



THE DUBLIN NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB

Club Newsletter

Winter 2022

Dear Members,

A busy autumn/winter programme is drawing to a close. You may enjoy these abstracts if you were unable to attend a particular field meeting or online presentation.

Field meetings.

Members who attended the outing to Massy's Estate were rewarded with a rich and varied selection of fungi in this woodland habitat including seven types of *Lactarius* (milk-caps), *Coprinus comatus* (lawyer's wig), two *Coprinellus* species (ink-caps) and a number of *Russula* species. Conifer identification, the vivid autumn foliage of deciduous trees and *Betula pendula* with its mycorrhizal partner, the birch bolete *Leccinum scabrum*, were features of the club's visit to Fernhill Park and Gardens. A late October walk began at St. Joseph's Church in the 'chapel village' of Valleymount. The church was built in 1803 and has an ornate front in the 'Mexican' style, this was constructed later reputedly by quarrymen who had returned from New Mexico. The outing took on a botanical theme as members walked along the shore of Blessington Reservoir before continuing to Ballyknockan. Quarrying began here in 1824 and provided granite (Golden Hill Granite) for many Dublin buildings including the GPO, Nelson's Pillar, St. Stephen's Green Arch, the RDS and many churches and banks.



Porcelain cap (*Mucidula mucida*), *Fuligo septica* Massy's Wood. Exposed alder roots Blessington.
Window by Harry Clarke, Valleymount.

Photographs P J Walls.

In November the focus shifted to the coastline when members attended a birdwatch outing in Kilcoole. A variety of geese, swans, ducks, waders and seabirds were seen including the Greylag, Wigeon, Greenshank, Red-throated divers and Whooper Swans. The highlight of the day were the Pink-footed Geese which are scarce visitors at Kilcoole.



Pink-footed goose(lft), Greylag goose (rt), Whooper swans, Red-throated divers. Photographs Pat Lenihan.

The next outing investigated the shoreline and rockpools in Scotsman's Bay, Sandycove. The pools yielded a treasure trove of hermit crabs, shrimp, beadlet anemones, snakelocks anemones, whelks, limpets and barnacles while autumn storms cast up many deep water algae, some covered with bryozoan mats.



Sea mat/Bryozoans *cf. Membranipora membranacea* on kelp, Water springtails *cf. Anurida maritima*, Polychaete worms *Spirorbis spirorbis*. Photographs Nessa Darcy.

Online presentations

In October some of the new habitats that develop on cutaway bogs were described. Common cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and bottle sedge (*Carex rostrata*) are the early colonisers and are then succeeded by other sedges. In the Lough Boora wetlands new habitats have developed in a mosaic fashion on cutaway bog. A pioneer calcareous grassland has formed at Turraun, Lough Boora, where an underlying glacial ridge was exposed, quaking grass (*Briza media*), lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) the food plant for the dingy skipper and common blue are found here. An acid habitat supports the bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*),

the cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and Sphagnum species. Orchid species recorded in these new habitats include marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), the early marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata* ssp. *coccinea*) and the narrow-leaved marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza traunsteinerioides*). The common crane, not seen in over three hundred years, has returned to the Lough Boora wetlands. The serrated wintergreen (*Orthilia secunda*) was found in 2014, at Ballydangan Bog, Roscommon.

In November an illustrated presentation placed our native conifers in an historical context that described how their populations increased, peaked and declined from the end of the ice-age to the present day and outlined how the pollen record contributed to this research. The microrefugium for Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris* L.) in Aughrim Swamp, Rockforest, County Clare, the protected ancient yew (*Taxus baccata*) woodlands at Reenadinna on the Muckross Peninsula, County Kerry were among the habitats described. In addition the mainly west of Ireland distribution of the prostrate juniper (*Juniperus communis* ssp. *nana*) was highlighted.

Images of many of Ireland's rarer plant species were shown in the final talk. These included Borrer's saltmarsh grass (*Puccinellia fasciculata*) in Booterstown and yellow archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*) by the Liffey. Golden samphire (*Limbarda (Inula) crithmoides*), sea wormwood (*Artemisia (Seriphidium) maritima*) and the yellow horned-poppy (*Glaucium flavum*) were photographed by the coast. Burren rarities the pyramidal bugle (*Ajuga pyramidalis*), squinancywort (*Asperula cynanchica*) and dropwort (*Filipendula vulgaris*).

The DNFC Conservation Sub-committee.

The sub-committee has made a submission to the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss. The document is available on the DNFC website.

A submission has been sent in response to the draft of the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan. The document is available on the DNFC website.

A second position paper on '*Protecting the threatened flora of old walls*' is at draft stage.

Thanks to all who volunteered to lead an outing or give an online presentation.

**The Board extend their warmest wishes to all members.
We look forward to seeing you in 2023.**