



THE DUBLIN NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB

Honorary Secretary's Report 2022-23

This report covers the almost 13-month period since the last AGM, which was held online on 21st May 2022. During this period the Field Club has continued with its programme of field outings; it organised a series of monthly online presentations for the autumn and winter; and it reintroduced its botanical identification workshops on the first Saturday of the month from February 2023.

Our field excursions included a series of outings on Tuesdays to the coast of North Co. Dublin last summer; outings to Co. Wicklow to record plant species for the supplement to J. P. Bruncker's '*Flora of the County Wicklow*'; and a joint initiative with students from TCD, led by Declan Doogue, to explore the flora of Inner Dublin. Other excursions have visited a diverse range of habitats including: the shores of Blessington Lake; Mountlucas windfarm on cutaway bog; a fen with a fringe of *Juniperus* in Co. Offaly and a raised bog in Co. Meath; visits to the farms of members who 'farm with nature' in Co. Wicklow and Co. Kildare; rock pools at Seapoint and at Portmarnock; birds at Kilcoole and at Poolbeg; geology at Valleymount and at Portrane; and the traditional St. Stephen's Day walk in St. Anne's Park. We also held two joint outings with the Belfast Naturalists Field Club, to Carlingford in June 2022 and to the Boyne Valley in May this year. Altogether a total of 34 outings were held during the year, with 17 in or around Dublin city, and the other 17 in the surrounding counties. Thanks to all of the leaders, from within the Field Club and from outside, who volunteered their services and made the excursions a success.

The online presentations, which ran from last September through until March this year, covered a wide range of topics, such as: cutaway peatland habitats, our native conifers, some rare and less accessible plants, the experiences of a long time botanist, agri-policy for pollinators in Ireland and putting biodiversity data to good purpose.

Many thanks to our Honorary Vice President, Declan Doogue, for organising the series of Praeger Centre events on the first Saturday of each month. Over the period from February these have been primarily focused on plant identification, including *Equisetum*, *Taraxacum*, *Polypodium*, *Fumaria*, *Salix*, *Myosotis*, bryophytes, small white crucifers and conifers that reproduce in Ireland. The workshops have also introduced participants to the Olympus Tough TG-6 waterproof camera, books by Carl Linnaeus, extracts from early floras, and reviews of books of regional or historic interest.

The WhatsApp Group has gone from strength to strength throughout the past year, and now has 109 participants. It has become a very powerful medium for information exchange, with

members posting photographs or videos of plants, mammals, butterflies, bees and other insects or fungi that they have encountered, either at home or when they are out and about. Many thanks to Tom Minter for managing the group, as it continues to be a well-used platform for the sharing of knowledge and for learning.

Since the last AGM the DNFC Board has met on 7 occasions, with all of the meetings being held by teleconference using Zoom. Our new Constitution, which was approved by the Charities Regulator in April 2022, and adopted at the last AGM, was lodged with the Companies Registration Office and deemed valid and active by the Regulator on 22nd June last year. A new policy, on '*Managing Donations, Bequests and other Monetary Gifts*' was approved by the Board in November 2022; and the Board has also completed its compliance with the Charities Governance Code for the year ending in December 2022.

The terms of reference for both the Conservation Sub-committee and the Research and Publications Sub-committee were reviewed and updated during the year. The Conservation Sub-committee, which is chaired by Melinda Lyons, met on 4 occasions. The Sub-committee made a detailed submission to the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss in October; and also submitted their response to the draft of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan in November. The Research and Publications Sub-committee met in January to discuss the programme for the re-convened identification workshops; and the ongoing research projects in Howth, Co. Wicklow and Co. Meath. A new Funds Governance Sub-committee, that will oversee the management and disbursement of any donations received for specific purposes, was established by the Board in November.

I would like to thank our President, Sunniva Hanley, for deciding to continue with the Club Newsletter, first introduced when members were unable to meet up owing to Covid restrictions. The newsletter provides information on our outings, workshops and online presentations, and it is especially valuable to those members who are no longer able to enjoy getting out in the field.

Over the period since the last AGM, the Board has approved applications from 27 new members to join the Club, 9 of whom are Student Members; and at the end of calendar year 2022 we had a total of 163 members.

I would like to thank all of the presenters who have contributed to our series of online seminars; and all of our members who actively participate in the WhatsApp Group, who willingly share their knowledge and who help to keep the great educational tradition of the Field Club very much alive. Thank you.

Charles Shier
Hon. Secretary