



## **THE DUBLIN NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB**

### **Honorary Secretary's Report 2025-26**

This report covers the 11-month period since the last AGM, which was held online on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025. During this past year the Field Club has continued with its three major activities: its programme of field outings; its botanical identification workshops on the first Saturday of each month; and its series of monthly online presentations during the autumn and winter months.

Field excursions to various locations in Co. Wicklow, to record plants for a supplement to the Flora of the county, were organised by our President, Alexis Fitzgerald. In July 2025, the BSBI Referee for *Rubus* in Northern England and Wales, David Earl, visited for a weekend of *Rubus* recording and identification in Wicklow and in several other counties. Other Field Club excursions visited a diverse range of habitats including: native and semi-native woodlands at Clara Vale and the Glen of the Downs in Co. Wicklow and Killinthomas in Co. Kildare; a Raised Bog at Ferbane, Co. Offaly and Blanket Bog in the Slieve Bloom Mountains; bryophytes at Glenasmole, Co. Dublin; tree walks in the Phoenix Park and at Kilmacurragh, Co. Wicklow; a joint visit with the Kildare Branch of Birdwatch Ireland to an extensively-managed farm near Maynooth; birdwatching at Rogerstown Estuary and at Kilcoole; invertebrates at Rathcoole, Co. Dublin; riparian vegetation at Ballymore Eustace; an autumn fungus foray at Donadea, Co. Kildare; an early spring coastal outing to Portmarnock; and the traditional St. Stephen's Day walk around the UCD campus at Belfield. Altogether a total of 24 outings were held during the year, with six of them in or around Dublin city, and the other 18 in the surrounding counties. I would like to thank all of the leaders, both from within the Field Club and from outside, who volunteered their time and expertise to lead these outings for the benefit of our members.

A great deal of thanks is due to our Honorary Vice President, Declan Doogue, for organising the series of Praeger Centre events on the first Saturday of each month. These workshops continued the Field Club's work on recording and identifying species of *Rubus* and *Taraxacum*. Other major groups studied included Gramineae, *Carex* and other members of the Cyperaceae, water plants, conifers, umbellifers, fern hybrids, wild roses and *Arbutus unedo*. Presentations at the workshops have also introduced participants to pre-Linnean botany; botanical latin; the flora of North and Mid-Wales; the division of the genus *Cupressus* into Old World and New World groups; the role of DNFC members in the Clare Island Survey; and a visit by the Royal Scottish Arboricultural Society to Ireland in 1897. Book reviews included Tadhg Ó Cuinn's "*Materia Medica*" (1415) and Thomas Pakenham's "*The Tree Hunters*" (2024).

Our series of online talks, which ran from last October through until March this year, covered a wide range of topics including: vascular species of plants named in the Flora Protection Order, the Native Woodland Trust, the *Irish Naturalists' Journal* 1925-2025, the development of the suburb of

Rathmines, Iberian invertebrates and a geographical perspective on the mapping of Ireland's hidden peatlands. The autumn season presentations were shared with the Board and members of the *Irish Naturalists' Journal*, in recognition of the journal's centenary.

Our Members' Day was held at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October. The Presidential Address paid homage to the humble bramble; while other presentations discussed *The Irish Naturalist*, the bryophytes of Slieve Gullion and the Sino-Himalayan giant tree-peony. Exhibits included a wide range of books and vegetation maps, cigarette cards displaying aspects of natural history, conifer cones, copies of *The Irish Naturalist* and the *Irish Naturalists' Journal* and photographs of DNFC personnel taken on significant Field Club occasions.

The DNFC WhatsApp Group, which currently has 114 members participating in it, has continued with regular postings throughout the year. It is an excellent platform for information exchange and for learning, and particularly useful to both newer members and to those who are no longer able to join in our excursions and workshops. Many thanks to Tom Minter for managing the group, and to all those who have posted photographs, reports, queries and answers during the year.

I would also like to thank Philip Grant for his continued stewardship of the Field Club's Facebook page, which posts information about our activities and also highlights other relevant events.

Since the last AGM the DNFC Board has met on 4 occasions, with all of the meetings being held by teleconference using Zoom. The Board approved updated terms of reference for both the Conservation and the Research and Publications Sub-committees. Thanks to Melinda Lyons for her work on developing a '*Risk Assessment Template*' and also an '*Accident Reporting Form*' for use in association with DNFC field outings. The Board has also completed its compliance with the Charities Governance Code for the year ending in December 2025.

Online meetings were held with members of the management committee of the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club to plan and approve the itinerary for a joint field outing to the Lough Ree Region in mid-June 2026.

Over the period since the last AGM the Board approved applications from 30 new members to join the Field Club, 3 of whom were Student Members; and at the end of calendar year 2025 we had a total of 175 members.

I would like to thank all of the presenters who contributed over the winter to our series of online seminars; all of the leaders who willingly led our outings to a wide range of interesting locations; and all of our members who actively participate in the WhatsApp Group, sharing their knowledge and expertise. Thank you.

*Charles Shier*

**Hon. Secretary**