of borders or in other places out of sight. Many moth caterpillars feed on the native plants we consider weeds, so tolerating some weeds and long grass in your garden can also be very beneficial to moths.

Popular Hawk Moth can be as big as your hand.
Their caterpillars feed on the leaves of broadleaf trees.



Benefits: To make a moth garden, plant both nectar-rich flowers for adult moths and host plants for caterpillars. Choose night-blooming or pale-coloured, fragrant flowers like evening primrose or jasmine, and include daytime-blooming flowers, flat-topped or tubular flowers, and host plants such as oak, willow, or nettles. Provide a shallow water source, allow for leaf litter for overwintering, and avoid using pesticides.

9 **Habitat: Roadside verges.** Next, we paid a visit to the Galbally Ecological Park. This is only a short five minute walk from the village but along a very busy road. The hedgerow here is very only and you can tell this by the rich plant community.

Benefits. Elm was once the dominant tree in the Irish landscape but was decimated by Dutch Elm disease in the eighties. Since then it has made a small recovery with many trees regrowing from the original stumps.

Dog rose has large pink or white flowers in late summer that are packed full of pollen and nectar for bees and large red fruit or hips that are eaten by birds and animals. It is found in old and well-established hedgerows.

There were lots of flowers in bloom from bindweed to Angleica. The latter has large blooms that attract a diversity of insects and especially hoverflies and soldier beetles.

Angleica is a magnet for insects.



Soldier beetle.



Willow warbler.



Chiffchaff.



Tips. Roadside verges can be managed for pollinators by reducing mowing, allowing native wildflowers to grow and provide food and habitat. Under initiatives like the [All-Ireland Pollinator Plan](#), local authorities and communities are transforming mown verges into pollinator-friendly meadows by mowing less frequently, often to a cut-and-lift regime (cutting and removing cuttings) once a year. This approach creates valuable wildlife corridors and habitats, supports biodiversity, and can even be cost-effective for maintenance

Benefits: Key actions for pollinator-friendly roadside verges

- Mow less often: Instead of mowing frequently, reduce the frequency of cutting to once a month or even less, allowing native wildflowers to grow.
- Mow and lift: If a verge is mown, a "cut and lift" approach is recommended, where the grass cuttings are removed after mowing. This prevents nutrients from being returned to the soil, which keeps the soil less fertile and favours the growth of wildflowers over competitive grasses.
- Manage strategically: Consider managing only certain areas, such as leaving a one-meter strip by the road for walkers while allowing wildflowers to grow on the rest of the verge.
- Avoid pesticides: Reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides in these areas to protect pollinators.
- Protect existing sites: Preserve existing species-rich verges, as they are often more valuable than those with planted commercial seed mixes.

Benefits of pollinator-friendly verges

- **Provides food and shelter:** The long grass and wildflowers provide essential food and habitat for pollinators like bees and other beneficial insects.
- **Creates wildlife corridors:** Roadside verges can act as vital links between habitats, allowing wildlife to move more freely across the landscape.
- **Supports biodiversity:** This management approach can transform low-value mown grass areas into rich, diverse habitats.
- **Cost-effective maintenance:** Reducing mowing frequency can lead to cost savings in landscape management.

10 Habitat: What an absolute gem and full of interesting plants and insects and a reminder of what the countryside must have looked like before the advent of modern farming. The meadow hummed with life, and I don't think outside of the Burren that I have come across one as diverse.

The field is unlevel and varies from dry places to wet with highs and lows. Each of these mini habitats supports its own community of plants and this creates an incredible diversity of wildlife



Community of flowers. While none of the flowers we found on the day are rare the real strength is that they are all growing together in the one meadow creating a community that is rarely seen today in the agricultural landscape.

The following plants were recorded, and the list could definitely expand with a year-round study. Pignut is an uncommon plant found in old unploughed and unfertilized meadows. If you follow the long root through the ground, you will find a small nut. This is edible and very nutritious.

Narrow leaved plantain. Provides seeds for small finches.

Meadow vetchling. Pollen and nectar for bees.

Meadow buttercup. Pollen and nectar for butterflies.

Ragwort. Caterpillars of the cinnabar moth feed on Ragwort. Also late summer source of pollen and nectar and especially for bumblebees.

Knapweed. Pollen and nectar for bees and the day flying six spot burnet moth.

Red clover. Fixes atmosphere nitrogen into the soil and excellent for bees.

Ferns. Provide shelter for small animals like rabbits and birds.

Yarrow. Pollen and Nectar for bees.

Meadow sweet. Pollen and nectar for hoverflies.

Angelica. Pollen and nectar for hoverflies and a host of other insects including beetles, wasps and moths.

Common hogweed. Pollen and nectar for hoverflies and a host of other insects including beetles, wasps and moths.

Figwort. Pollen and nectar for flies that are in turn eaten by bats and birds like swallows.

Dandelion. Early source of Pollen and nectar for queen bees that emerge in spring.

Recommendation. The meadow only needs **small changes**, and this is mainly around monitoring and recording of the wildlife that is found living in the meadow throughout the year

Habitat: Yellow rattle site Benefits: Yellow rattle is semi-parasitic on grasses and other plants and can be used to reduce the vigour of grasses, thus making it easier for wildflowers to establish and increase. For this reason, it is often viewed as a wildflower meadow maker.

Tips: Yellow rattle does not store well so sow the seed you get as soon as possible.

Select and prepare a few target areas on the edge of the meadow.

With the right management it will self-seed and spread through the area over time, allowing you to harvest the seed for using.

The area selected should be sunny and well drained.

Cut the grass on the target area and lightly scarify the ground to create some bare soil amongst the grass.

Scatter the seed and tread in lightly. If the grass is particularly strong and fast growing where you sow it, the Yellow rattle seedlings can be shaded out and die before they have the chance to establish and start weakening the grass. Only if this is the case, help it to establish by mowing the grass in late March with the blades set high enough that they will not cut any Yellow rattle seedlings that have germinated. All cuttings must be removed.

After sowing, leave area unmown and ungrazed until at least late July to allow the Yellow rattle to flower and set seed. Use temporary electric fencing if stock are grazing the field before this time.

N.B. As Yellow rattle is an annual (i.e. flowers, produces seed and dies in a year, with all new plants growing from seed dropped the previous year), it is easy to eradicate it by cutting it too early.

Collect seed by hand when the seeds pods have turned brown and split open to reveal the seeds. An easy way of doing this is to pull the plants that have finished flowering, and leave them upside down in a bucket or other container, in a dry place. The seeds will drop within a few days and can be maximised by giving the plants a shake before removing. Store in paper bags or open containers, and sow elsewhere as soon as possible after harvesting.

Recommendation. Full year survey of the plants, birds, animals and insects found in the meadow. This survey would capture the rich wildlife communities and give added protection to the existing management plan, helping to preserve the meadow for future generations.

Recommendation. Grasses and sedges are often an under recorded part of the meadows plant community. Grasses are the food plants for meadow species of grassland butterfly from the aptly named Meadow brown to Ringlet.

Meadow Brown.



Ringlet.



Recommendation. Include yellow rattle.

Recommendation. FIT Counts. You could also do a FIT (Flower Insect Timed) count. These are done through the National Biodiversity Centre in Waterford.

The **Flowered insect timed.** FIT (Flower insect timed) counts are very easy to do. You watch a patch of flowers for 10 minutes and record how many insects visit. This is a very useful method of measuring changes in your local biodiversity especially if you have developed new habitats for pollinators as part of the All-Ireland Pollinator plan.

The counts are done between the April 1st and September following the guidelines from the National Biodiversity Data Centre through the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

The FIT counts do not require individual insects to be identified down to species but just to the group they belong too, for example moths, bees, flies and wasps.

This might be an excellent project for the students in the local school.

Rare Moth. We were delighted to find a Chimney sweeper moth. These are a dramatic black colour, hence the name with a white training edge. This is a rare and vulnerable species with limited distribution and records for Tipperary

Chimney Sweeper Moth.



Garden Cross Spider.



Recommendation. All of the flowers in the meadow and the woodland edge will support a wide diversity of moth species. Carry out a monthly moth survey and submit records to the National Biodiversity Data Centre. This can be done using a mobile Heath Moth trap that runs of a small battery.

Also include a bat survey as all of the insects will attract feeding bats and these nocturnal creatures can eat up to 3500 insects each night.

We heard grasshoppers calling and this is sound that has disappeared from many parts of the countryside. There were lots of garden cross spiders and these have a large white cross marking on their abdomen.

The meadow is enhanced a mature roadside hedgrow and also a **Wodland edge** that consists of willow in the wetter parts and hazel in the dryer. Willow is one of the best native trees for wildlife and the spring catkins are packed full of pollen and nectar and hum with early bees in spring. Elderberry berries are aoft and easy to digest and large flocks of starlings will spend the day devouring the berries. They will then help spread the elder as they fly over the trees.

The leaves of hazel are eaten by the caterpillars of moths and the nuts are part of the Autumn diet of red squirrels and mice.

11. Habitat: Planting Scots Pine.

Many species of birds will **nest in the trees**. All levels of the woodlands are used. Ground nesting birds like wrens, robins and dunnocks use the lower parts often nesting in fallen branches. Great, blue and coal tit occupy the middle level while blackbirds and song thrushes tend to stick to the top level. Birds will find plenty of berries, nuts and caterpillars.

Benefits. Woodland edges are prime foraging ground for bats. Irelands biggest bat the leisirs will hunt above the tops of the trees. Brown long bats glean insects and spiders from the leaves and are very distinctive in flight with their very long ears.



You have already planted oak saplings and if I correctly remembered the acorns were gathered from a 700-year-old Oak tree growing on a nearby farm.

Tips. Scots pine is one of our native conifer trees and grows well on wet land. It produces abundant pinecones, and the seeds are eaten by birds and also by animals like red squirrels.

A small stream flows along one side of the meadow. This has a very clear gravel bed, and this is usually a great habitat for invertebrates and their larva. These tributaries are often nurseries for fish and eels.

The long grass had lots of **frogs** and while adult frogs spawn in water they spend most of the year in long damp grass.

Beehive in Meadow.



Song thrush.



Woodland Edge.



You have placed a beehive in the meadow, and they must be the luckiest bees alive with the flower rich meadow right on their doorstep. The bees will also help pollinate all of the flowers helping to keep the meadow healthy and in bloom.

As we left the meadow, we heard a Robin and Song thrush singing along the woodland edge. Both of these species are typical of woody areas and have also moved in gardens.

- 12 Habitat:** Our last stop was at the community nature habitat. This had the fanciest bug hotel that we had ever come across but is a great home for all manner of insects.

Very fancy bug hotel.



Very informative wildlife sign.



Recommendation. The vertical surface of the bordering wall could be utilized to grow wildlife friendly climbers. Bee-friendly climbing plants provide food for pollinators like bees, offer shelter and nesting sites for wildlife. They are a practical way to add colour and fragrance to vertical spaces while also supporting biodiversity by providing essential resources like nectar, pollen, and habitat throughout the seasons.

Benefits: This has to be fanciest bug hotel that we had ever come across but is a great home for all manner of insects.

Honeysuckle, Jasmine and ivy will all provide shelter, food and nesting locations for birds, insects and sometimes even bats.

Tips:

Provides essential food for pollinators: Climbing plants with nectar- and pollen-rich flowers are vital food sources for bees and other insects. Some plants, like ivy, are important late-season food providers when other plants have finished flowering.

- **Creates shelter and habitat:** Their dense foliage provides sheltered habitats for all kinds of wildlife, especially birds, and can offer important nesting and hibernation spots for insects.
- **Improves garden aesthetics:** They can transform dull or unattractive walls and fences into vibrant, living features, adding colour, fragrance, and a lush, jungle-like ambiance to a garden.
- **Enhances air quality:** Some climbing plants, such as ivy, are excellent at purifying the air.
- **Supports local ecosystems:** By attracting pollinators, these plants help improve the quality of fruits and vegetables in your garden and support the overall biodiversity of the local environment.
- **Increases growing space:** They allow you to utilize vertical surfaces, increasing growing space without taking up horizontal room in the garden.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Some helpful resources relating to the Hare's Corner and Plans for Nature can be found at www.theharescorner.ie. These resources are in development and will be added to over time.

[Nature designations, recorded archaeological monuments, protected structures.] - *delete if none present or state briefly what is present so participant aware. E.G. Adjacent to Lough Corrib SAC, part falls within notification zone for a Rath (archaeological monument), house is listed as a protected structure.*