

Press Release

Issued Friday 15th May

For Immediate Use



Press Release: Join in the celebration of biodiversity for National Biodiversity Week, 18th – 22nd May.

National Biodiversity Data Centre is working to ensure ‘biodiversity’ remains an important source of inspiration for people during difficult times.

National Biodiversity Week 2020 in Ireland runs from 18th to 22nd May, culminating with [International Day of Biological Diversity on the 22nd of May](#). Despite the ongoing [COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions](#) on physical social events, thankfully we are all still very much connected in a virtual world that is thriving and will help us to celebrate this important week in the calendar.

Perhaps time is ripe for us to celebrate ‘biodiversity’ and to reflect on our dependence on nature. Observations of flourishing roadside grass verges filled with Dandelions and Cowslips were commonplace in April in the throes of the lockdown indicating that the natural world appears to be thriving too, whilst green spaces in some residential areas have been blossoming with Red Clover and Cuckooflower providing important food resources for our beleaguered insects. A community in Portlaoise has even recently reported the occurrence of a rare [Green-winged Orchid](#) flowering in a local housing estate, nearly 120 years after it was previously found in the general Portlaoise area by one of Ireland’s most famous naturalists Robert Lloyd Praeger! There are most certainly silver linings to the lockdown for biodiversity.

Around this time last year Sir Robert Watson, chair of IPBES [the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services], released a [global assessment](#) of our natural ecosystems and identified “unprecedented” levels of species extinction and called for immediate, drastic global action. He called for “transformative change” to ensure that we conserve nature, restore it and use it sustainably. Perhaps a thing or two can be learned from the relaxation of maintenance crews and landscape contractors during the pandemic that can help us inch our way towards the necessary change needed to reverse biodiversity loss in Ireland.

The [National Biodiversity Data Centre](#) is just one of many organisations throughout Ireland that will be drawing peoples’ attention to Ireland’s *biodiversity* over the coming week.

With responsibility for managing Ireland’s largest source of data on Ireland’s biodiversity as well as the coordination of [national efforts to monitor environmental change](#) in the countryside through biological recording schemes, staff at the Centre are in good position to encourage better engagement with biodiversity in each and everyone’s own locality.

Current Government health measures in place allow you to exercise up to 5 kilometres from your house so for the next week why not use this opportunity to explore what nature you can find in your own locality. Of course, it would not be a normal Biodiversity Week if the National Biodiversity Data Centre did not have a programme of events planned to help the public engage with this celebration.

So why not participate in some of the events promoted by the National Biodiversity Data Centre to coincide with the National Biodiversity Week celebrations?

1. [Seashore Splash](#) – Saturday 16th to Sunday 24th May: we are asking people who are exercising along the coast within government Covid19 guidelines on travel, to record any marine species they find and submit them to us at [ExploreYourShore.ie](#). Two lucky recorders who submit records for our Seashore Splash! will win a copy of our brand-new Marine Bivalve Shells identification swatch.
2. [Dragonfly Dash](#) – Saturday 16th to Sunday 24th May: we will also be running a dragonfly recording initiative where we are asking those who are out exercising within government Covid19 guidelines on travel, to record any dragonflies or damselflies that they see. Records can be submitted at [Biodiversityireland.ie](#). One lucky recorder who submits a record for our Dragonfly Dash! will win a copy of a Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Ireland.
3. [Ireland's Biodiversity Top 10](#): The National Biodiversity Data Centre has compiled a series of Ireland's Biodiversity Top 10 blogs to highlight different aspects of Ireland's biodiversity. These informative notes on topics such as *10 species Ireland has lost*, *10 sites to visit before you die*, and *10 conservation success stories* will be promoted on social media throughout the week.
4. [World Bee Day](#) - Wednesday 20th May. This is a special day to celebrate bees and the valuable pollinator services they provide. Check out [Pollinators.ie](#) for ways to help you mark the day and help create awareness of the importance of bees.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre also encourages members of the public to engage with a variety of other ongoing initiatives which will continue to run throughout the year. If exploring wildlife is new to you but you want to get involved in documenting the biodiversity in your locality, then we have some easy ways to get started:

1. [#SpeciesADay](#) - The National Biodiversity Data Centre is continuing its #SpeciesADay initiative on social media where we encourage everyone to record a different species each day, that can be found within 5km of your home. We provide a photo and identification features to help you out and then it is up to you to head out and search for the species of the day.
2. [Backyard Biodiversity](#) – Adhere to the Covid-19 'Stay at home' protocol but still participate in recording biodiversity by seeing what can be found in your garden for Backyard Biodiversity. We provide accounts of 20 different species that you might find. Download the recording sheet and search for them in your garden. Then upload details of the sightings to the Backyard Biodiversity recording scheme.
3. [Flower Insect Timed Counts \(FIT Counts\)](#) – This citizen science survey can only be done in warm and dry weather and runs from now until the end of September. All you need to do is watch a 50x50cm patch of flowers for 10 minutes which could be in your garden, farm or local park, and record how many insects visit. You do not need to know any particular insect species in this scheme, but just how to tell the difference between the various major groupings so it's perfect for beginner recorders.
4. [Garden Butterfly Monitoring](#) – A new monitoring scheme that asks recorders to record the maximum number of butterflies seen in their garden during a 15-minute count. Register for this monitoring scheme and let us know how good your garden is for butterflies. Full details can be found at [Biodiversityireland.ie](#).

Follow the National Biodiversity Data Centre on Twitter (@BioDataCentre) and Facebook (@Biodiversity Ireland) for regular reminders and updates about the programme of events during Biodiversity Week.

With Sir. Robert Watson's words still echoing in many of our minds a year from since the release of the global assessment, it's worth reminding ourselves that big changes can be achieved with small incremental steps and for many of us that first step may be a simple and more regular interaction with nature. Now more than ever, we need to be boosting our interaction with the outdoors, even if its just for the benefit of our own mental and physical wellbeing. Which is why Sport Ireland in collaboration with the Mental Health Ireland, University of Limerick and the Health Research Institute are currently running the [#NatureMoves](#) social media campaign at the minute, in bid to get us all outside a little bit more and help lift our spirits. Why not support this worthy campaign too during these difficult times.

As always, many other Irish environmental organisations will also be celebrating National Biodiversity Week. Be sure to check out the individual websites of the member organisations of the Irish Environmental Network to find out more.

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Link for images:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/1bx7yd6jawkrzip/Press%20release%20images%20-%20National%20Biodiversity%20Week.zip?dl=0>

Relevant weblinks:

International Day of Biological Diversity: <https://www.cbd.int/idb/2020>

Latest public health measures: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>

National Biodiversity Data Centre: <https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/>

Seashore Splash: <https://exploreyourshore.ie/seashore-splash-may-2020/>

Dragonfly Dash: <https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/monitoring-scheme-initiatives/dragonfly-ireland-2019-2024/dragonfly-dash-may-2020/>

World Bee Day: <https://pollinators.ie/world-bee-day-2020/>

Backyard Biodiversity: <https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/additional-survey-schemes/backyard-biodiversity/>

Flower Insect Timed Count (FIT Count): <https://pollinators.ie/record-pollinators/fit-count/>

Garden Butterfly Monitoring Scheme: <https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/monitoring-scheme-initiatives/butterfly-monitoring-scheme/garden-butterfly-monitoring/>

Notes for Editor:

About the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a national organisation for the collection, collation, management, analysis and dissemination of data on Ireland's biological diversity. Biodiversity data are

a key requirement for understanding our natural surroundings, for tracking change in our environment and for gaining a greater insight on how we benefit from, and impact upon, the ecosystem goods and services provided by biological diversity; a national asset which contributes at least €2.8 billion to the Irish economy each year. The Data Centre was established by the Heritage Council in 2007 and is funded by the Heritage Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The Centre is operated under a service level agreement by Compass Informatics Limited, an information and location technologies company focussed on applications in natural resources and planning.

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