

Biodiversity, which is short for biological diversity, is the variety of all life. This includes plants and animals and the areas where they live (also known as habitats). Biodiversity also includes humans, crops, stock, and even our pets!



Why is biodiversity important?

Biodiversity sustains all living things – providing us with food, fuels, medicines, and building materials while the processes of biodiversity help to provide the planet with fresh air, clean water, control of pests and diseases, pollination of crops and stabilisation of soil. Globally, biodiversity is disappearing, as habitats are destroyed or damaged across the world.

How is the biodiversity of County Wicklow protected?

The biodiversity of County Wicklow is protected by National and EU legislation (The Wildlife Act (1976 & 2000) and the EU Habitats and Birds Directives), and is also protected by Wicklow County Council through policies in the Wicklow County Development Plan.

Biodiversity of County Wicklow

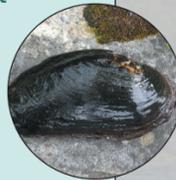
River valleys

Our rivers in County Wicklow are naturally acidic. They support such species as Irish Dipper, Kingfisher, Goosander, Brown Trout, Salmon and Otter. Daubenton's Bat and Grey Wagtail feed on the midges, stonefly, and mayfly which live in the river. Our rivers also act as major wildlife corridors connecting diverse habitats in our countryside.



Freshwater Pearl Mussel – the oldest animal in Wicklow

One of the most sensitive indicators of the water quality of our rivers is the Freshwater Pearl Mussel, found only in the cleanest watercourses. This is the County's oldest living animal – the Freshwater Pearl Mussel can live up to 120 years of age!



Woodlands in Wicklow

The wooded river valleys and glens of Wicklow are famous for their spring colours of Bluebells, Wild Garlic and Wood Anemone beneath a canopy of Sessile Oak, Ash, Hazel and Holly. Rarely seen birds such as the Jay and Wood Warbler are present. Many species of bats also roost and feed in our woods. Other mammals include deer, Badger, Fox and the rare and elusive Pine Marten. Our woods also support a rich variety of butterflies and moths such as the Poplar Hawk Moth and Peacock Butterfly.



New species of Bat for Ireland discovered in County Wicklow!

The first confirmed record of Brandt's Bat for Ireland was found in Glendalough in 2003.

The coastal beaches, dunes and rocky shore

The coastline of Co. Wicklow is dominated by soft coastal habitats such as the sand dunes of Brittas Bay and the expanse of shingle known as The Murrrough north of Wicklow Town. Pyramidal Orchid, Sea Bindweed, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Sea Holly and Restharrow are found growing between the Marram Grass of the dunes providing nectar for many insects.

Ireland's rarest breeding seabird nests at Kilcoole

The Little Tern Colony at The Breaches near Kilcoole forms one of the most important breeding colonies of our rarest breeding seabird in Ireland.



Unusual plants like Yellow-horned Poppy and Sea Kale can be found on The Murrrough, where Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher also nest. Offshore you may be lucky enough to see a Grey Seal or Risso's Dolphin.

Bray, Wicklow and Arklow Heads, all support a small colony of cliff breeding seabirds such as Kittiwakes, Razorbills, Guillemots, Shags, Gulls and Fulmars.



Man made habitats

Agricultural grassland and hedgerows

The lower lands of the County are principally used for grazing and silage production. An intimate network of fields, hedgerows, small woodlands and small wetlands provide homes for a variety of mammals and farmland birds such as the Wren, Robin, Dunnock and Yellowhammer.



Christian Osthoff

Conifer plantations

Wicklow is now the most wooded county in Ireland due to the creation of large conifer plantations planted in the 1950s. Conifer plantations form a refuge for our native Red Squirrel and support birds such as Crossbill, Siskin, Goldcrest, Long eared Owl, and Redpoll.



Buzzards make a welcome recovery in the County

The Buzzard, which was extinct in Ireland by the end of the 19th century, has begun to recolonise the county and often nests in conifers.



The Wicklow Reservoirs

Poulaphouca Reservoir and the Vartry Reservoir provide much of the eastern counties and the City of Dublin with their water supply. They also support breeding waterfowl such as Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Mallard, Mute Swan, Moorhen and a large night-time roost of Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Otter, deer, Badger and Fox are common along the shoreline and Common Frog and Common Newt are also present.

Buildings

Old farm buildings may offer a home to Barn Owls and several species of bats, while holes in old stone walls provide nesting habitats for Great Tits and other birds.



Who is responsible for protecting biodiversity in County Wicklow?

We all have a responsibility to conserve biodiversity. Statutory bodies have responsibility for developing policies and legislation, while every person has a responsibility to conserve biodiversity in their homes and local areas.

an action of the
 County Wicklow Heritage Plan

For more information contact:
 Heritage Officer,
 Wicklow County Council,
 County Buildings,
 Wicklow Town,
www.wicklow.ie/heritage.

Text by Faith Wilson. Design by Michael O'Clery.



Internationally and nationally important habitats or species within the county are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs). Special Protection Areas (SPAs) protect internationally important wildfowl sites. Wicklow Mountains National Park and Nature Reserves such as Deputy's Pass and Glen of the Downs are state owned, while the East Coast Nature Reserve at Newcastle is owned by BirdWatch Ireland.

Much of our agricultural land, hedgerows, small woodlands and wetlands are managed under the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS), the Native Woodland Scheme and the NeighbourWood Scheme.

The habitats of County Wicklow and species they support

Uplands – blanket bogs, wet and dry heath, mountain lakes and cliffs

The Wicklow Uplands form the largest unbroken area of high ground in Ireland reaching their highest point at Lugnaquilla at 925m. These granite and metamorphic mountains were subsequently shaped by glaciation during the Ice Age.

These mountain plateaus are now covered by blanket bog, wet heath, dry heath, upland acidic grasslands and rocky habitats such as cliffs and scree slopes. Carnivorous bog plants such as sundews trap insects to supplement their diet! Raven, Ring Ouzel, Red Grouse and birds of prey such as Hen Harrier, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon which prey on Meadow Pipits and Skylarks are found in these upland areas. Our wild deer (Sika/Red Deer hybrids), the Irish Hare and Viviparous Lizard may also be observed.



Dick Coombes

Extinction in our mountain lakes

The Arctic Char is a unique fish species, which has been present in Ireland since the last Ice Age. Formerly found in Lough Tay, Lough Dan and Glendalough it has recently become extinct in these lakes due to acidification. Investigations are currently taking place, in the hopes of reintroducing this species to County Wicklow at a future time.



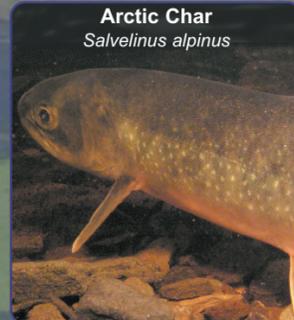
Biodiversity of Co. Wicklow



Common Spotted-orchid
Dactylorhiza fuchsii
Nuacht bhallach



Irish Hare
Lepus timidus hibernicus
Giorria



Arctic Char
Salvelinus alpinus



Poplar Hawkmoth
Laothoe populi



Mountain Ash
Sorbus aucuparia
Caorthann



Grey Héron
Ardea cinerea
Corr Réisc



Yellow Iris
Iris pseudacorus
Feileastrum



Otter
Lutra lutra
Madra uisce



Risso's Dolphin
Grampus griseus
Deilf liath



Badger
Meles meles
Broc



Guillemot
Uria aalge
Foracha



Yellow-horned Poppy
Glaucium flavum
Caillichin na trá



Bluebell
Hyacinthoides non-scripta
Coinnle corra



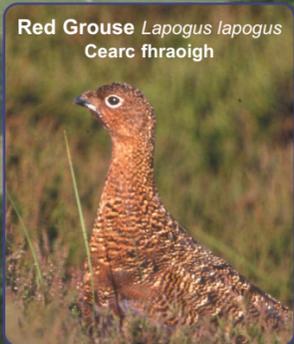
Ringed Plover
Charadrius hiaticula
Feadóig chladaighuisce



Kingfisher
Alcedo atthis
Cruidin



Common Newt
Triturus vulgaris



Red Grouse
Lapogus lapogus
Cearc fhraoigh



Buzzard
Buteo buteo
Clamhán



Little Tern
Sterna albifrons
Geabhróg bheag



Freshwater Pearl Mussel
Margaritifera margaritifera



Jay
Garrulus glandarius
Scréachóg



Peacock Butterfly
Inachis io



Red Deer
Cervus elaphus
Fia rua



Barn Owl
Tyto alba
Scréachóg reilige



Long-eared Owl
Asio otus
Ceann cait

