



CRANN

AUTUMN/WINTER
ISSUE 2022 | NO:116

€4 (STG £3)

Ireland's tree magazine



Biomass Required

Sawdust | Woodchip | Pulp wood | Forestry thinnings & residues

Bord na Móna has a substantial annual biomass requirement to fuel its power plant at Edenderry Co. Offaly. The company is offering suppliers a continuous year round offtake with sustainable contracts.

For further details please contact:	Kevin Whelehan 087 1732448 kevin.whelehan@bnm.ie	Joseph Spollen 087 965 4645 joseph.spollen@bnm.ie	Ciara Wynne 087 185 3647 ciara.wynne@bnm.ie
--------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------



Bord na Móna

A Greener Future for All

Coillte cares for Ireland's forests sustainably. As our country seeks to combat climate change, we'll do more. Our ambition is to create new forests, manage our existing forests for greater carbon capture and provide more habitats to enhance biodiversity. We'll support the creation of new homes by delivering sustainable Irish wood products. And we'll increase the number of beautiful forest recreation spaces for everyone to enjoy.

www.coillte.ie #greenerfuture4all

COILLTE

PATRON
Michael D Higgins
President of Ireland
EDITOR
Gabriel Bruton
EDITORIAL COMMITTEE
Crann Directors
PRINTING
GPS Colour Graphics
Ltd, Belfast

CRANN BOARD CHAIRMAN
Peadar Collins,
SECRETARY
Diarmuid McAree
BOARD MEMBERS
Peadar Collins,
Jess Bolton,
George Cunningham,
PJ Fitzpatrick,
Diarmuid McAree,
Marie Louise O'Donnell,
Ercus Stewart,
Joan Whelan,
Mark Wilkinson
NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS
John Feehan,
William Merivale.
ADMINISTRATOR
Marguerite
Arbuthnot-O'Brien
CRANN HEAD OFFICE:
People for Trees (Ireland)
Ltd. trading as Crann,
P.O. Box 860, Celbridge,
Co. Kildare.
Tel/Fax: (01) 627 5075
Email: info@crann.ie
Website: www.crann.ie



Cover photo
Quinn's Road,
Shankhill, Dublin 18

Photo credits: Orla Farrell,
George Cunningham,
Diarmuid McAree, Emma
Reeves, Alistair MacRobert
Piotr Łaskawski,
Ronan Lynch, Sean
McGinnis, Ger Clarke

Reasons to be cheerful, one, two, tree

THE RECENTLY announced proposals for the future of Ireland's forest strategy have been a long time coming but they are indeed welcome as is the fact that funding has been secured to pay for them. If the stated aspirations can be quickly achieved then one must not complain. As I write, the document is currently out for both public consultation and EU approval so there could well be further alterations. Overall, however, the proposals have been widely welcomed by farmers, interested groups and the many professionals within the forest industry. It will hopefully restore the confidence that had been lost among landowners to plant for the future.

While many of the proposals deal with aiding an increase in the planting of native broadleaves, there is also a clear recognition of the urgent need to grow more conifers and replace the current overuse of concrete in the building industry with a higher percentage of home-grown timber. In this regard two important changes are proposed, the first and perhaps the most important is the reinstatement of the 20 year premium for farmers who plant, secondly the premium rates are to be increased substantially. Both these actions are game changers and should deliver a resurgence of interest in planting. When launching the new proposals, Minister Hackett stated that "Planting trees is one of the most effective methods of tackling climate change as well as contributing to improved biodiversity and water quality. One of my main aims is to re-engage farmers in afforestation. I'm delighted therefore to be proposing a new 20-year premium term exclusively for farmers, as well as introducing a new small-scale native woodland scheme which will allow farmers to plant up to one hectare of native woodland on farmland and along watercourses outside of the forestry licensing process."

This is all good and sensible as is the section on regulation and legislation where the aim is to make it quicker and easier for public and private landowners to get involved in creating sustainable woodland. If that can be achieved then we should see an end to the appalling delays in securing planting approval and felling licences etc that have destroyed our targets in the past.

While annual premium rates are to be increased, 20 year premiums are of course inadequate for anyone growing broadleaves, given the time scale involved in waiting for a financial return from trees such as oak but on a brighter note, CCF or continuous cover forestry is also included in the proposed grant schemes. This is most welcome as more and more woodland owners like myself are converting to this system of management. Non farmers might not be aware of the importance of annual premium payments. They are an essential element in the overall scheme in which growing trees can become viable and are to provide, at least partially, the income lost when woodland is established and replaces livestock, cereal crops etc.

The introduction of a small scale native woodland scheme allows landowners to plant small copses and shelter belts without enduring the tedious and lengthy procedures that excluded such small woods from past schemes. Hopefully we will see many such mini-woods appear in the future. When linked by hedgerows and located utilising field corners and headlands, such plantings are of immense benefit to wildlife and the broader environment. I would have liked however to have seen an inclusion of some non-native species also, given the current threats to our small numbers of native trees such as ash from pests and diseases. Also, the inclusion of edge of woodland species such as hawthorn, holly, hazel and others would further enhance the diversity and the benefits to wildlife and the environment in general.

The document covers virtually every aspect of establishing and managing woodland and all details can be accessed on the Teagasc website <https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/news/2022/dafm-announces-new-forestry-supports.php>.

Overall, the proposals provide good reason for optimism for the future of forestry in Ireland. Let us hope the words and aspirations are now converted in to action.

Joe Barry
Joe Barry is a former Crann board-member and a Forestry landowner



[cranntrees](https://www.instagram.com/cranntrees) [Crann - Trees for Ireland](https://www.facebook.com/Crann-Trees-for-Ireland) [@TreesForIreland](https://twitter.com/TreesForIreland)

OUR MISSION: To enhance the environment of Ireland through planting, promoting, protecting and increasing awareness about trees and woodlands.

The views expressed by contributors to the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Board of Crann or its committees. We welcome all articles on trees and related topics. Crann Magazine is the periodical publication of People for Trees (Ireland) Ltd, trading as Crann. Crann is a voluntary, non-profit organisation dedicated to planting trees and protecting Ireland's woodlands. Crann ISSN 1649-5217 Registered Charity No: CHY13698

CRANN CONTENTS

Autumn/ Winter | 2022

- 4** **Giants Grove**
Sean McGinnis explains why Giants Grove is much more than just a forest

- 6** **Parasites in a pear tree**
Mistletoe is probably on Santa's naughty list and Emma Reeves tell us why

- 8** **Keep calm and head to the forest**
Vera Steinberg of FOREST EUROPE on how to protect and sustainably manage Europe's forests

- 9** **Crann/Coillte photo competition**
The winning entries from around Ireland and beyond in our annual contest

- 16** **Sustaining the natural world**
Joe Barry sees that little changes to land use can help accommodate the return of wildlife

- 18** **The joy of trees in a small garden**
The pleasure that trees can bring to a small space is something George Cunningham enjoys

- 20** **Encounter with an ancient woodland**
Spending a long time alone in a Canadian forest helped Patrick McCusker understand it

- 24** **Books**
George Cunningham looks at the book that sets the standard for lovers of trees and their history

- 28** **Making sense from the silence**
Lockdown coincided with major changes in Ger Clarke's life but a radio appeal helped him refocus

- 30** **Culture morning, noon and night**
Orla Farrell recounts the latest Easy Treesie adventures nationwide



- 35** **Poetry**
Some seasonal poems by Anto Kerins

- 36** **The Speaking Tree**
Aidan French examines the relationship between humans and trees

CRANN Membership applications

Ireland was once entirely covered with woodland. It is now the least wooded country in Europe. CRANN is Ireland's leading tree organisation, uniting people with a love of trees. CRANN's mission is to enhance the environment of Ireland through planting, promoting, protecting and increasing awareness about trees and woodlands. CRANN is pursuing this mission through contributions to urban & rural planting projects, through its schools programme and through this magazine.

Members receive:

- A copy of CRANN magazine.
- Invitations to join with other members on a variety of woodland walks and talks.
- Access to advice and information about trees in Ireland.
- Most important of all, by joining CRANN you will be helping secure a future for Ireland's rich heritage of trees and woods.

Annual Membership rates:	Unwaged/DAPs	€25
	Individual	€35
	Family	€45
	Life	€700
	Corporate	€100

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____

Email: _____

Type of Membership: _____

I enclose a chq/postal order for: € _____

Please send completed application form with payment to:
CRANN, P.O. Box 860, Celbridge, Co. Kildare.
Payment option: via PayPal www.crann.ie
CRANN is an Irish non-profit organisation promoting and planting broadleaf trees.

Time to reach out and grow Crann



PJ Fitzpatrick, Diarmuid McAree, Orla Farrell, Marguerite Arbuthnot O'Brien and Peadar Collins at the Crann AGM in the Botanic Gardens

AT THE 2022 Crann AGM, held in the National Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin, Crann Chairman Peadar Collins asked the board to seriously consider the appointment of a development officer to aid the progression and implementation of the board's initiatives.

Speaking at the end of his first year as chairman Peadar said that 2022 was a very busy time and that Crann's projects were delivering but there are areas that will need attention in the years ahead. The chairman thanked each of the directors for their unique contribution, in particular Marie Louise and Diarmuid for advancing an international dimension to Crann with meetings between board members and relevant tree experts in Latvia and Forest Europe.

Orla Farrell told the meeting that the Easy Treesie project is one third of the way to its final destination of planting one million trees

The secretary's report was given by Crann Administrator Marguerite Arbuthnot-O'Brien with an overview of Crann's activity in the past year:

sharing seed collection and lanting ideas for online workshops and interaction. Schools have organised fundraisers in aid of Crann such as, fancy dress using recycled items, sponsored walks and handmade eco Christmas decorations.

National Tree Day

Crann started October with National Tree Day supported by the Tree Council of Ireland and Coillte. There were many tree planting parties arranged with school children far and wide. Orla Farrell was busy organising the distribution of trees to various locations for schools and community groups

Easy Treesie

The Crann Easy Treesie project has become even more popular, especially with corporates wanting to do their bit for the environment through their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.

The project appreciates the ongoing support

of funders, facilitators, interns and volunteers. It also has partnered with the GAA Green Clubs initiative who have committed to planting 45,000 trees with their communities nationwide.

Tidy Towns

Covid also had a huge impact on Tidy Towns groups countrywide. However, every county in Ireland has returned to take up their tools and get back into action.

Our TT advice clinics are popular again, as groups welcome the opportunity to improve their local communities and to attract new members into their hands-on environmental activities.

Giants Grove Project:

Phase II site preparation is on target thanks to a specific donation received for that purpose. With the ongoing climate change issues this project is most definitely becoming a conservation project as well as a tribute to Ireland's diaspora.

An imaginative sponsorship was received from Trinity Business School, who sponsored 18 trees for 18 Faculties. We look forward to organising ecotherapy forest walks for the staff and students in the coming months.

We thank one and all, including the county councils who facilitate a lot of the tree planting events and endorse our work and the individuals who contact us to lend a helping hand.

We welcome the funding that we receive from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and also the Irish Environmental Network (IEN) who have continued to be supportive of the work that we do.

Crann Schools Programme:

With Covid restrictions easing the Crann Schools Programme had a slow return to physical interaction. However, we can see a more normal response to booking visits since the schools returned in September 2022. These environmental education workshops are followed by tree planting with pupils on the school grounds or designated community space.

Crann's Environmental Education expert, Dale Treadwell, continues to be popular with his design and building of education pods, his

A Christmas Box

As a thank you to Crann members for their continued support, Crann director Dr George Cunningham will sponsor a box of books for a member, couriered (foc) to anywhere in the ROI (box of about 50 new books; diverse topics; fiction and non fiction)

All you have to do is send your email or mobile no to georgecunningham@eircom.net or to 0877926991, before 17th December 2022 and you will be entered in a draw for the Christmas box.

What is the Giants Grove?

It's much more than you might think!

By SEAN MCGINNIS

THE Giants Grove project is a partnership between Crann – Trees for Ireland, and Birr Castle Estate. On the surface it's basically an eight hectare (20 acre) green-field afforestation project in the heart of Ireland that was launched by President Higgins in 2017, who also planted its first tree. But the Giants Grove is so much more than just your average forest, it's a lot more special than you might think.

The Trees

The Giants Grove is a Redwood forest, and it's the largest Redwood forest outside of the United States. It is home to both the Giant Redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) and the Coastal Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), the most massive and tallest tree species on Earth. While Redwoods are common in parks and gardens, a Redwood forest, especially a newly planted Redwood forest, is very rare indeed. Each tree has been planted at a luxurious six–10 metres spacing which will give them plenty of room to develop on their 1000-year road to maturity at Birr. And they won't get lonely either, because the large space between the giants has been planted with a diverse mix of native Irish trees, including oak, birch, alder, holly, hazel, willow, rowan, spindle, yew, and guelder rose. Of course, these natives will eventually be shaded-out over time by the faster growing foreigners, but not for 50 years or so, and the wildlife they attract, and the biodiversity and

habitats they create, will add so much more to the project.

Protecting Redwoods

Climate change is a tremendous threat worldwide, but the Redwood species are particularly vulnerable. As temperatures and rainfall levels change in their native California, the Redwoods cannot adapt to the new norms and their very futures are in doubt. In the past few years alone, it is estimated that up to 20pc of the Giant Redwood population has been wiped out by forest fires caused by climate related droughts. While Ireland is also experiencing climate change, our current climate is ideal for Redwoods, and the Grove at Birr will provide some additional protection for both species long into the future.

The Irish Diaspora

Surprisingly, recent scientific analysis has revealed that Redwoods were native to Ireland before the ice age about three million years ago. The world has changed a lot since then, and they cannot now be considered as 'native' Irish species, but their history should not be forgotten. The Redwoods long absence from Ireland reminds us of so many Irish sons and daughters who had no choice but to leave our shores, and their return to Birr symbolises our hopes that the Irish around the world, or their descendants, will someday return home themselves, even if only for a short visit.

Carbon Sink

Redwoods are some of the best trees on the planet for carbon sequestration. Considering their fast growth rates, their very long lifespan, and their potential height and girth, Redwoods



can store up to five times more carbon than any other type of forest. Where an average person in the developed world uses around 520 tons of carbon in their lifetime, a big Redwood, like the famous General Sherman, has soaked up over 1,400 tons in its life. Studies have found that mature Redwoods store more carbon in their bark than what was found in entire neighbouring trees. Over the next 100 years, the Redwoods in the Giants Grove will soak up over 21,000 metric tonnes of carbon from our atmosphere, and in their lifetimes will store more carbon than 250,000 average trees. Nothing takes so much carbon, and gives so much habitat, as a Giant Redwood.

Living Memorial

Every Redwood in the Giants Grove, and the Giants Grove itself, is a living memorial. Each tree will be sponsored, and every sponsor can dedicate their tree as they wish and add a few words to a label that will remain with its tree in perpetuity. Every Giant in the Grove, and the land the Grove is in, is legally protected – it cannot be cut down, cannot be sold, few things in life are as secure. What a beautiful way to be remembered! Who knows, maybe someday, some of the trees at Birr will be as famous as the most famous Redwoods today – Hyperion, the tallest Redwood, or General Sherman, the largest Redwood.

Diverse Habitat

The Giants Grove is not a park, it's a managed wilderness. We planted the Redwoods, and

the natives in-between, and apart from some grass-cleaning and filling-in we basically let nature take its course. It might appear a little unkempt or messy, but it's a haven and a heaven for a vast range of species that have made it their home. Apart from the 12 species of trees planted, there's a huge variety of flowers, grasses, mushrooms, mosses and lichens, insects, spiders, birds, and mammals present. There's species diversity, age diversity, structural diversity, and this diversity is because the Giants Grove isn't a habitat, it's a range of habitats. And it's only 5 years old.

And there's so much more

The Giants Grove is many things. It's a classroom where we sometimes teach a little, but mostly learn a lot. It's become an international focus with visits from the Save the Redwood League, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC International), and the International Dendrology Society, among others, and the interest is growing daily.

And the Giants Grove is also a charity. There are no profits, no fancy business trips, or corporate lunches, no mileage, and no subsistence expenses. Much of the work is voluntary, and we do what we can with what we've got, because really, it's all about the Redwoods. And it always will be.

Your Giants Grove stories

If you would like your own personal Giants Grove story to be told, please get in touch and mail info@giantsgrove.ie

Well done to our very own Dr Joan Whelan

Crann board member Joan Whelan has graduated with her PhD from DCU on October 26, 2022. Having retired as a primary school principal in late 2016, she embarked on her PhD in 2017.

The title of her thesis was *An Ethnographic Study of Forest School: Relational Caring Pedagogy in an Irish Primary School*. Joan is now working as a postdoctoral researcher in DCU and looking forward to sharing the findings of her study about this emerging approach to getting children out into nature. **Congratulations Dr Joan.**



Stephen Lombard RIP

It was with great sadness that the Crann Board learned of the passing of Stephen Lombard RIP. Stephen (formerly of Rathbeggan, Co. Meath more recently living in Llíber, Alicante, Spain) died peacefully at Denia Hospital, November 22 2022.

Over the years, we were fortunate to have Stephen write some excellent articles for Crann Magazine. With his passion for trees, his research and his skill in writing he brought the wonders of the Spanish trees, customs and countryside to the Crann readers with a wonderful diversity of topics. He was a loyal friend and proud supporter of Crann, he will be sadly missed. Crann wishes to extend deepest sympathy to Stephen's family and friends. May he Rest In Peace.



Stephen and his partner Barbara

Some of Stephen's articles as featured in Crann Magazine, include: The Kerry connection: *Arbutus Unedo*, Traveller's tales: Saving the Saguaro, Truffles or trotters?, Put a cork in it, A toast to Oak, The tree of forks, Believe it or not a fig called Donegal and The almonds of Costa Blanca.

Apologies

In the Crann Spring/Summer 2002 issue, The article 'A climate for trees' was written by Aidan J. ffrench. Unfortunately Aidan's biog was left out. Aidan is a landscape architect and past-president of the Irish Landscape Institute. He was project manager and lead author for dlr's new Trees and Urban Forestry Strategy 2022-2031. He recently retired from the county council



Beware the parasites in a pear tree

It might be festive but it's probably on Santa's naughty list EMMA REEVES looks at the dangerous brute that is mistletoe

MISTLETOE, *Druvalis*, *Viscum album* is synonymous with Christmas. Most, will quickly recognise the plant and either avoid it for fear of an awkward romantic advance or take advantage of the tradition! On closer inspection the mistletoe at the office party is probably plastic and holds no romantic power. Mistletoe is not a very common plant around Ireland. The National Biodiversity Data Centre has only 42 records in 14 10km squares, that's not a lot really. It is not a native, it was probably introduced to Ireland already on fruit-tree stock from England, it is often associated with old orchards and not really with native woodland, as one would expect. Mistletoe does not grow in Ireland in commercially viable amounts so it is imported from England and Europe. It is extremely expensive for very small amounts so most of us have grown accustomed to artificial mistletoe sporting unmelting snow that is available in every pound shop. This is probably for the best, because the plant itself doesn't live up to its festive image, it's on top of Santa's 'Naughty list' because it can be a poisonous brute. At the same time, mistletoe can be an important feature of an ecosystem, enhancing biodiversity, a component of nutrient cycling, and its seeds, leaves and fruits are a food source to a range of bird, mammal and invertebrate life. Yeah, but...

Firstly, Mistletoe is a parasite! More specifically a hemi-parasite, a watered down version of a parasite. There are plenty of hemi-parasites in the Irish flora including Eyebright, Red bartsia, Lousewort and Yellow Rattle,

Dr Emma Reeves, who lives near Navan, has a PhD in botany from UCD



typically on grass roots. A hemi-parasite is a plant which may obtain some or all of its nutrition by invading the tissues of another plant species. There are two types of hemi-parasite, those which invade the root tissues and those which invade the aerial parts.

Mistletoe can invade the aerial parts of up to 400 different deciduous tree species but it has its favourites such as pear, apple, lime, poplar and hawthorn. There are over 100 different species of the genus *viscum*, only *Viscum album* is found in Europe, far greater species diversity is found in Africa, Southern Asia and South American. Far from missing a trick on the limited Irish distribution of this plant we might be dodging a bullet. *Viscum album* is considered one of the most significant biotic factors limiting commercial tree growth in many parts of Europe. Mistletoe infections have been associated with reduced tree vitality, shoot die off, reduction in quality and volume of yields. In the Romanian Carpathian, 42pc of the Silver Fir are affected.

Typically, climate change rears its ugly head in the story of European mistletoe. The minimum winter temperature governs the distribution of mistletoe in high altitude regions of Europe. As minimum winter temperatures have steadily increased over the last century so has the range of mistletoe, increasing in altitude by 200 metres between 2009 and 2011.

The word mistletoe is derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'Shit on a Stick', which describes

very clearly the start of the mistletoe lifecycle. Birds such mistle thrush, Black cap and Fieldfare gorge on the seeds of mistletoe contained in the shiny spherical berries. About 100 berries should suffice a bird's calorific intake for the day. They pass through the bird's intestinal tract and end up deposited on another tree at some distance from the parent plant. They can also get stuck to the foraging bird due to the presence of 'viscum' a natural adhesive in the globose berries, eventually they drop off and stick to the aerial parts of un-infested trees. The seeds go on to germinate and develop independently from the tree on the bark, but over time develop the haustoria, its physical connection with the tree. This tissue invades the cambium of the host tree and a one way transfer system of nutrients, minerals and water begins. Mistletoe leaves contain chlorophyll and can photosynthesise, producing some of its own carbohydrate but the reliance on the host tree for water prevents it from living independently. Its methods of dispersal are so effective that the plant has become a villain in commercial and natural habitats on the continent. Plants infected with several spherical mistletoe bushes often become so weakened by it that they succumb to secondary infections of viral, fungal or insect origin. By comparison, should we really be complaining about ivy?

Secondly, when decorating with mistletoe make sure to either wear gloves or wash your hands afterwards. Some sources suggest that you shouldn't use it if you've pets! All its parts are poisonous. Symptoms include gastric pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Cardiovascular collapse has been recorded also. So hang it out of the ceiling for drama at the Christmas party but don't dress your Christmas pud with it.



Keep calm and head to the forest

From being a passionate hiker to policy advisor

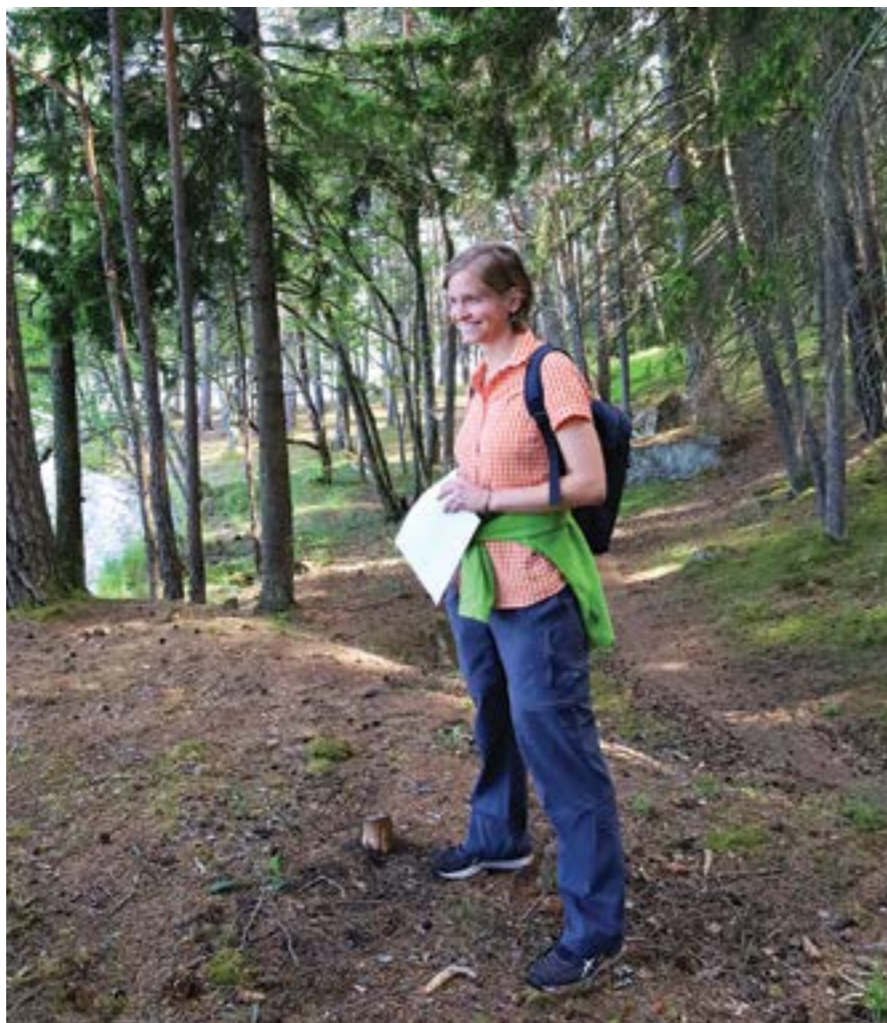
by VERA STEINBERG

MY NAME is Vera, and I grew up near the Black Forest in Germany, one of the most beautiful areas in the world - at least I think so. The Black Forest has a wonderful mix of forests, mountains, vineyards, and the river Rhine. From a very early age I felt a connection to the mountains and being outdoors.

When I am hiking my mind is calm; it is almost like meditating. I can walk endless hours all by myself, not talking, just dreaming and thinking. And of course, I like hikes in the forest. For me forests are the most fascinating of all ecosystems. There is so much to explore, so many unknown interconnections and, above all, they are just beautiful.

So, it was soon clear to me that I would like to work with nature - and forests! - in the broadest sense. I decided to study for a Master of Science in Forest Ecology and Management. It was the perfect mix of sciences, nature and field trips. After my degree I started to work for the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food in Bonn as a project manager for international research projects. Then I changed positions and worked for the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, supporting Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Since 2021, I have worked in the FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit in Bonn, where Germany is chair until the end of 2024.

FOREST EUROPE is an informal process on a high political level. It holds ministerial conferences on the protection of forests in Europe and develops common strategies for its 46 signatories on how to protect and sustainably manage their forests. Here I lead the work stream "Green Jobs and Forest Education." This includes research and campaigns regarding green jobs, which are getting more attention as a key component of a better future for both ecosystems and people. For me, it is a great mix of different aspects: policy advice,



Vera Steinberg hiking in the woods, where she is happiest

protecting and using forests, bringing people together, research and communication. We also established an Expert Group on Green Jobs, where Diarmuid McAree is a valued member. This Expert Group proposed a definition for "green forest jobs," which reads as follows: "green forest jobs provide forest-related goods and services while meeting the requirements of sustainable forest management and decent work." The signatories of Forest Europe at the last Expert Level Meeting adopted the definition in August 2022. This was a great step towards achieving a common understanding of what we actually mean when we say "green forest job".

My colleagues also work on very challenging and interesting topics such as the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. We also promote the forest risk knowledge mechanism to enhance cooperation, exchange and coordination between key stakeholders on forest risks such as forest fires and the response towards emerging issues and communication. It never gets boring and I am very fortunate to work with such a diverse and fantastic team.

For more information on our events and campaigns, please see www.foresteuropa.org or follow us on social media: www.linktr.ee/foresteuropa.



SNAP SNAP AWAY

WE THOUGHT that we were going to be down on entries

this year, but I'm glad to report that our trusty photographers didn't let us down and just before the date for final entries we got lots in. Most of them stayed true to the theme; this is important if the photographer is hoping to be in the prizes, you won't win if you take a fabulous snap of a rocket launch in Florida!

Phone photographs

We got some useful photos in the phone section with the winning one - Natures Wreath ticking all the boxes, well composed and exposed with good composition and colour saturation. This lovely photograph will surely make its way into the 2023 Crann Calendar.

Runner-up in the phone group is 'Avenue', a well composed

tree-lined avenue stretching into the distance. Sharp focus does the trick.

Camera photographs

In first place is 'Lone tree; taken at Sunset', this dramatic shot with magnificent saturation is a natural winner. By way of a tip to the photographer I would suggest that centering the tree on the Sun would have improved the composition just a tad to the left, about a metre or so would do it.

In second place a photograph taken on the mainland of Europe, a first for this competition. 'Misty Forest in Arhnam', the Netherlands (my uncle Dick was there in 1944), quite a haunting photo with lovely rich colours on the forest floor while the tree tops disappear into the mist.

Third place went to 'Tree Sun'; making good use of the late evening light to bring out the

tortured contours of this venerable beech tree. First light in the morning or late sun in the evening is the perfect time to images.

This highly commended image of an old orchard (I think) in Maynooth is a super record of a special place. Its nicely composed with good sharpness and exposure.

Special mentions; are due to the following photographs any one of which deserves a prize. 'Sunbeams in Cruagh Woods', lovely sunbeams and an interesting network of paths lead your eye into the picture.

'Trees at Mount Usher', is an image with wonderful colours. Glenabo Woods is another misty photo, I think the path disappearing into the mist makes you want go there.

Dsc 6489 What colour! I'm not what this shrub tree is, the leaves look a bit large to be a hornbeam; if the photographer hadn't cut off the top this photo would have

been much higher placed, it only goes to show how important composure and cropping are to a good picture.

Double Delight; a fabulous scots pine crowned with, not one, but two rainbows!

Finally, an image that I really like Winter at Powerscourt; I'm not sure if we are looking at a juvenile beech tree holding onto its leaves, or a manipulated image? I'll settle for the former because I like it so much.

Mark Wilkinson

The 2022 Crann/Coillte Photographic Competition is sponsored by Coillte, Ireland's largest commercial forestry and land solutions company.



Judges
Mark Wilkinson, LIPF
Marie Louise O'Donnell



THE WINNER of this year's Crann/Coillte Photographic competition is Dubliner, Denis Grehan. Denis has been taking pictures for as long as he can remember and about 12 years ago he joined the Dublin Camera Club to help him on his journey with a camera.

The winning picture was taken with a Fuji XT2 near Slane while he was out for a spin on his motorbike and Denis says of the image, 'It's good, but it could have been perfect'.

Well done, Denis.

FIRST PRIZE €250

LONE TREE

Photographer: **Denis Grehan**

Location: Boyne Valley near Slane

2nd PRIZE €100
MISTY FOREST Bernadette Crawford
Location: Arhnam, the Netherlands



THIRD PRIZE €50
TREE SUN Jimmy Freeley
Location: Kilmacurragh arboretum, Wicklow

HIGHLY COMMENDED
ANCIENT APPLE ORCHARD Liz Roulston
Location: Maynooth, Kildare





RUNNER UP
SUNBEAMS IN CRUAGH WOODS
Ewa Poplawska Location: Dublin mountains

RUNNER UP
DOUBLE DELIGHT Niki McGrath
Location: St Kearns, Saltmills, Co. Wexford



RUNNER UP
GLENBO WOODS Helen Kiely
Location: Glenbo Woods, Cork



RUNNER UP
AUTUMN IN MOUNT USHER
Berni Murphy
Location: Mount Usher, Wicklow

RUNNER UP
WINTER AT POWERSCOURT Maria McCormick
Location: Powerscourt, Wicklow



PHONE CAMERAS

NATURE'S WREATH **Elizabeth Murphy**
Location: Dumboyne, Meath



AVENUE
Kathy Kerins
Aoife Costello
Location: Maynooth, Kildare



This has been a bumper year for mammals like the hedgehog that have been absent for so long. Photo: Piotr Łaskawski

Inset: Holly and Ivy boughs were said to provide shelter for the woodland spirits during the mid-winter. Photo: Alistair MacRobert

Sustaining the natural world

By JOE BARRY

ONE AUTUMN afternoon, I heard one of our terriers barking in a very agitated manner. Hurrying to see what was wrong, I found the cause of her alarm was a hedgehog with five babies, about the size of my fist, all curled up tightly in defensive balls. They were in a small shelter belt close to the farmyard and not having seen a hedgehog for many decades, I was delighted at this discovery and immediately placed the family in a box and moved them to safety in an area of adjoining terrier free woodland. Hopefully they will quickly gain sufficient weight to hibernate and see them through the winter. This was one more sighting of wild animals that were once common on my farm but had become very scarce in recent times.

However, it has been a bumper year for encountering mammals that have been absent for so long and many are making a comeback. Red squirrels have returned since the greys departed, presumably thanks to the pine martens which are now a frequent if fleeting sight and bird numbers have definitely increased. Would any of this have happened if I had not planted woods, hedgerows and other semi wild habitat? My house is also covered with various creepers which sparrows and other small birds have taken over as a high-rise residency and a variety of both evergreen and deciduous plants are clinging to the walls. Some are flowering and are beloved by bees in spring and summer and in the autumn the birds feast on the fruit.

Ivy is of course excellent in providing nectar for bees and its late maturing berries sustain field fares and thrushes in winter and early spring. It is so easy to create valuable habitat with just a little careful planting and a bare wall can be turned in to place of immense benefit for birds, bats and multiple insects as well as looking great and helping to keep the house cool during heat waves.

The well-known wildlife photographer and TV producer, Colin Stafford Johnson reinforced my own beliefs on what a beneficial plant ivy is. He said that he

considers it the most useful plant of all. Some people criticise ivy and vilify those of us who allow it to grow on our farms but it is a wonderful native evergreen and captures masses of carbon in addition to all its other benefits. In pre-Christian times, the custom was to bring both holly and ivy indoors and hang the boughs on walls and over doorways to provide shelter for the woodland spirits during the mid-winter. It is lovely to think that when we do so today, we are perhaps helping the spirits of trees to keep warm and safe and maybe even enjoy the heat of a cheery log fire

The Burrenbeo Trust do invaluable work in assisting farmers to establish small but vital spots on their farms that will benefit wildlife. One of the latest initiatives is "The Hares Corner" which is simply pocket-sized areas in field corners, protected from livestock and machinery and left as a refuge for the wild creatures that were once abundant. In recent years, large numbers of farmers in the Burren have enthusiastically adopted many of the measures the trust supports. Little changes can achieve a lot and these could well be copied throughout Ireland.

I pitied any livestock that did not have access to shady corners during the record spells of intense heat in August. This is something that seems to be an ever-increasing factor in our Irish summers. It is surely pointless to criticise the measures being proposed to limit global warming when we, the farmers, are the ones that will be worst affected. This summer was wonderful for haymaking and tillage and on the heavy land here in my locality in Meath, grass growth was excellent. But it would take very little more to tip what has been a great summer into a disaster. There is no future in making excuses and continuing to farm as we used to. We simply have to grow up and realise that there is no point in blaming others and doing nothing ourselves. We can all so easily take actions to slow global warming and hopefully, sense will eventually prevail throughout the world and halt it.

The challenges facing us are to assist nature by providing suitable habitats while keeping the land alive and productive. We can do this by taking care to retain organic matter in the soil, putting in ponds to retain water in wet areas, caring for our hedgerows and of course, planting more trees.



The joy of trees in a small garden

by GEORGE CUNNINGHAM

CICERO once said that if you have a garden and a library you should want for nothing. Well, these certainly add much to our living but love, care, health and a great sense of community come into the equation too. Carmel and I count our blessings. These blessings include packed garden plots – too packed as I discovered this year – interspersed with trees in pots which give enormous pleasure and as they become too big we are able to pass them on to Tidy Towns and friends with bigger gardens.

Between those trees in the ground and in pots we have over forty different species. This year we lost our eucalyptus, alder, prostrate juniper, coconut palm (for the second year running) and for some reason cherry, but added almost ten more. The new arrivals of note are a monkey puzzle, strawberry tree, dawn cypress, olive, holm oak and some lovely willows and maples. Of particular interest is our Norfolk Island pine, variously known also as the Star Pine, Living Christmas tree or Triangle tree. It is an *Araucaria heterophylla* and really is the token tree of many of the Pacific islands. On a memorable cruise some years ago we met it on many islands and fell in love with its elegant shape and foliage. But it won't survive a hard winter and so we have to bring it indoors.

Our local supermarkets began to stock more and more perennials and even exotic plants. With great joy we were able to obtain

bougainvillea, various species of jasmine, balloon plants, fig, garden croton, *dracaena* (young dragon trees) and solanum; their only downside is that they will have to be protected from the frost. As will the palms: sage palm (*Cygas*), date and Canary palm, as well as the bonsai version of the Money tree (*Pachira aquatica*) with its bridled trunk. But as we have most of these in pots which can be brought indoors to the patio and various garden sheds, we hope for a high survival rate. In recent years our winters have not been exceptionally cold but one never knows, a really cold spell of temperatures plummeting to below minus eight degrees could lead to devastating losses. I have had a miserable return on my apple and pear trees but will try

Four interesting trees help adorn this autumnal display of peppers, chrysanthums and dahlias: Japanese maple, Canary palm, Cicas palm (sage palm) and the money tree in bonsai form.



This Norway maple under the chrysanthemums is special. Some years ago our mature roadside one had split its trunk and the council decided it must be cut down. Imagine our delight when some months later we discovered that it had self-seeded in a hanging basket outside our front door. Now ready to be planted out again!

Inset: The late Matt Fogarty gave me a present of two redwoods after a Crann open day some years ago. We planted one in the nearby SH primary school and this one is ready for a new home.

again this year. Also a project for 2023 is to acquire as many different species of fruit trees as I can.

Some forty years ago I planted Leyland cypresses as a boundary fence on two sides. Over the years these had to be cut back many times which encouraged their outward growth in a straggly fashion. They now had reached over fifteen feet in width and were giving very little enjoyment not only to ourselves but

upsetting our neighbour as well. I love trees and champion their right to grow as trees but these *Leylandii* should never have been sown in the first place, the wrong trees in the wrong place. They provided little if no biodiversity; we never saw any birds nest therein and they didn't seem to host any other species. So the decision was made to take them out over a period of many months. We left the trunks where we could, to be used as pedestals, a use I believe that could



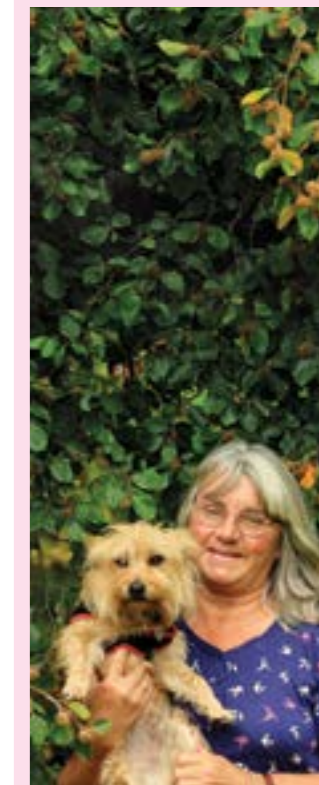
AR SCÁTH A CHÉILE

*Caoineann crann leochaileach,
sroicheann sé amach
ó scáth feosaí,
éigheann sé ar a chomrádaí,
déanann sé comharthaí dóibh,
aithnítear an chontúirt roimh ré,
agus tugtar cúram dó,
le deochanna ó phiopaí,
ó fréambacha chomb tanaí le ribí,
sileann cothú
trí mogall micéiliam,
sacann carthanacht glas
isteach sa bhuinneán,
agus anois, solúbtha,
fásann sé go maith,
i dtreo an tsolais,
ar aon leis an t-íomlán.*

Susan Flynn

Foclóra

feosaí: shrivelled, withered
éigheann: beseches
mogall micéiliam: mycelial mesh



*Susan Flynn has published two collections of poetry, *The Animal Woman*, and in 2022, *In a Woman's Skin* (Swan Press). She is a member of Rathmines Writers' Workshop. She is deeply interested in natural history.*

Encounter with an ancient woodland

Spending time alone in a Canadian forest helped confirm to **Patrick McCusker** that to understand a place, you must first spend considerable time there

SOME years ago, I worked as a naturalist in Ontario, Canada. One of the tasks I was asked to provide was to undertake a survey of plants and animals in a particular woodland. The purpose of this survey was that Ontario Parks needed a clearer understanding of the potential of the entire area for development into a provincial park.

I collected together mist-nets, small-animal traps; butterfly nets, collecting jars and reference books. And a map to locate the place.

It was an old-growth forest with several small streams cutting through it. On one side, the forest gave way to an extensive area of wetland that, in turn, drained into a large river in the distance. A scattering of the older trees had toppled over years before and were now mouldering back into soil. Nevertheless, they had kept their shapes on the forest floor and had formed long ridges of decay where they had fallen. Upon a number of these mounds a new generation of trees had taken root on what once may have been the bodies of their parents. Some of these youngsters stood over thirty feet tall.

On my arrival I discovered a make-do wooden hut. No need to unfurl the tent. This hut would be my shelter. It was nothing fancy, but it had a sound roof, which, in its entirety, as though to demonstrate its longevity, was covered in a thick layer of cushion moss. The hut was no more than a small square room that

boasted a tiny window, webbed and re-webbed, from the industry of generations of spiders. A jumble of planks of wood, a table, and two chairs fought for space. And, for some reason, a large unopened tin of paint, rusted through on one side, stood on one of the chairs. This hut would be my home for the length of the survey. A layer of mud and fallen branches, that had accumulated over the years, had the door stuck at open. It took me the best part of an hour to clear away enough of the mud to get the thing to finally shut.

The survey work was immensely enjoyable. So, too, was the solitude it offered. Within days I had organized myself into a ritual of rising with the dawn to attend to my traps to see what the night before had to offer. A telescopic butterfly net and field binoculars were constant companions during the day.

A forest is not just a collection of trees sprawled across hills and valleys. It contains an undergrowth that is influenced by the conditions dictated by the canopy above. And the trees, some standing for hundreds of years, are the guardians and protectors of all within their shade. Together, these trees, and the shrub layer below them, generate a presence and an atmosphere that pervades all.

I knew something of the trees that were to be found in this forest, so I was comfortable in their identification. But the shrubs and ground flora were another matter. The reference books I had brought with me would be invaluable in identifying many of these. For the rarer

ones I would need the help of experts back in the office: people with remarkable botanical knowledge.

On the second night I had a visitor. A repeated banging on the door had me out of my sleeping-bag; flashlight in hand. I peered out into the darkness – and down. A large porcupine presented himself at the door and waited to be let in. Clearly, by his insistence, it was his hut before mine. Well, maybe it was, but I had seen dogs, their faces covered in porcupine quills from having been struck by the tails of these animals. So, I had to firmly tell my visitor that he could not come in. With numerous prods from a plank of wood he was persuaded to go away. The going-away, however, wasn't very far. He took up residence in a hole under the hut: no doubt waiting for the pest who had taken over his home to go on his way.

But there was one adjustment, that I was forced to make, that was far worse than dealing

with an insistent porcupine – snakes. There is a misconception that all naturalists, and rangers, are fearless rugged types who would think nothing of calling the bluff of a charging bear by standing their ground. Maybe that is true for some. But, never having been put to the test, I am not sure what my reaction might be. On the quiet I had been advised that a tall tree would be a sensible second option. But, for me, snakes were the big-bear-rush. Whether they were poisonous or not made little difference. Coming to Canada from Ireland, where there are no snakes, had a lot to do with this attitude.

The problem I found with snakes is that they are suddenly there. They make no sound to warn of their coming. If they would only make some kind of noise, I might hold a different attitude. But, unfathomable black eyes, suddenly staring at me at close range, was, to say the least, unsettling. To this day I am uncomfortable with snakes about the place.

They seemed to carry a cold wisdom from the time of dinosaurs.

But, in fairness to the snakes in this particular forest, I had to recognize that I was in their territory. This was their home. The whole purpose of the survey was to map out the distribution of species so that their habitats would be protected in any subsequent developments into a provincial park. All of that is fine, but I hadn't expected some of them – snakes – to be living right inside the hut.

On the first day, when I was cleaning clutter out of the place, I discovered three black rat snakes in residence. Each was about four feet long. One was on a shelf, high up. I discovered this when I foolishly tried to remove a flat board above my head. The snake had been coiled up on the board. When I tilted his shelf, he slid downwards and went right over my head. With an experience like that, the work of tidying up went a lot slower. Every board and every plank of wood was

treated with keen suspicion.

That black rat snakes are non-poisonous was not much of a comfort. I had been bitten by one before, and it hadn't been pleasant. So, like the porcupine, the three of them had to go. But how to get rid of them? Holding my fear under tight control, I grabbed them, in turn, by their tails, and running to the door, flung them away and off into the long grass before they had time to react. That was fine, except that all three of them had a shared attitude towards ownership. This point of view was strengthened that night by a violent thunderstorm, and torrential rain. The rain drops, the size of the droppings of crows, drenched down onto the forest with unbelievable ferocity, and depth-charged every puddle and pond to frighten the tadpoles below. In its fury, it roared against the moss roof and streamed down the tiny window, seeking for places of entry. And all three snakes appeared back in the hut by crawling



A forest is not just a collection of trees sprawled across hills and valleys, it is also home to many different creatures Photo: Edgar Bullon

through several holes in the walls. They were back home, and there would be no more of this throwing-out business, especially with such a storm hammering down outside.

The dread I had was that I would find them in my sleeping-bag when going to bed, or later, in the dark, that they would crawl in beside me for the little heat and comfort I might generate. Searching desperately for a remedy to solve the problem, I noted that the hut had one solution to offer – the large table. The sleeping-bag went onto the table with me inside it.

On the first night, an unsettling thought came to me and nestled, with great insistence, in my head – did snakes climb table legs? I didn't know. Anyway, any bits of sleep I had hoped to gain, collapsed away when the sleeping-bag fell off the table. Where were the snakes? Where was the flashlight? Clearly, it was essential that we have a truce, each party keeping their distance. And, in truth, the three of them kept to their side of the bargain and never bothered me from then on. They were content to occupy the planks of wood at the back of the hut. Each slept in a different area, the locations of which were never far from my mind. I was the lodger in their hut and I had to respect that.

Days passed into weeks. The notebooks grew thick with observations. Using a relascope I took numerous heights of trees, and an increment borer gave me their age. The ease by which some species mixed, or stood aloof, was noted. Hemlocks and white cedars seemed to delight in each other's company. Sugar maple and red maple had more need of light. Yellow birches preferred to stand alone, or to form themselves into exclusive clumps. Red oaks grew in drifts and bands throughout the forest. Speckled alder insisted that their feet be in water, and fought for space in the wet places among giant bur-reeds and blue flag iris.

One of the delights that I looked forward to each morning was the identification of bird species. Birds have personalities: I am convinced of that. Grackles, by the racket they make, travelling around in gregarious gangs, saw to it that they would not be over-looked in any diary entries I would care to make. They are mischievous birds brimming indeed with personality – and devilment. Black-capped chickadees are different. They know to be quiet and to keep their distance. But, for all that, they were numerous, friendly and inquisitive. For the entire time I was there, one group of chickadees stayed in a clump of white pine next to the hut. Among other birds: bitterns; bobolinks; ovenbirds; red-winged blackbirds and downy woodpeckers were all recorded.

Hérons have always been a favourite of mine. Other than an occasional 'crake', they



keep their silence. But, by their size, they would not be easily missed as they carefully pulse past on slow wing-beats, as if they had not entirely mastered the skills of flight. But to see them, through binoculars, dropping down to land with one foot carefully testing the ground before the full commitment, is pure beauty.

Deer were present, but other than tracks, I never caught sight of them. Lynx, too, ghost walkers in the evening, left not a trace of their movements except for small tufts of hair on thorns. Raccoons were the jazz band of the forest. They saw to it that they made a great din outside the hut every night; exploring for what they might find through the bits of equipment I had left outside.

Ever conscious of my sharing the hut with the three rightful owners, I made it my particular purpose to carefully map out the strong-holds of snakes throughout the forest so that any developments in the proposed park would not harm their holdings.

Wild strawberries grew in profusion. Foam flowers; Joe Pye Weeds; beebalm and black chokeberry were there. In open spaces, meadow grasses, sedges and Black-eyed Susans

competed for space and for the nourishment that the deep loamy soil had to offer.

But, in spite of the growing inventory of things that I was steadily accumulating, there was something that I was missing; something that I could not pull into focus. Whatever it was, it seemed to conceal itself behind a fog that I could not penetrate. In my several weeks of living in solitude, this important absence continued to elude me. Yet, it was there, stretching over the entire forest, I was sure of that, but I still could not see it. Through all my observations, and through the growing mound of pressed plants, for later identification back in the office, there was something about that forest that I had not captured.

It brought to mind the discipline of Japanese painters, centuries before, who would go into wild places to paint. But they would not pick up their brushes until several weeks had passed. This would allow them time to absorb an understanding of what they were to capture with their pallet knives and brushes and paint. It was only then that they would set up their easels: the time being right.

On the last morning of my stay, when I emerged from my make-do hut, the forest

immediately seemed different. It was as though it had decided that now was the time to show itself to me as it really was. This revelation came slowly: nothing rushed. It built upon itself until it was suddenly there in all its clarity. On that last morning, the forest presented itself to me in its indescribable completeness, no part separated from any other. No tree or chipmunk or frog less important, or more important, than anything else. All in their place, none out of place. All were an integral part of the one.

From out of this astonishing insight, the work I had been engaged in over those past weeks seemed trite and meaningless. It came as a shock to realize that what I had been doing was fragmenting the indivisible forest into separate pieces as though that would give me an understanding of its nature. I had been completely wrong. What I had been doing was confronting a great poem – and hadn't realised it. In its entirety, the forest, that morning, displayed for me its true nature: a nature beyond any measurements that I might attempt to make. For the first time, what I was seeing was indeed a poem, and I had been butchering it into pieces in trying to gain an



The original inhabitants, the rat snake (left) and the prickly porcupine

understand of what it was. A great painting, when viewed close-up, is a meaningless jumble of brush strokes. But when we draw back from it by some distance, we can at last see the unified statement that makes up the whole. It was that profound reality that the forest was displaying for me on my last day there.

I took a long walk, on a now familiar track through it all. I carried neither notebook nor binoculars. To do otherwise would have seemed improper and tasteless. I just walked, and walked. Never did pine pollen, that rimmed every puddle that morning, seem to shine with such unusual brightness. It was as though it, too, was revealing something about the forest that was beyond the need of any inventory in any notebook.

The realisation of what I was seeing, really seeing, left me with an over-whelming feeling of bewilderment. In merely accumulating lists of names, I had entirely missed the fundamental presence and the essence of the forest in all its completeness. And what was it that I had been missing?

It was the gallimaufry of a multitude of things intensely woven together to make the totality of it all. It was the bark of a fox; the call of a goose over frosted ground; the snoring of owls; the haunting cries of loons, like the wavering calls of the long-dead, that they might still be remembered. All of these sounds were part of that. So too, was the warm breath of deer drifting in the cold air among the trees; the constant choir of frog-song at evening time; the sway of Blue Joint grass; the flit of Meadow Jumping Mice; and the murmuring together of forest flies in flight, in numbers beyond comprehension. Something else as well. The silent breathing of leaves in summer time throughout the entire forest. Then, the spiralling-down of prodigious clouds of them, their job done: so many leaves, in preparation for winter, to make mulch that others might grow. The spin of whirligigs and the ballet-dancing of water striders on every pond was also part of it all. And, just as important, if

more diaphanous, the caress of the morning mist against the trunks of trees. Drifting too, like the soft kiss of snowflakes over each dying petal, giving it an assurance of a job well done. Whispering through the grey-white whiskers of mice, and over the thin sheen of ice starting to form on small streams, it gave an affirmation that everything was as it should be. And, above all else, an enigmatic and unseen presence, that understands all and that holds all of it together in its completeness.

In one fleeting moment all of this came together for me on that morning. And it was a feeling that all of this is what we should know if we are ever to properly understand wild places.

When I packed my things that day and got ready to return home, the last thing I did was to replace the mud around the hut door to leave it open for the porcupine.

In writing my report back in the office, I felt like a traitor. I was not setting down the sense of that forest at all. How could I? It was beyond the ability of words to capture what it was that I had experienced in that beautiful place. My report, among others, would be used to evaluate the potential of that unforgettable forest.

Those Japanese painters were right. To understand a place, you must first spend time there. Modern technologies drive our minds to be functional. They remove a sense of reverence and strip away time: time that is needed to give space for our abilities to wonder. This quickening pace, that no one questions, takes from us the silence, the solitude and the slowing-down of time that is essential to fully understand what can be found in wild places.

I carried out surveys in other forests, but I never again experienced the closeness to nature that I encountered, on my last day, in that ancient woodland all those years ago.

Patrick is a full-time writer and has two thrillers out on Amazon. FEAR is a medical thriller. THE BRONOSKI TEMPTATION is an archaeological story based on a discovery in Glendalough.

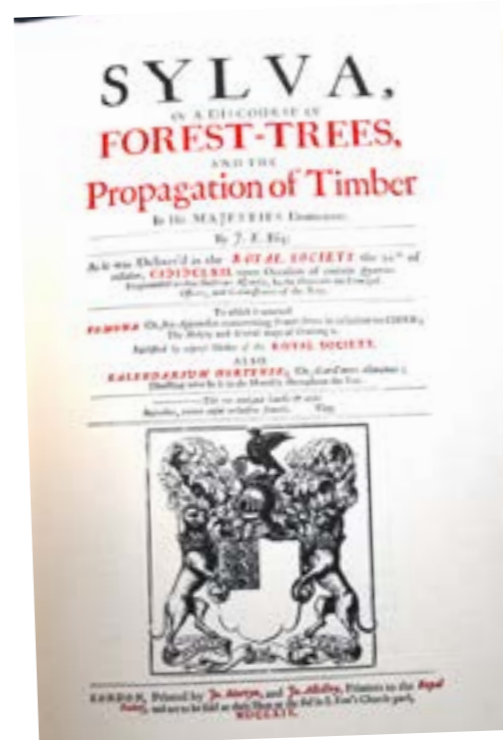
mccusker.patrick@gmail.com

The standard setting book for people who love trees and their history

By GEORGE CUNNINGHAM

JOHN Evelyn's *Sylva* holds a special place in the hearts and minds of all those who love trees and their history. Although not the first about forests and woodlands it was probably the most influential of all time, its impact being felt for centuries. Evelyn was largely a self-educated man: he never graduated from Oxford nor did he finish at the Bar. But travel and the creation of an impressive library proved to more than compensate, and with a 'personal cultural explosion', he became one of the leading diverse scholars of his time, leading to the Royal Society's first publication, his *Discourse concerning forest trees*, his *Silva* in 1664. In it he combined his love of trees with practical experience writing in masterly prose about 'woodmanship, horticulture, forestry and folklore, mingling scientific experiment with popular mythology' but as that doyen of the history of woodlands and forestry, Oliver Rackham adds, 'much of the misinformation about trees that is current today can be traced back to it.'

Following chapters on the environment, raising of young trees and 50 pages on the oak, the subsequent seventeen short chapters deal with all aspects of



Sylva, Or A discourse of forest-trees, and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesties Dominions. By J.E. Esq; As it was Deliver'd in the Royal Society the xvth of October, MDCLXII.To which is annexed Pomona; Or, An appendix concerning Fruit-Trees in relation to cider; the Making and several ways of Ordering it. Published by express Order of the Royal Society. Also Kalendarium Hortense; Or, Gard'ners Almanac... Printed by Jo. Martyn, [J. Macock], and Ja. Allestry, Printers to the Royal Society, and are to be sold at their shop at the Bell in S. Paul's Church-yard, MDCLXIV. [1664.], 1664.

individual trees. He added appendices on *Pomona*: a treatise on cider (and its virtue over wine and beer), the cultivation of fruit-trees, and a compilation of writers on the virtue of drink; and *Kalendarium*, a month by month planting plan for a garden.

The work enjoyed 700 subscribers and in it he pleaded with society and gentry to plant more trees and for landowners to have

oak-lined avenues on their country estates.

With the support of the King the impact of *Sylva* was huge, encouraging political and private action for planting. It went into five editions during the author's life before his death in 1706, its title changing to *Silva*. He had eight children with his wife Mary, only one of whom survived him.

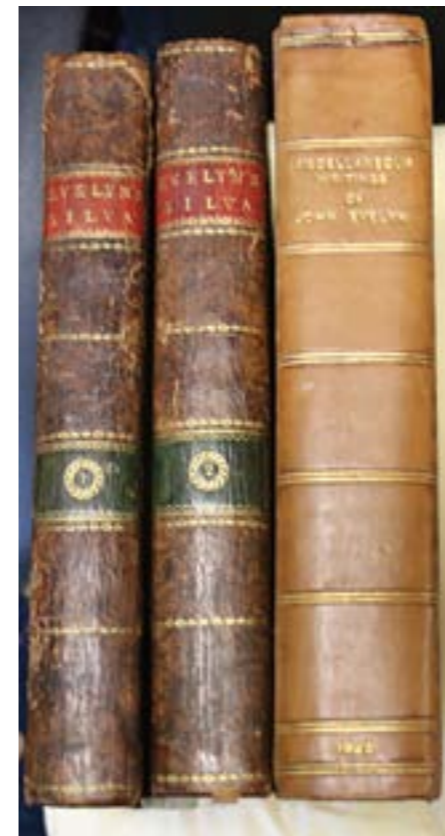
Evelyn's work is not the first treatise on



One of the magnificent drawings from the York Hunter edition of 1776

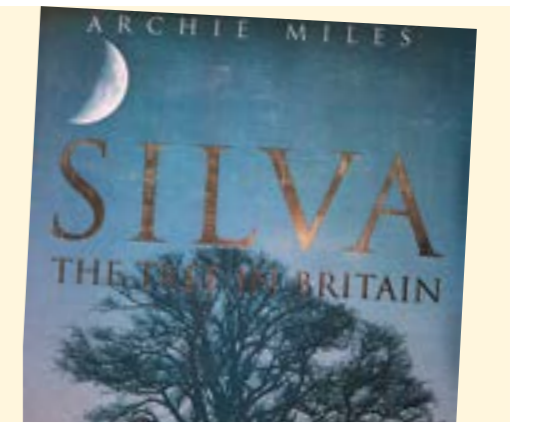


The truly magnificent drawings of the trees (left and far left) are from the York Hunter edition of 1776, as clear today as when they were created by John Miller; two leather bound vols of this edition from the author's library are pictured below beside Evelyn's Misc Writings edited by Turner in 1825. These full page tree drawings were used by John Feehan in his chapter on 'Trees and Woods on the Farm' in his magisterial work on Farming in Ireland. Right: The portrait of Evelyn by Bartolozzi as mentioned in the text.



Silva, The Tree in Britain, (1999) by Archie Mills.

If you want one book that encompasses everything about a tree, from evolution to species, from folklore to woodcraft, from trees in art to conservation, then this magnificent volume is for you: 400 folio pages of historical and modern data full of exquisite illustrations. As David Bellamy writes in the foreword: 'This is a leviathan of a book....Silva more precious than gold.'



trees: the Doomsday book of 1086 with its assertion of forest rights and the sealing of the Magna Carta under the giant yew at Runnymede shows the importance of woodland in people's lives from earliest times. Exploring woodlands and forest in varying degrees were later forests charters and works such as Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* in 1627; Fitzherbert's *Book of Husbandry* (1523) and Gerard's *Herball* at the end of the sixteenth-century. One has to be careful when using

Evelyn's *Silva*. It certainly paints a picture of decreasing woodland in the pre and post Tudor period, but are Evelyn's reasons for this decline valid? His assertion that shipbuilding and ironworks were mainly responsible doesn't hold up under modern research but is repeatedly trotted out. Again as Rackham has pointed out 'authors copy one another; each repeats his predecessor's errors and adds a few of his own. Plagiarism often goes back to a first statement by Evelyn.' Seventy years after Evelyn's death a major new edition with copious notes and excellent plates was produced by a Scottish physician and another lover of trees, Dr Alexander Hunter of York in 1776; it was so successful that four later impressions were called for and included the Bartolozzi portrait of Evelyn, described as 'under the lean and fallen features of age which exhibits all the intelligence and fire to youth.' Hunter's edition is the most desirable after the original of 1664. Evelyn's *Misc Writings* were brought together by Turner in 1825 in a large quarto

volume of 850 pages. He kept a diary from his student days in 1640 up to shortly before his death in 1706; these were also edited in six volumes. The best facsimile copy was produced by the Scholar Press in 1972. And for the 350th anniversary of the original work the new *Silva*, a worthy successor was produced to the highest possible standards of scholarship and art by silvologist Gabriel Hemery and artist Sarah Simblet in a truly breath-taking contemporary version. John Evelyn would be pleased. Well could we copy his motto: '*Omnia explorata, Meliora retineta* – explore everything, keep the best.'

A TREE THOUGHT
 Much has been made of the prominence of the names of native species in our Gaelic placenames: the argument being that they showed how Ireland was heavily wooded in earlier times when these names were given. But surely the opposite is also true: that woodland was so scarce that the presence of a small group or a significant specimen warranted a special naming?

Making sense from the sound of silence



All good things take time, and lockdown meant that edging around Ger Clarke's pool was eventually finished after 12 years

The start of lockdown coincided with major change in GER CLARKE's world but a simple request to feed the elephants in Dublin Zoo help him refocus

IT ALL began in silence. My memory of that long three-month period was only triggered recently when we had an unexpected power outage at about 8pm. Donna went to bed fairly early, but I remained on, in the dark, listening to the growing silence.

Lines from a poem (The Voice) by one of the wartime poets, Rupert Brooke, describe the scene best "...and quietness crept up the hill," I even went outside to look at the stars in the great overhead vacuum of outer space.

As I recalled it, I knew at the beginning of the Pandemic and lockdown that it was also the beginning of a time of momentous change in my own life as well as that of the entire world. On March 13th 2020, I was advised to work from home. Little did I know that I would never go back to my workplace again in an official capacity. Except for a retirement party in June 2021.

I had left home in September 1974 for university and had been studying, working, and travelling from then until that fateful directive. I had never had the chance to spend all my time, 24/7, at home week in week out, at home.

So, I stayed at home. Getting myself involved in the wind-down to my final

retirement from the Missionary Society of St. Columban. I had been working at Dalgan Park with the Columbans for 26 of the 46 years since leaving Ballina. This was my chance to prepare for the final phase of my life here on planet earth, third rock from the Sun. But to have to do that in isolation, under quarantine and in silence was not anticipated.

I had bought a woodworking shop and done a course with our local Master Woodworker, Seamus Cassidy. But, before starting turning, I was taking six months out to walk to Istanbul. Being from North Mayo, where everyone thinks the next village is New York, New York, and having done the Camino, where the terminus is Finisterre, I

Some of our apples we gathered before we set off to feed the Dublin Zoo elephants



have always wanted to go to the other side, to where Europe begins. Where Asia, Africa and Europe all converge. Covid put paid to that and now, when things are relaxing, Mr. Putin has intervened.

To get the chronology right, March, April, May of 2020 were the best three months of weather ever in this part of the world, Donna retired after 43 years with her company at the end of that month. I continued to work from home until June 2021, then we both began to look forward to a life of living in each others full time company (24/7/365) for the first time in our 39-year-long marriage.

During the initial three months there were no planes overhead, no contrails, there was no traffic, no road noise, no sirens nor alarms. Only once or twice a day would I hear the distant rumble of the cargo trains, hauling lead and zinc ore from Tara Mines to Dublin port. Another step on its long journey from

deep under Navan to Sweden or Finland or whichever smelter needed the high grade concentrate the most.

Yet for all the growing quietness there was a new awareness developing, our wildlife began to be heard, studies have shown that in urban areas birds sang louder. Now humans began to hear them properly, it even became a topic of conversation (not that there was a lot of conversation during lockdown). I wonder how long we would have to be locked down for before the birds would sing at their normal level. As the new soundful world was rediscovered and our own human cacophony curtailed I wondered too how long it would last.

When our world shrank to a 2km radius we all became mathematical geniuses and quickly figured out the longest circumference for our daily walk. Along routes that we had previously whizzed through, as we guzzled diesel and

petrol, going from A to Z and ignoring the magnificent alphabet of life that has always existed all around us.

Of course it did not continue forever. The need to move on, to accommodate our lives and our world to the new reality of Covid meant that we slowly and gingerly began to put a new world together. Some winners some losers.

For me lethargy was a downside, not so much anger but shortened temper, unwillingness to move out, go places. I could not write, my poetry efforts non-existent. I could not write and would not communicate. W.H.Auden must have written "Stop all the Clocks" with me in mind. My new reality. I could not get interested in TV, radio or music. My only saviour was the garden, a new rockery, a path to the greenhouse, a new patio, finishing the edging around the pond (began 12 years ago). Then one day in 2020 our Zoological Garden in the Phoenix Park put out a plea for support, and Ireland's response was tremendous. This motivated myself and Donna to contact the Zoo staff, we had a huge surplus of apples, and would donate them, if needed. Once we got a cover letter to explain our mission off we went up the M3. The Garda checkpoint was near Blanchardstown, "what is the purpose of your journey" the Garda asked. I told him we were going to the Zoo. "Have you not heard about the pandemic and lockdown?" he continued. "Yes", I said, "but we are going to feed the elephants". He looked at me as if I belonged in the zoo myself. On opening the boot where we had about 200 kilos of apples all boxed up he

laughed and said "wait 'til I tell the lads about this back in the station, Go on with ye", and he waved us on.

We repeated the gesture again this year, 300 kilos this time. Our 2021 crop was non-existent. 2022 was bumper, similarly our acorn, horse chestnut and spanish chestnut crops were like in a mast year. So too the gooseberries and blackberries, But, unusually for Meath, the sloes, fruit of the blackthorn were very scarce. No sloe gin this Christmas, but we compensated by making our own Cassis, we made about five litres.

Yet this new world, with covid ever-present, is not the same nor will ever be. The silence, lethargy, lack of motivation, now exacerbated by the fear of energy price rises, power outages, the developing anarchy in our political systems worldwide, Putin, and threats of nuclear warfare all have a negative effect on me, and probably on many others. The last few working years I spent planning great things. "All is changed, changed utterly." said WB Yeats. How very apt those words are now, three years of turmoil have made me rethink my plans

I will put a more comfortable bench in a sheltered spot beside the pond.

Then, wrapped up well with a Kir Royale to hand, this Christmas Eve I'll sing "O Silent Night."

PS. Recommended reading "Lines written during my Second Pandemic" by Eduardo C Corral, From Poem-a-Day/Poets.org poem-a-day@poets.org

Culture Night? For Easy Treesie it's Culture Morning, Noon and Night!

Easy Treesie's impressive work continues and ORLA FARRELL recounts the latest adventures within the community nationwide

THE EASY Treesie Project has a mission; to carry out the Plant-for-the-Planet challenge to plant a million trees. How? With Ireland's million school children & their communities. That's a lot to do by the deadline we have set ourselves for 2024! One of the ways we get things done with ease is by celebrating national and international special events to the full, through of course, tree planting. For example, on National Biodiversity Week, we ran 10 separate events. On Tree Week we have collaborated with up to a dozen tree planting parties nationwide. On Earth Day, World Environment Day and National Tree Day we've held multiple tree planting ceremonies, starting our warm-ups weeks beforehand so that the media will have their pictures on time! The national Culture Night event is another great chance to shine a light on

Tree Culture in as many places as we can and we find it a great opportunity to get our tree planters into the groove for Tree Day and our upcoming planting season. Story and Song and ArtisTREE are central to us in Ireland.

Even Covid lockdowns did not deter us as in 2020 we ran a five-hour event on Zoom with virtual visitors from as far away as Canada and Malawi and broadcast a new film at the same time, running in parallel on the Culture Night TV channel!

The Culture Night national event has traditionally kicked-off in the early evening since its inception. Now we teachers love to get cracking with our work to-do lists in the morning. For that great feeling of calm, it is best to get through what has to be done early in the day to make space for playtime! Recently our national Culture Night has coincided with the day of the popular youth-led Climate Marches, where we've even

brought along some trees. In previous years we have joined in with a "March of the Trees" and have participated in some poster-making in time for the lunchtime speeches. This year we chose to start our cultural day at breakfast time to accommodate our participating schools, and were most fortunate to have a glorious sunny morning for our new initiative, collaborating with One Tree Planted. What a relief, in a

week where we had experienced drenching rain that hops off the ground! Especially so since the school communities attending were coming on foot and using the public buses and since we would be getting out and about with only the trees for shelter in the grounds of historic Swords Castle!

An order for orchard trees valued at €1,000 - gosh, what would that look like? Where

would they go if they arrived early? Not in Cllr Joe' Newman's office, says Joe; (A co-founder of one of our partner organisations, the Swords Woodland Association) ; he feared he would not be able to move for trees. This was no obstacle to local nursery Tully's and a dawn delivery was made allowing just enough time to turn the splendid Fingal County Atrium into a forest of 34 towering orchard

trees. Cherry, Apple, Pear and Damson, many of the apple trees decked out in abundant autumn fruit! This was one tree for every single child attending that morning, which would be planted in the surrounding schools and community spaces.

It was in this Urban Indoor Orchard that we gathered for a welcome breakfast of tea, coffee, juice boxes and tree-fruit oatcakes. What a lovely tree-t on our arrival - Fingal County Council was thanked from the stage for this generous hospitality. Isn't it a delight to catch up while mingling again? It is now three long, Covid-filled years since we enjoyed a similar chance to socialise in these splendid surroundings. Our Tree Academy which had been scheduled to take place in the Castle Chapel and here in this building looking out on ancient evergreen oaks in March 2020 was of necessity moved online and this event was a first such chance to meet again! Many local



Mayor of Fingal Cllr. Howard Mahony addresses St. Finian's and Mary Queen of Ireland students at our Easy Treesie/ One Tree Planted/Swords Woodland Culture Night event at Fingal County Hall. PHOTO RONAN LYNCH

Below: Country Coordinators enjoy our story of Irish Tree Culture at the Plant-for-the-Planet Youth Summit, Bonn



volunteer tree-planters from organisations such as Swords Tidy Towns and the Broadmeadows Community Gardens, who have joined us lately at local plantings in public parkland sites such as Swords Manor and Donabate, had come to join in the fun.

The Easy Treesie project has worked with, among many schools around the country, Fingal schools and their communities now for several years including the two schools who sent delegations attending this bright September day. Indeed it's a joy to report that our first-ever project in Fingal won the National Tidy Towns Special Tree Award in 2022 for planting one tree for every one of their residents at the seaside town of 'Baldoyle Wild Towns'. We enjoyed presentations by teachers and pupils on the biodiversity (variety of life) they enjoy, as a result of the trees added in recent years to their school grounds and environs. A great display of smiling photographs of tree-planting, going back to our first joint event at nearby Malahide Castle, shone on the giant screen. Teacher Ciarán described hearing me, Orla Farrell, Easy Treesie founder describe the project we are carrying out to participate in the planting of a trillion trees worldwide on the radio one Saturday morning and how he had gone immediately to the easytreesie.com website to sign up his school, St. Finian's.

It was a delight to hear the children describe the remarkable new increase in plants and animals they have enjoyed since they have given nature more space. The tool kits and tree nursery boxes sponsored by the Dublin Airport Authority allows them to grow local tree-seeds into trees with guidance from Edward (our seed-saver par excellence.) Teacher Sandra was excited to report that this meant the school can now plant their own trees grown from seed at no cost whatsoever to the children. The pupils and teachers from Mary Queen of Ireland National School, which is adjacent to Dublin International Airport, were of course very pleased indeed to be bringing back several of the orchard trees to their grounds. Their school is a regular host to rabbits, foxes and of course aerial creatures, an abundance of birds and bats; indeed one small chap was able to catch a small bat in a jar which had managed to lose itself in a classroom and release it again to the wild of the school playground.

Sitting down all day, they say, is anti-health so we did what we often do; a Yoga Break for the Pose of the Tree. There was time for a quiz followed by a poe-TREE workshop using up the reverse side of the quiz pages. We are "being the change we wish to see". The children set to work instantly though



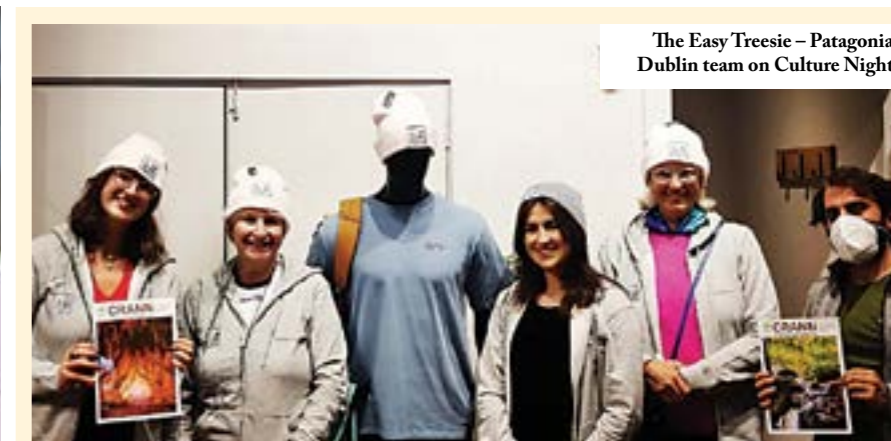
Getting serious at quiztime in the Atrium, Fingal County Hall

some extra encouragement was needed for the adults present, who were markedly more shy about their skills as poets. When the poems were read out they realised their modesty was well-placed and declared themselves glad their offerings were anonymous as they decided they did not match the standard of many of the children's works. You can read some of our poetry on the website; <http://bit.ly/3EIQHni>.

It was a lovely surprise to be joined by the Mayor of Fingal, Cllr. Howard Mahony who praised the efforts of all present in their climate actions. Mayor Mahony joins a roll of honour of distinguished public representatives who have honoured our project with a visit. (Indeed the Dublin Lord Mayor Cllr. Caroline Conroy - a great planter of trees in Ballymun and surrounds with our and her own projects - has since then accepted some Holly trees for her Tree Day Climate Action.) We were also joined by Councillors Ian Carey and Ann Graves and the presentations which ensued emphasised the importance of preserving the Green Belt around Swords. Now for Prizes, we love rewards for star efforts. Snug woollen winter beanie hats were awarded to the Mayor - who did very well in the quiz element of the programme - for which he won his new winter hat! For the children who had written and recited their poetry, graced the stage and

provided logistical backup in distributing the wonderful poster featuring champion local trees - more hats. The latest issue of Crann which features an article thanking One Tree Planted for their most valuable sponsorship of several recent tree planting projects was another welcome gift. Teachers also took back some very special almond and orange- tree chocolate which was sourced for this special

Speakers, Dr. Gerhardt Gallagher, Dr. Rory Harrington and Deirdre Lane (left to right) with participants in our IMMA Earth Rising Eco Art Festival Tree Talks and Steven Doody and son (far right), Easy Treesie's Community Liaison Officer.



The Easy Treesie - Patagonia Dublin team on Culture Night

A special thanks to all who made this Culture Night so memorable this year and to our many supporters who keep our show on the road. Here are some of their comments; thank you friends!

"I participated in Easy Treesie's Culture Night exhibition in Patagonia. To speak to Orla and my fellow team members about the important work being undertaken to plant one million trees by 2024 was inspiring, and the evening provided a wonderful opportunity to meet new people passionate about saving the planet. The poetry session

was a wonderful way to round off a wonderful evening!" *Aoife McGeogh, (Easy Treesie Graduate Intern, Dublin City University)*

"Enjoyed by all, our evening spent in Patagonia was the perfect start to a night full of culture. Poetry, Music and more; it made for a truly entertaining evening. With Patagonia's recent climate moves, and Easy Treesie's presence, the feeling of togetherness and unity in our fight toward a better world was evident from the atmosphere created by all involved." *Máire Dempsey, (Easy Treesie Graduate Intern,*

Trinity College Dublin)

"The event was well organised and very enjoyable. This was the fourth Culture Night Ireland poetry reading where I have been invited to read original poems to support the important work of Easy Treesie." *Poet, Anto Kerins.*

"I loved that it was in Patagonia, a brand I admire and which has been making history recently with its commitment to making the world a better place. The guitar music and fairtrade chocolate elements contributed to a great atmosphere". *Audrey Wilson, attendee.*

And now it's off to meet up with our Town team; we load up our Culture Kit including a tree in a pot who'll be in the audience and will stay there and our new slim volume of new poetry to display in the city centre store window. Artist and meteorologist Evelyn, hops into the "Leaf"-mobile and we're off to Patagonia. This amazing sustainable-apparel firm was the first ever commercial sponsor of our project with their "1% for the Planet" grant and are long-standing Crann supporters. Our new folding wheelbarrow makes short work of ferrying our gear including the tree. Unfortunately a loose nut is shaken off as we wheel along the bumps and out falls our tall apple tree, a half-dozen green apples rolling down Drury Street during a drenching shower. We gather up the runaway apples and tighten the wingnut and soon have the stage set for our Culture Night evening programme.

As we wheeled in our gear, musician Arash Kazemi struck up some rousing and very appropriate renditions of many upbeat - and some thoughtful - melodies which greatly added to the relaxed and friendly ambiance. We look forward all year to hearing original poems around nature, trees, climate change and other topics on this special night. The readings were opened by Aoife McGeough, Easy Treesie Environmental Intern, reading

"Holly Picking" - very appropriate as it is this year's chosen tree for Tree Week - followed by our poet-in-residence reading his poems, "Starlings", "On the Street", "Butterfly", "Baby Artem", "Earth Kill", "The Waterfall", "Here and Now" and "The Elephant Cheers".

Patagonia's team once again came up trumps supporting our climate initiative and we are especially grateful to One Tree Planted who sponsored the 34 fruit trees and some great tree-planting gear for our team, for some special tree-champions and for the school children attending Fingal County Hall. We also thank our Crann board, administration and membership, our lead sponsor, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, who have provided the core funding for the Easy Treesie project in 2022, and our very many supporting local authorities, businesses and individuals among them the unparalleled Coillte team, Trees on the Land, our partner nurseries including English's Fruit Farm, the Loreto Order, GreenPrint Maxol for their focus on energy transition education, Docusign, and Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. We are proud to display a detailed list of our benefactors and lots of other information about our successes to date including links to our growing film resource library on our Easy Treesie website. Our team

Orla Farrell presents Felix Finkbeiner, Founder, Plant-for-the-Planet with an Easy Treesie Hoodie and the latest Crann magazine featuring Tidy Towns Special Tree Award Winners



had the chance to regale the public throughout the day with tales of our recent successes, including

- Our camping trip to the Woodland Festival at Clonalis House where we left trees behind instead of tents and held both storytelling and singing sessions in the woods
- Our new Tree Maintenance parties with our volunteers and ongoing partnerships including with the Tree Council of Ireland, GAA Green Clubs, Northside and now Northwest Partnerships, IMMA Earth Rising and



A presentation to Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr. Caroline Conroy of Coillte Holly with Pauline Logan, Coordinator LEO Dublin City Women In Business at the Mansion House

Barretstown events with our team artist Steven Doody.

■ “The Easy Treesie Story” Podcast, our new Rethink Ireland film, and our Irish delegation to our fourth COP-focused Plant-for-the-Planet Youth Summit. At the five-day conference we planted oak and cherry trees in the City of Bonn forest with youth leaders and young people selected from almost 80 countries working on this Restoration Project. We also enjoyed meetings at the UN campus and with founder, the great Felix Finkbeiner who planted the first apple tree of the now-Trillion Tree Campaign at the age of nine.

Dear Crann Members and Friends,

Would you like to receive native and common Irish species saplings for planting, to improve the tree canopy where you live, to support the establishment of woodlands and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration?

Our Easy Treesie Million Trees by 2024 Project is being carried out in collaboration with Crann -Trees for Ireland, the Tree Council of Ireland, GAA Green Clubs and others.

A request for a minimum of 100 saplings can be made by schools, colleges, co-operatives and community group, by filling out the short form at this link as soon as possible and at latest by 1st February;

<https://forms.gle/Sd6uNRK9h2fr6urJ6>
Orders will be considered and successful projects will be contacted directly by the nurseries before National Tree Week in March, via the email you provide.

Currently, we are not charging for the supply or delivery of saplings thanks to the generosity of our tree-mendous sponsors who have made them available for our project. We ask in return that you please share your tree planting story e.g. in your local press and using #generationrestoration #restore #easytreesie hashtags on social media if you can. We really like to thank our sponsors and helpers with a shout out!

We will do our best to provide suitable projects with saplings. It is possible that you may receive fewer trees than requested or be added to a waiting list as demand always exceeds our available supplies.

The information you provide in the form will be shared with suppliers to facilitate the direct delivery of ordered trees to the appropriate location or a nearby depot. We will also use the information for follow-up on tree survival rates. In receiving trees through us you commit to seeing to the best of your ability that your trees grow successfully by:

- planting them promptly (or potting-up/healing-in, in case of delay)
- protecting them from damage
- providing water for your trees until they are established
- picking away or trampling the weeds
- providing details for your planting site

There is a Frequently Asked Questions section on the website at this link <https://easytreesie.com/2021/01/06/faqs/> and you can contact us for any other information at orla@easytreesie.com with National Tree Week in the subject line. More information is available at www.crann.ie and www.easytreesie.com where donations to the project are of course also always welcome.

Regards,
Orla Farrell

THE LEAF GATHERERS

*When all the pigments glow they stand about,
sipping beers, the breath from coloured trees,
catching up, the craic, well-worn views.
In-between the stream of talk the gusts
now build to shake the boughs, off they go to
wait with night and bear the windstorm blow.*

*Morning finds the gale upon the ground,
leaves fill round the cul-de-sac, crinkled heaps
hide drains and corner paths, schoolboys
gallop through, small kids kick and leap.*

*Out they come with rakes and bags
lifting up the leaf debris, pods of leaves,
pack and squeeze, racing to the end of day,
all the bags are stacked away, city truck picks
them up, colour on the street now grey,
trees stand bare at winter rest,
orange sunset in the west.*

© Anto Kerins

THE SNOW DROP

*Angry rain, ugly sleet,
driving snow, freezing feet,
darkened days, frightful nights,
chilling water, damp and cold,
begging for some homeless help,
looking for a wooden bench,
city of a million folk,
not a single one I know.*

*Will I go and search for food?
Maybe find a meal for free.
Then I see a broken fence,
creep along and slip inside,
no one looking from the house,
hide within the garden shed,
sleep all night upon the floor.*

*Morning peeps in through the door,
glimpse a tiny snowdrop stand
hanging over ice and snow
with its precious head held high
holding ground against harsh wind.*

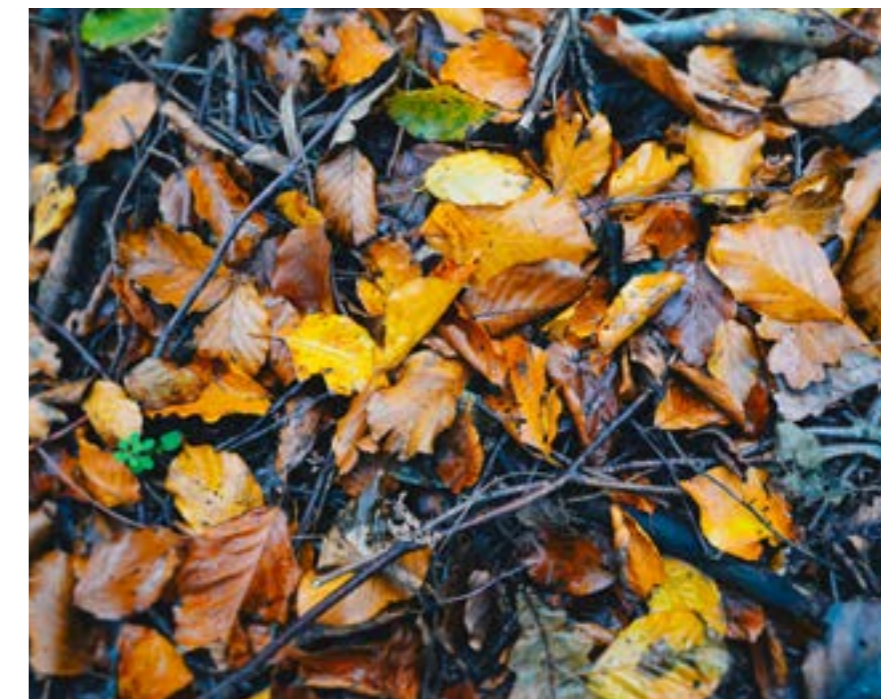
*I feel its fragile soul
enter me as in a trance,
look upon my battered heart,
soften and relax its beat,
strengthen me within my core.*

Life inside I'll now restore.

© Anto Kerins



Adim Rahman



Andreas Vardalho

JANUARY

*Tightened
down by winter's grip,
deepest dark, primal night,
death is lingering in the shade,
sun neglecting all its power,
empty trees, bitter east,
nature hiding half
afraid.*

*Moving,
creaking, frozen reach,
rolling thunder cracks the sky,
old year's gone, shifting minds,
wind chills, white hail flying past.
Calendar: a framework source,
marking nature's changing
force.*

*Pushing up
through ice and snow
from the damp and musty soil
up and through the winter's cold
come the roots and stems that coil
round about the stones and grit
building life inside the earth
January rises
forth.*

© Anto Kerins

STARLINGS

*Countless of them, watch them gather,
rushing, dashing, all together,
surging, sweeping through the air,
flowing over empty fields,
billowing beneath the clouds,
bending as they break and border,
high and low they race and go,
watching others makes them follow,
wheeling while they form a shape
sometimes it's an endless corner
then appears a moving eight,
all the time a million flutters
whirring echoes as they curve
diving downwards at the ground
next they roll and turn away,
keep it going while they can,
daylight dies behind the hill,
suddenly they all slow down,
finding branches, roosting perches,
chatter noises, crush of others,
listen while they fall asleep
sheltered by the rising dark.*

© Anto Kerins



Phil Bauman

Anto Kerins is a conservationist, educationalist and writer and a member of An Taisce's Natural Environment Committee. He writes poetry on nature and other topics.

He has read his poetry at Culture Night Ireland each year since 2019 in support of the important work of Easy Treesie and Crann.

One of the most dramatic events in nature is a starling murmuration. This is a swooping mass of thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of birds whirling in the sky in the evening before they roost for the night. We are still not certain why they do it – maybe it's just for the fun, the company and the togetherness.

Trees and people: *a mutually-beneficial relationship*

Aidan J. ffrench
CRANN member
Landscape Architect, Bray, Co. Wicklow

TREES are intrinsic to human life. That may not always be obvious. Do we in Ireland take trees for granted? Are we complacent? Many say “but Ireland is so Green!”, so there’s no real need for well-designed, managed Urban Forestry or Greenspace. That is an unfortunate, misguided mindset. With accelerating, often poor-quality urbanisation and evident absence of greenery, we need trees more than ever. Let’s remind ourselves of how truly amazing trees are and how we can enhance our relationships with them, especially in the urban settings where over 63pc of us live. “A tree basically makes itself out of air, water, soil and sunshine” (John Parker, Arboricultural Association). That’s quite an awesome reality! And, we know - increasingly from science - trees bring many vitally significant benefits to humans, e.g. clean air, oxygen, food, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and companionship. But what of the spiritual and psychological aspects of our relationship with trees? Aren’t these as important as purely human-centred (anthropocentric), utilitarian values? Our narrow, anthropocentric mindsets blind us to the inherent value of other creatures who also have rights. But seen as fellow Living Organisms, trees remind us that all Creation is connected, all is relationship. Embracing this deeper mindset, recognising inter-species rights and our inter-dependency, means right relationship with trees. It also strengthens the case for trees, especially since they often compete for precious space in the ‘urban arena’.

Increasingly, people recognise the vital role of trees to human Health/Well-being, to Climate Adaptation and Biodiversity. The pandemic highlighted our need for Nature (Biophilia), for us to foster an Ecological Culture, connecting us with and for Nature. We’ve much in common! Just as humans need each other and live in communities, so do trees. Forest scientists such as Peter Wohlleben and Suzanne Simpard are finding that trees function as communities of solidarity, supporting each other through symbiotic relationships (*mycorrhizal fungi*). Our humanity



and social connections mirror these mutually-dependent relationships.

“Ours is a special time. On the one hand, climate change poses the most significant threat to our planet that humanity has ever faced. On the other, we are better equipped than ever before to take on that challenge. To do so, we need to understand the natural world as people once did. We need to see all that the sacred cathedral of the forest offers us and understand that among those offerings is a way to save our world. We are all woodland people. Like trees, we hold a genetic memory of the past because trees are parents of the child deep within us., the majesty of nature calls us in a voice beyond our imaginations.” - Diana Beresford-Kroeger. To Speak for the Trees (2019)

Trees are not things; they have inherent ‘divine energy’.

“Once the planet is seen as infused with divine creativity, creation can no longer be seen as just a thing. Thomas Berry observed that, ‘an absence of a sense of the sacred’ was the basic flaw in ecological efforts. we will not save what we do not love, we will neither love nor save that which we do not experience as sacred’ (Saving Our Common Home in Wounded Shepherd – Pope Francis and his Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church. Austen Ivereigh. 2019).

Drawing on this consciousness, I propose that organisations promote the following **Tree Ethic:** -

We recognise Trees as Living Organisms Awesome in Beauty and Wonder!
People and Trees are intrinsically connected, People Need Trees and Trees Need People
This Ethic is based on an enlightened, shared responsibility for trees. It’s conceived

in the interest of the Common Good and informed by our obligations to Mother Earth, to her current and future generations. Related principles include: -

- Trees are Living Organisms**
- Foster a culture of awe, care and respect for their sacred beauty
- Take a balanced approach to aesthetic and functional benefits
- Promote Health/Well-being tree benefits Shared Responsibility and Equity
- Promote Participatory Active Citizenship and Governance
- Urban Ecosystems - design for sustainable co-existence of people and trees
- Provide Equitable Access to quality, diverse, mature tree cover
- Map gaps in cover, identify opportunities for planting
- Biodiversity**
- Plant a broad range of mainly native species

This richer, holistic understanding of Trees as Living Organisms, and not as decorative objects, offers practical opportunities for care and co-creation. You can see this growing shift in consciousness especially in community projects and eco-forestry. One current example is the emerging Edible Urban Mini-Woodland, Coolevin estate, Ballybrack, Co. Dublin: a multi-partner, neighbourhood, educational project with local volunteers, who will learn to value all aspects of trees and to take responsibility for their long-term care.

Resources

- The Singing Heart of the World. John Fechan (2010)
 - Sacred Trees of Ireland. Christine Zucchelli (2016)
 - A new garden ethic. Cultivating Defiant Compassion for an Uncertain Future. Benjamin Vogt (2017)
 - The Charter of the Forest: Plunder of the Commons- A Manifesto for Sharing Public Wealth. Guy Standing (2019)
 - Le Charte d’Arbes, Grand Metropole Lyon, France <https://blogs.grandlyon.com/developpementdurable/files/downloads/2015/06/Charte-v-british-complete-2.pdf>
- Invitation to comment: Aidan welcomes feedback please by email to ffrenchaid@hotmail.com

THE SPEAKING TREE

The concept of The Speaking Tree dates back to the 5th century BC in India when the founder of Buddhism meditated for 49 days under a Pipal tree, or *Ficus religiosa*. This column is a platform for thoughtful comment that may stimulate debate or just reflect on the way of the world.

TREE COUNCIL OF IRELAND

Fostering a tree culture in Ireland through action and awareness

www.treecouncil.ie

SUBSCRIBE FOR THE PERFECT GIFT

The Irish Garden is Ireland's bestselling gardening magazine, written by Irish gardeners for Irish gardeners.



Subscribe online today at www.garden.ie/subs
or contact Kim at 087-1945 888 or kim@theirishgarden.ie
(Note: this line is not staffed at all times, but please leave a message and Kim will return your call promptly.)

SUBSCRIBE TO THE IRISH GARDEN:
Delivered post-paid to your door → At a lower price than the shops → On the morning of publication → And never miss an issue.
Subscribers also receive a newsletter about special promotions and offers only available to subscribers.
The Irish Garden rates: ROI and NI annual €40, 2 years €78. Rest of world annual €60, 2 years €117



Specialising in the growing and supplying of first class forestry plants to the Irish forestry market

GROWING QUALITY FORESTS FOR THE FUTURE

www.nonesohardy.ie

Tel: 353 (0) 539429105
Paulbeg, Shillelagh, Co. Wicklow, Ireland

VAN DER WEL LIMITED
Nurseries and Garden Centre
AUGHRIM, CO. WICKLOW
Tel.: 0402-36595 <> Fax.: 0402-36506 <> E-mail: mail@vanderwel.ie

For a wide range of Hedging & Hedgerow plants (including Native species), Ornamental trees, Conifers, Shrubs, Fruit trees/bushes and much more.

Please Visit: www.vanderwel.ie and have a look at our Pricelist and Web Shop



Get Paid to Plant Trees on Your Land

Farmers and landowners can benefit from lucrative grants, and additional tax-free earnings while helping the environment.

- All the costs of planting including fencing requirements are covered by this Department
- Receive attractive financial premiums for the first 15 years of your new forest
- Earn money from sales: between €15,000 - €30,000 per hectare for harvesting mature trees
- Forestry grants and premiums can be paid in addition to direct payments made through CAP
- Complement your agricultural business with additional annual tax-free forestry payments
- Contribute towards climate mitigation, improving water quality and biodiversity

Consultant foresters can advise farmers and landowners on what portion of their land would be suited to farm forestry and how to secure the necessary licence approval.

For more information visit gov.ie/forestry



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine