

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

For The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster of
Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady and Moyle Councils

2013 - 2018





Sloughan Glen Waterfall

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‘Our collective vision for the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster is for biodiversity to be valued and enjoyed by all’

Foreword

This document highlights the key habitats and species that can be found within the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster, why they are important and what we can do to conserve or enhance them.

The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster is one of the most beautiful and spectacular regions of Northern Ireland, well known for its stunning coastline, including Benone and Portstewart, its majestic rivers the Roe, the Bush and the Bann, its wealth of lowland raised bogs such as Garry and Dunloy bogs and the unique Rathlin Island. These areas are important for tourism, and with a large proportion of the land being agricultural land, are vitally important for sustaining local livelihoods.

The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster is also extremely important in terms of its biodiversity. It is always a thrill to see the whooper swan and wigeon returning to spend the winter in Lough Foyle, or a flash of the salmon and trout in the rivers Bann, Bush and Roe, to a glimpse of the scarce crimson and gold moth in the sand dunes, to catching a fleeting glance of a red squirrel in Cottage Wood or drumming snipe over Garry Bog.

The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster is committed to protecting our natural environment and the wildlife that depends on it, which is supported within all four council's corporate plans. To be successful, we need the support and help of local people, so we can work together to conserve our rich natural heritage for future generations.

Therefore we urge you to support your Local Biodiversity Action Plan and become actively involved in protecting the fantastic biodiversity we are so lucky to have on our doorstep.

Cllr Evelyne L. Robinson, Mayor, Ballymoney Borough Council

Cllr Sam Cole, Mayor, Coleraine Borough Council

Cllr Cathal McLaughlin, Mayor, Limavady Borough Council

Cllr Sandra Hunter, Chairperson, Moyle District Council





Pale Bellied Brent Geese, Lough Foyle

Biodiversity in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area

What is Biodiversity?

Very simply biodiversity is the total variety of all living things. This includes people, plants, animals, fungi, micro-organisms, the habitats where they live and the ecosystem which they are part of. Biodiversity exists in many places from native oak woodland and coastal sand-dunes, to places you least expect such as gardens and our many miles of roadside verges.

The biodiversity we see today is the result of millions of years of evolution, shaped by natural processes and, increasingly, by the influence of humans. Biodiversity is all around us, in our gardens, parks, woodlands, fields, mountains, lakes and rivers. It is easy to find but also easy to lose.

Why is Biodiversity Important?

Biodiversity is the web of life, of which we are an integral part. It provides us with essential goods and services ('ecosystem services') that we could not live without, such as the oxygen we breathe, water we drink and food that we eat. By adding beauty and variety to our surroundings, it enhances our health and well-being. Biodiversity adds character and distinctiveness to an area. The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster, is truly distinctive and varied from the Giants Causeway and Rathlin Island, to Binevenagh, the River Bann, and Garry Bog. Indeed, this natural beauty has helped to shape our culture and inspire our artists, writers and composers.

"Biodiversity itself is part of our inheritance and culture. Its future is bound up with our future. Because of the way we live, this variety of life is deteriorating. We accept that this is a sign of an unsustainable relationship between humanity and the natural world. And we believe this is true of NI, just as it is the world as a whole. We also believe this need not be so", (NI Executive, 2002)



Lowland Raised Bog



Himalayan Balsam



Litter Pick with Community Volunteers

Habitat Loss

Habitat loss is the greatest threat to biodiversity worldwide. All habitats are under threat from loss, damage or fragmentation. For example, wetlands support a rich array of plants and animals but are subject to damaging activities such as drainage, conversion or abandonment. Upland areas are under threat from trampling, recreation undertaken in an unsustainable way and over grazing, which result in the loss of specialised plants, peat erosion and mortality of ground nesting birds.

Invasive Alien Species

Non-native invasive species are the second biggest threat to biodiversity after habitat loss. Human activities are the main cause of the spread of invasives; some are deliberately released or escape from gardens or farms while others are stowaways with imported goods. Examples include Japanese knotweed, himalayan balsam and giant hogweed which occur mainly along water bodies. The non-native grey squirrel is now present throughout the area, which places the native red squirrel under increased threat. As invasive species tend to be highly adaptable and strong competitors, they can out-compete native species for food and space. For further information on invasive species see:

www.invasivespeciesireland.com

Pollution

Pollution is the introduction of contaminants into the natural environment and can take a variety of forms, including water pollution. Water bodies can become polluted through the introduction of sewage, industrial waste, agricultural run-off and litter. Litter is a problem particularly in the marine and coastal environments. Sea-based sources include fishing vessels, pleasure craft and cruise liners. Land-based sources include beach users, untreated sewage, industrial facilities, urban run-off, fly-tipping and agricultural waste. Marine litter can be consumed by marine animals when it is mistaken for food and can cause entanglement and smothering of seabed communities.

Threats to Biodiversity in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster

It is through biodiversity that all living things are connected. As the human population is increasing and asserting more pressure on the natural world, this relationship is being damaged. Major threats include pollution, over harvesting, climate change and invasive species. The UK has lost over 100 species during the last century with many more under the threat of extinction, especially at a local level. Action must be taken to prevent further loss of biodiversity. The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster's biodiversity is no exception as it is under threat by human activities such as habitat loss, invasive alien species and pollution.

Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area

Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady and Moyle Councils cover an area of 1,968 sq Km (14% of NI) and approximately 155km, including Rathlin Island, of NI's coastline, encompassing urban settlements such as Ballymoney, Coleraine Limavady and Ballycastle along with numerous villages and hamlets. The Council Cluster has a population size of 137,724 (2007), with 52% of the current population residing in rural areas. The population is projected to rise to 140,930 by 2021. It attracts an estimated 561,100 (NITB 2009) visitors annually including domestic holiday makers, who visit the many attractions of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area, including the striking landscape and natural environment, from Limavady's spectacular coastline to Moyle's red squirrels, from the bogs of Ballymoney to the impressive Bann Estuary of Coleraine.

Of the eight Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) that are designated in NI, four lie within this area; Binevenagh AONB lies to the West, Causeway Coast AONB to the North, Sperrins AONB to the South West and Antrim Coast and Glens AONB to the East. A large number of sites in the area

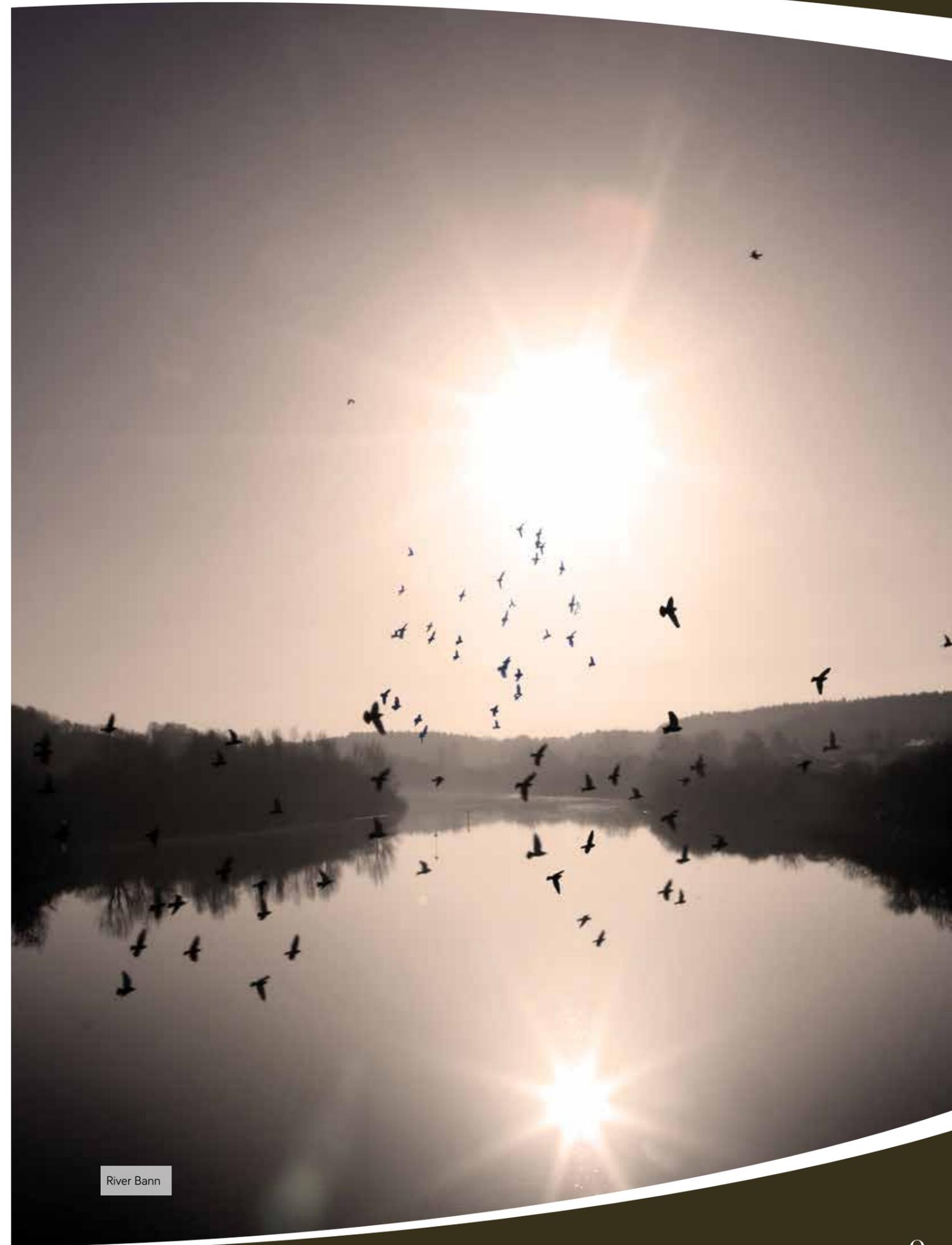
have been designated through legislation to protect key areas or habitats for nature conservation. The area has 58 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), 12 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), 4 Special Protection Areas, (SPA), 3 Ramsar sites, 13 Nature Reserves and 209 Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI). This reflects the importance of the area for biodiversity. Beyond these protected sites, in the wider countryside, land is managed for agriculture some of which will be under agri-environment scheme agreements. These are designed to encourage the adoption of environmentally friendly management practices which can have great benefits for our biodiversity.

For the latest on designated sites visit: www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/biodiversity/whatisbiodiversity/designated-areas.htm

The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area has a diverse range of habitat types, including woodland, grassland, bog, heathland, peatland, wetland, coastal and marine habitats, which in turn support an amazing number and variety of species. Indeed, of the 51 NI Priority Habitats at least

39 occur in the area. These habitats support many animal and plant species; of the 481 NI Priority Species, a minimum of 108 have been recorded in the area.

In order to conserve these diverse habitats and species for the future, whether rare or common, rural or urban, we must take ownership and get involved in protecting them. Read on to find out more about the variety of habitats and species that can be found in your area and how you can take local action to look after the biodiversity that exists just outside your door.



River Bann

Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The publication of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) is the result of a number of international, national and local processes. It all began in 1992, which saw the gathering of world leaders from over 150 countries at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit.

The UK and NI Biodiversity Strategies include national targets and actions for a range of important habitats and species. To achieve the recommendations of these strategies, local biodiversity action must be taken.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans do just that developing local action for local wildlife. It also links in with and helps deliver other plans within the area such as, Council Corporate Plans, the Tourism Area Plan and the AONB Management and Action Plans. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan, or LBAP process as it has become known, is a fantastic way to promote biodiversity throughout NI. It is now the turn of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster to celebrate our local biodiversity and encourage people to work together to conserve it for future generations. The LBAP is significant for the four councils concerned and the NI biodiversity process as it is the first such plan to be produced on the basis of the proposed new council structure, emanating from the Local Government Reform. In addition it is only the second LBAP to be published since the new Biodiversity Duty was introduced in 2011.

1992

- The UK signed up to the Convention on Biological Diversity at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit.

1995

- The UK Biodiversity Strategy was developed.

2002

- The NI Biodiversity Strategy was produced.



Benone Sand Dunes Conservation Grazing Project

Biodiversity: It's our duty

The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011 places a statutory duty on all public bodies to:

'further the conservation of biodiversity in exercising any functions'

The Act requires public bodies to take reasonable steps to further the conservation of priority habitats and species or to promote such actions by others. This will help to ensure that NI meets its European and international commitments to work towards halting biodiversity loss.

The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster LBAP project is part funded for three years by NI Environment Agency (NIEA) with match funding from the four partner Councils; Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady & Moyle. A Steering Group was formed to guide and support the project, particularly in the creation and implementation of the LBAP and associated Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs).

Key Aims of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Project

- Conserve and enhance the rich biodiversity of the area
- Raise awareness of the variety and importance of the areas biodiversity
- Encourage local ownership and guardianship of the areas biodiversity
- Where possible, incorporate the sustainable use of biodiversity into all new policies and strategies affecting the area covered by the cluster councils



Common Darter Dragonfly



Bog Cotton

Priority Habitats and Species in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area

The first major milestone in the LBAP process is the completion of a biodiversity audit to determine what habitats and species occur in the area, especially NI Priority Habitats and Species.

The audit signposts available data and highlighted gaps in existing information.

This helped guide the selection of habitats and species requiring priority action in the area, along with selecting habitats and species that would benefit from action carried out throughout the cluster area, for which HAPs and SAPs will initially be created. This list is not exhaustive and will be updated during the course of the LBAP.



Salt Marsh, Roe Estuary



Yellowhammer

Habitats selected for Priority Action *

Although we aim to help in the protection of all of habitats listed in this LBAP, the habitats below have been selected for local priority action:

Coastal

Sand Dunes, Saltmarsh

Grassland and Farmland

Lowland Meadows, Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh

Marine

Intertidal Mudflats

Peatland and Heathland

Lowland Raised Bog, Blanket Bog, Lowland Heath

Urban

Urban Greenspace, Brownfield and Industrial Sites, Gardens

Woodland

Oakwoods, Mixed Ashwoods, Parkland, Wet Woodlands, Species-rich Hedgerows.

Wetland

Rivers, Eutrophic Lakes, Fens and Swamps, Lowland Fens

These habitats are indicated by * symbol above throughout the LBAP.

Species selected for Priority Action

The species listed below have been selected as local priority species. Through raising awareness, practical conservation and education, we aim to protect these species and, in doing so, help to conserve others. For information on objectives and local actions for these species see pages 42 - 45:

- Harbour Porpoise
- Swift
- Barn Owl
- Yellowhammer
- Otter
- Fish Species (Atlantic Salmon and Brown Trout)
- Scarce Crimson and Gold
- Red Squirrel
- Bumblebee
- Bats

These species are indicated by # symbol above throughout the LBAP.

Many of the diverse habitats and species found in the area will now be summarised. Each broad habitat category details the priority habitats in the area, where they occur locally, which key species they support, main threats to the habitat and examples of the objectives and actions required to conserve them. For further information on any of the habitats or species listed, please contact the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster Biodiversity Officer.

Coastal

The coastline is a characteristic feature of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area, extending from Greysteel to Waterfoot and including beautiful, sandy beaches such as Benone and White Park Bay and NI's only inhabited island, Rathlin Island. This spectacular coast contains a range of habitats including saltmarsh and extensive sand dune systems.

Key Threats

- Reclamation
- Coastal Squeeze
- Cutting and grazing
- Erosion
- Invasive species
- Pollution
- Unregulated shore-based shellfish collection

Objectives

- Maintain the extent of the coastal habitat within the area
- Educate and raise awareness of the biodiversity value of the coastal environment
- Improve the condition of coastal habitats on selected sites
- Improve knowledge on threats to intertidal habitats and species

Local Actions

- Raise awareness of coastal biodiversity through events, talks and educational packs
- Promote the recording of key coastal species
- Encourage the monitoring of the coastal environment by local community groups
- Support studies of intertidal communities
- Encourage the development of bye-laws to manage the coast for the benefit of people and wildlife

Coastal Sand Dunes*

Sand dunes develop when wind blown sand is trapped by specialised dune building grasses, such as marram, above the high water mark. Sand dunes are diverse habitats that support a range of common and rare plants, mosses, insects, birds and mammals. They support a large proportion of our butterfly, moth, ant, bee and wasp species. Sand dunes also provide nesting habitat for breeding birds such as the skylark and meadow pipit.

Three of the largest sand dune systems in NI are found within the area: Magilligan (SAC), Bann Estuary (SAC) and White Park Bay (ASSI). Magilligan SAC includes Benone and Downhill, which is part of an extensive dune system over 6000 years old. Magilligan (SAC) supports the rare small eggar moth. Keep your eyes peeled for the secretive common lizard.

Bann Estuary SAC dunes support a diverse range of plants including wild thyme which in turn supports the rare, scarce crimson and gold moth. In addition there are a number of orchid species including; pyramidal, northern marsh and the rare frog orchid.

White Park Bay (ASSI) sand dune system remains largely unmodified and is notable for its orchids. Eight species have been recorded, including frog, pyramidal, fragrant, bee and small-white orchid.

Coastal Saltmarsh*

Saltmarshes are highly productive habitats that occur in estuaries, saline lagoons, behind barrier islands, at the heads of sea loughs and on beach plains. They are dominated by salt tolerant plant species that are adapted to regular immersion by the tide. Saltmarshes act as high tide refuges for wading birds and wildfowl feeding on adjacent mudflats such as the oystercatcher, redshank, golden plover and curlew.

Saltmarsh is now a rare habitat in NI as the majority of the original habitat has been reclaimed and improved for agriculture. Lough Foyle supports extensive areas of saltmarsh in NI. The Bann Estuary (SAC) saltmarsh associated with the river estuary supports an array of plant species.

Coastal Vegetated Shingle

Coastal vegetated shingle can be defined as sediment with particle sizes larger in diameter than sand (>2mm) but smaller than boulders (<200mm). Vegetated shingle banks occur at the upper end of the shore where conditions are favourable, usually in high energy environments. They occupy long strips but typically have a small surface area and support specialised plant and invertebrate communities.

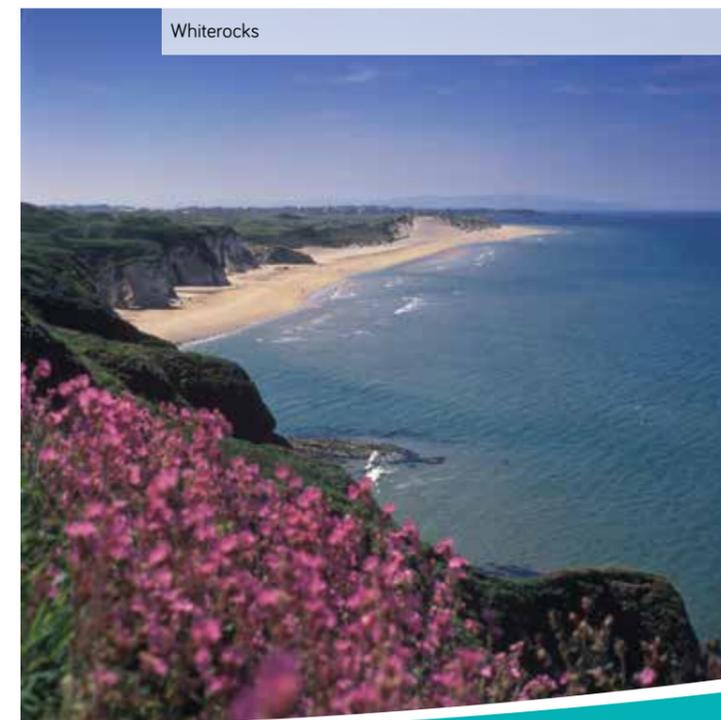
This can be found along the shores of Rathlin Island. Rare plants found in these areas include sea kale, oysterplant and yellow-horned poppy. These habitats also support breeding birds such as ringed plover and oystercatcher.

Maritime Cliff and Slopes

These include hard and soft cliffs, which extend from the splash zone (above the high water mark) at the base of the cliff, to the land at the cliff top, which is influenced by salt spray. Maritime cliffs are often significant for their populations of breeding seabirds, numbers of which can be of international importance. They provide nesting sites for breeding birds such as the guillemot, kittiwake and razorbill. Examples include the cliffs on Rathlin Island, the Moors Castlerock and the cliffs along the Causeway Coast.

Subtidal Sands and Gravels

These are the most common habitats found below the lowest low tide and include a range of environments, from sheltered gravels to mobile sandbanks. Most gravel beds occur in water deeper than 10 metres. Lough Foyle has a significant area of sand deposits at the mouth of the lough, from which extensive dune systems have developed. Subtidal sands and gravels are important for sea cucumbers, burrowing anemones, seapens, starfish and the NI Priority Species, the rugose squat lobster.





Shelduck



Seaside Centaury

Scarce Crimson & Gold



Key Coastal Species

Shelduck

One of the most attractive of our waterfowl, with its red bill, white and chestnut body, dark green head and neck. This species is mainly associated with estuaries and coastal mudflats, and breeds in rabbit burrows.

Seaside centaury

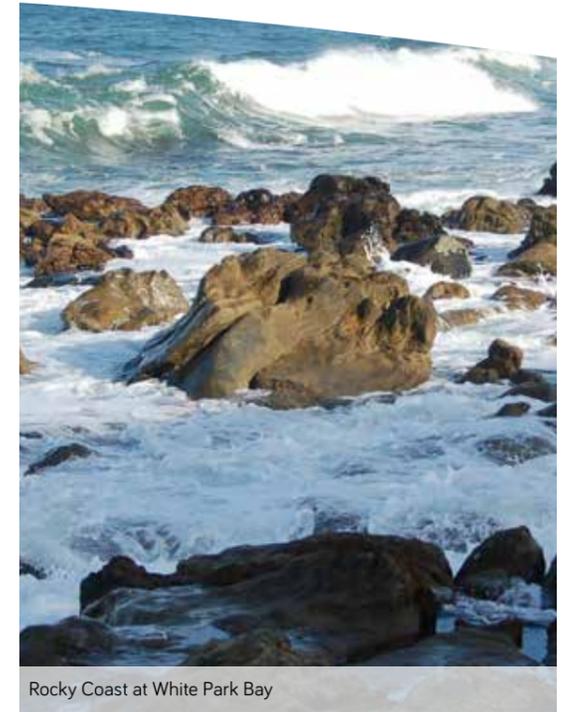
Similar to the delicate common centaury but has narrow leaves and the flowers are of a more intense colour. It is a rare and vulnerable species; the Bann Estuary and Magilligan sand dunes are now thought to contain the entire Irish population of this species.

Invertebrates

Scarce crimson and gold moth, and the northern mining bee (*Colletes floralis*) are rare invertebrates found in the coastal sand dunes in this area. In the British Isles, the scarce crimson and gold's population is limited to the north coast of NI, the northern tip of the Isle of Man and the Burren. Its name describes its colouration; bright yellow background colour to the forewings with a strong dark pink border and cross line.



Black-headed Gulls



Rocky Coast at White Park Bay



White Park Bay

Grassland & Farmland

Grassland is a major habitat type in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area, which includes lowland meadows, calcareous grassland and purple moor grass and rush pastures. These grasslands differ depending on the soil type and vegetation cover. Agriculture is a major industry within the area and, if managed appropriately, farmland can provide food and shelter for many native plants and animals.

Agricultural intensification is a major threat to native farmland species, particularly birds. Agri-environment Schemes have been introduced by DARD to encourage the adoption of environmentally friendly management practices by farmers and landowners to help ensure that farmland wildlife can live in harmony with agriculture.

Objectives

- Improve the biodiversity value and extent of species-rich grassland in the area
- Raise awareness of species-rich grassland and mixed farming options
- Increase management of suitable grassland areas within Council owned sites

Key Threats

- Inappropriate grazing regime
- Burning
- Agricultural improvement
- Habitat fragmentation
- Abandonment

Local Actions

- Identify key grassland sites within the area that could be improved
- Liaise with DRD Roads Service and other governmental organisations to enhance the biodiversity value of roadside verges through appropriate management

Lowland Meadows *

Lowland meadows are unimproved neutral grassland found on enclosed land, typically in well drained mineral soil with grass rich in wildflowers. They can be found in former hay meadows or in non-agricultural sites such as churchyards and roadside verges. These meadows have a high coverage of grasses such as common bent, red fescue and crested dogstail. They support priority plant species such as meadow crane's-bill, wood crane's-bill and fungi such as the pink meadow waxcap. The skylark and Irish hare are also characteristic of this habitat.

Lowland meadows are found at Ballymacallion (ASSI), Castle River Valley (ASSI), and the Lower Bann Floodplain (LCA). Roadside verges are an important area where a large amount of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area lowland meadows remain, and they provide an important corridor for wildlife to travel.

Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh *

This is pasture that is periodically inundated by water or meadows with ditches containing standing brackish or fresh water. Coastal grazing marshes occur in flat coastal areas typically behind coastal defences or natural barriers (e.g. sand dunes) and are drained by ditches of standing water. Floodplain grazing marsh is found near slow-flowing rivers and lakes, where they can also be drained by a network of ditches. In the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster this habitat is found at the Bann Estuary (ASSI/SAC) and the shores of Lough Foyle. These habitats usually support a high proportion of herbs such as marsh thistle, meadowsweet, water mint and marsh bedstraw and wading birds including curlew, redshank and lapwing.

Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture

This habitat occurs on poorly drained, acidic soils in lowland areas often as fragments within farmland in wet hollows or field corners. Purple moor grass is always present in the mix, with many other species of grasses, sedges, rushes and wildflowers such as orchids, wild angelica, meadow thistle, devil's-bit scabious and self-heal. This habitat, in association with others, provides ideal sites for a number of NI's Priority bird species such as the skylark, curlew, reed bunting and snipe. The Irish lady's tresses orchid and marsh fritillary butterfly may also be found in this habitat. This habitat occurs within Ballymacallion (ASSI), Castle River (ASSI), Smulgedon (ASSI), Errigal Glen (ASSI), Coolnasillagh (ASSI), Ballymacaldrack (ASSI) and the Antrim Plateau.

Arable Field Margins

Arable field margins are strips of land between cereal crops and the boundary of the field. They are deliberately managed under agri-environment agreements to benefit farmland wildlife. Arable field margins provide nesting and feeding sites for many birds such as skylark and linnet, not to mention the huge variety of insects including butterflies, grasshoppers and plant bugs. Many species of priority wildflowers can be found in these margins. Within the area, arable field margins are created by individual landowners through agri-environment schemes.



Mixed Farmland



Cuckoo Flower



Knapweed

Arable Field in Myroe, looking towards Binevenagh





Irish Hare

Key Grassland Species

Irish Hare

The Irish hare is a sub-species of the mountain hare that is only found in Ireland. It has a russet brown coat, long black tipped ears and, with its powerful back legs, it can reach speeds of up to 30mph and jump to heights of around 2 metres! Hares mostly feed at night and rest during the day in scraped out hollows called 'forms'. When disturbed they can be seen bounding across the landscape, flashing their white tail.

Barn Owl

The barn owl is a much loved countryside bird. The barn owl's beauty is not for show – their white heart shaped face and asymmetrical ears help to pinpoint fast moving prey. Their wings are specially adapted for silent flight in which they can reach speeds up to 50mph! Barn owls have undergone major declines due to a variety of factors including agricultural intensification, loss of nesting sites (e.g. old trees and farm buildings) and rodenticides.

Pink Meadow Waxcap

The pink meadow waxcap fungus is one of a group of brightly coloured waxcaps. It is nicknamed the 'ballerina waxcap' due to its attractive pink domed cap and whitish stem. It can be found in meadows, lawns and churchyards throughout the area. Fungi are extremely important organisms as they decompose dead material and recycle nutrients that can be reused by other plants and animals.



Barn Owl

Pink Meadow Waxcap

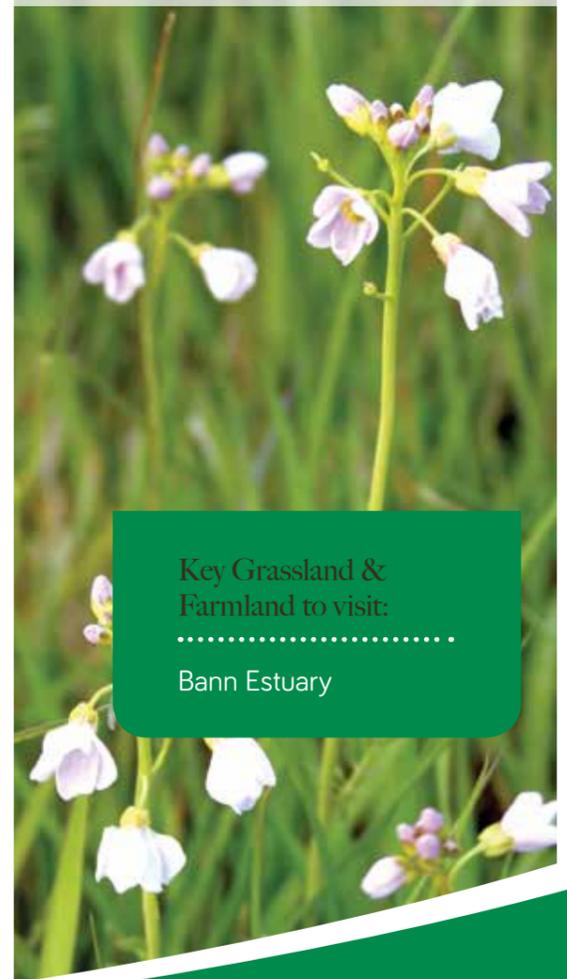


Farmland in the Glens of Antrim

River Bann



Cuckoo Flower



Key Grassland & Farmland to visit:
.....
Bann Estuary

Marine

The marine environment supports over half of the UK's biodiversity. The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster cover a large section of the NI marine area and approximately 155km of coastline running from Greysteel to Waterfoot, and includes Lough Foyle, waters around Rathlin Island and the Skerries. Lough Foyle, Rathlin Island and Sheep Island are all designated Special Protection Areas (SPA) and support internationally important breeding populations of cormorants, whooper swan, light-bellied brent, razorbill, guillemot and kittiwake. Lough Foyle and Rathlin Island have also been designated as Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as they encompass a range of important habitats.

Objectives

- Raise awareness of our important and unique marine biodiversity
- Maintain and improve the condition of marine habitats within the area

Key Threats

- Physical disturbance e.g. trawling/dredging
- Water pollution
- Over exploitation of marine resources
- Marine litter
- Invasive species

Local Actions

- Collaborate with the Council's tourism and education programmes to promote the biodiversity, tourism and educational importance of the marine environment through talks and events
- Raise awareness of marine biodiversity through education packs and interpretation
- Work in partnership with local environmental organisations to hold 'shore clean-ups'
- Promote recording of key marine species such as cetaceans
- Promote marine recording schemes such as Seasearch and Shore-thing

Saline Lagoons

Saline lagoons are water-bodies with a restricted connection to the sea due to natural or artificial barriers. As a result, the salinity of the water is neither marine nor fresh but may vary from brackish to fully saline. Organisms found in saline lagoons range from marine and freshwater species to lagoon specialists. Saline lagoons are also important habitats for large numbers of wildfowl and waders. Saline lagoons are found at Bann Estuary (ASSI/SAC) and Ballykelly by Lough Foyle.

Intertidal Mudflats*

Mudflats are intertidal habitats consisting mainly of deposited mud, silt and clay. They are found in estuaries and other sheltered areas such as sea lagoons. Mudflats are submerged at high tide and exposed at low tide. As a result, they support an abundance of small organisms (such as lugworms and molluscs), which provide food for a large number of birds and fish. Lough Foyle contains extensive areas of mudflats. These areas support eelgrass (*Zostera*) beds which are excellent feeding grounds for wintering wildfowl and waders.

Seagrass beds

Seagrasses often grow in dense, extensive beds, creating a productive and diverse habitat that provides food, shelter and nursery grounds for a wide variety of other plant and animal species, including many of our valuable commercial fish species. Seagrass beds occur in Lough Foyle (ASSI/SAC), the Bann Estuary (ASSI/SAC) and the Skerries.

Maerl Beds

Maerl is the term used to describe several species of calcified marine algae. Although it is slow growing, over long periods its dead calcareous skeleton can accumulate into deep deposits. With an additional thin layer of living maerl, beds are formed. Maerl beds are typically found in sheltered conditions with some tidal flow, including the narrows and rapids of sea lagoons. These habitats can support communities of sea pens and sea cucumbers. Maerl beds are found in Lough Foyle.



Rathlin from Fair Head



Mudflats, Ballykelly



Seagrass

Maerl Beds





Common Seal

Key Marine Species

Common Seal

The common seal or harbour seal is the smallest of the two species of seal found along the NI coastline. It can be recognised by its short muzzle and V-shaped nostrils, compared to the longer, doglike muzzle of the grey seal. The common seal can be seen hauled out on rocky shores and sandbanks from July to September. They can be seen locally hauled out on the Skerries and Rathlin Island.

Fan mussel

Named because of its thin, fragile, triangular shaped shells, the species is described as 'scarce' with the only known living populations present in the UK around Rathlin Island and in Plymouth Sound. However, it is also believed that they may be present around the Skerries after two empty shells of fan shell were found there during a recent survey.

Red Blenny

The red or Portuguese blenny has only been seen at one location in NI, the Skerries. The species is fairly widespread on the exposed west coasts of the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and the Isles of Scilly. Blennies have elongated, tapered bodies and a continuous long dorsal fin. Increasing information of its distribution may be the result of the growth of scuba diving, underwater digital photography and marine recording in the NI and UK.



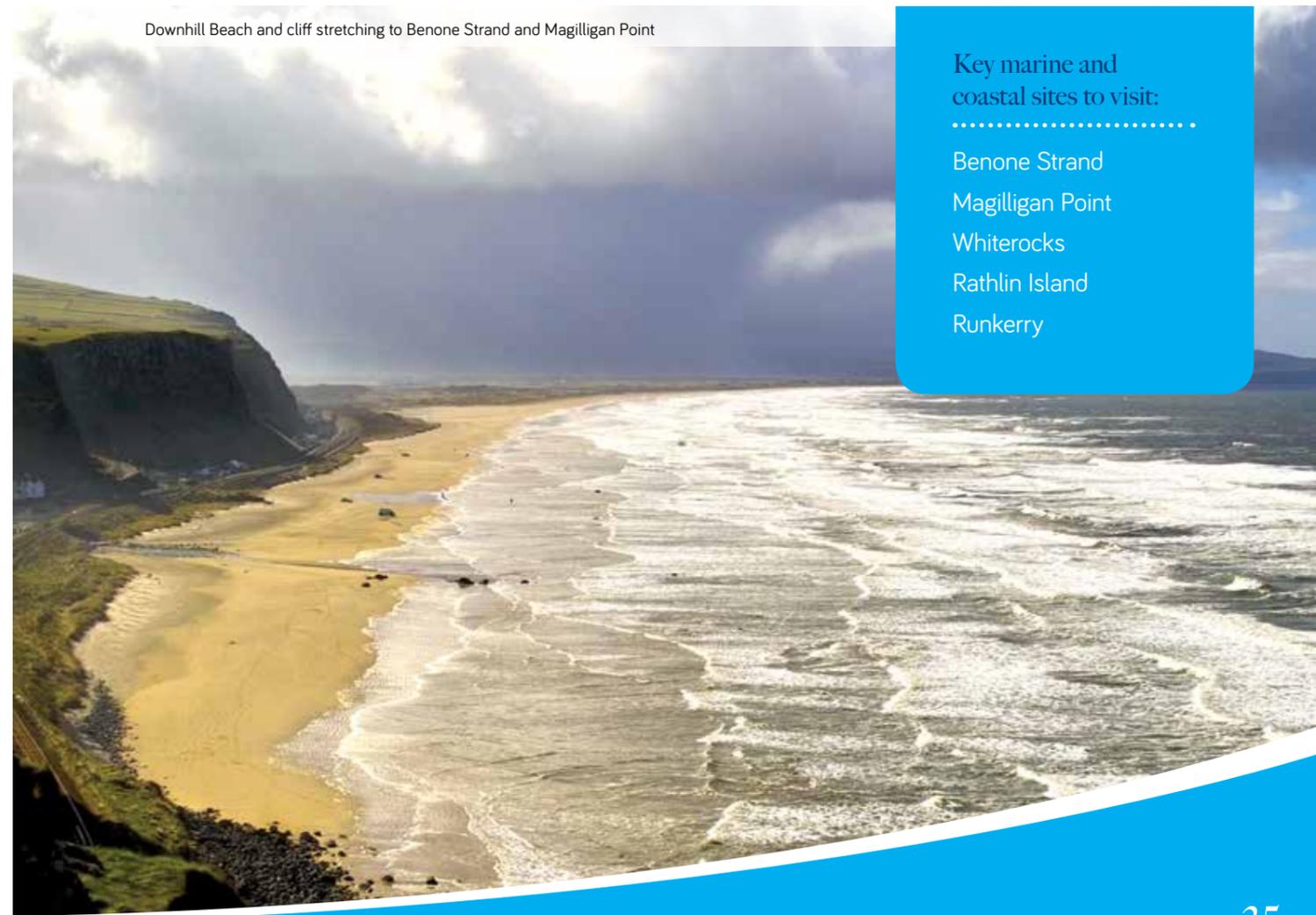
Fan Mussel

Red Blenny



Eelgrass

Downhill Beach and cliff stretching to Benone Strand and Magilligan Point



- Key marine and coastal sites to visit:
-
 - Benone Strand
 - Magilligan Point
 - Whiterocks
 - Rathlin Island
 - Runkerry

Peatland & Heathland

Peat bogs form one of the most characteristic features on the island of Ireland. The climate here and in north-western regions of Britain is particularly well suited to peat formation with high rainfall, cool summers and high atmospheric humidity. The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area has some large areas of blanket bog, lowland raised bog, lowland and upland heathland.

Key Threats

- Peat extraction
- Drainage
- Inappropriate burning
- Overgrazing and trampling
- Agricultural improvement

Objectives

- Maintain the extent of peatland/heathland habitats within the area
- Raise awareness of the biodiversity value of peatlands/heathlands
- Increase recording of key peatland/heathland species
- Promote the use of peat alternative materials

Local Actions

- Map the distribution of peatland/heathland habitats within the area
- Work with local communities to highlight the importance of peatlands/heathlands
- Promote the use of peat alternative materials at events (e.g. garden centres)
- Give talks to local gardening clubs on peat free compost
- Work with the Council to trial peat free compost in flower beds.
- Promote the recording of key peatland species through relevant communities and groups such as ramblers

Lowland Raised Bog*

Lowland raised bogs are peatlands found in lowland areas, generally below 150m. The waterlogged soils allow the accumulation of dead organic matter in anaerobic conditions and the formation of peat. Over time, they form a classic dome shape which can reach more than 12m in depth. Due to the harsh conditions, only a limited number of specialised plants can live in these habitats, including cotton grasses, cross-leaved heath and bog asphodel. Sphagnum mosses are the building blocks of bogs, giving them their spongy surface. Lowland raised bogs are excellent habitats for damselflies, dragonflies, butterflies and birds such as the skylark and grasshopper warbler. The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area hold some of the best and largest examples of this habitat in NI, Garry Bog (ASSI/SAC) and Dunloy Bog (ASSI). Some lowland raised bogs across the area have been cut-over in the past and some have been reclaimed into grassland.

Blanket Bog*

This generally occurs in upland areas and is a layer of peat of an average depth of 0.5-3.0m and associated vegetation covering the land like a 'blanket'. Dominant plant species include heather, cross-leaved heath, bog cotton and specialist plants including sundews and the important Sphagnum bog mosses. Hen harrier, red grouse, skylark, Irish hare, otter and the common lizard all utilise this upland habitat. The Garron Plateau (ASSI), Slieveanorra and Croaghan (ASSI) and Altikeeragh (ASSI) are examples of this habitat and are largely intact blanket bogs.

Lowland Heathland*

Occurs on mineral soils and thin peat; this habitat is characterised by the presence of dwarf shrubs including heather, western gorse and bell heather. Lowland heathland lies generally below 300m and supports a range of flora and fauna not found on upland heath. This habitat occurs along the coastline of the area.

Upland Heathland

Upland heathland occurs on acidic soil and thin peat in upland areas on the higher slopes, generally above heights of around 300m. However, in the west of NI, this habitat can occur in areas as low as 120m. This habitat is characterised by dwarf shrubs such as heather, bilberry, crowberry and bell heather. Examples, under Forest Service ownership, are found at Springwell Forest, Cam Forest and Grange Park.



Lowland Raised Bog, Garry Bog



Lowland Heathland

Upland Heathland, Ballyhackett



Key Peatland Species

Sundew

A common insectivorous plant found on peatlands. Leaves are covered in hairs which secrete a sticky liquid that insects stick to; these are then digested by the plant's enzymes. This helps it survive in acidic and nutrient poor environments. All three species - oblong-leaved, round-leaved and great sundew have been recorded in the area.

Common (or Viviparous) Lizard

The only terrestrial reptile native to NI, it occurs in habitats such as blanket bog, dry stone walls and embankments and coastal habitats. You can easily distinguish between males and females, as the male has a speckled back and orange belly, whereas the female has a striped back. They can be spotted basking in the open in spring and summer on a stone, log or grass tussock to absorb the heat from the sun.

Dragonflies and Damselflies

A group of conspicuous, highly colourful aquatic insects. The Irish damselfly is a NI Priority Species because its entire UK population and a significant proportion of the Irish population is present in NI. It is found on sheltered lakes and large pools on cutover bogs.



Sundew



Common Lizard

Banded Demoiselle Damselfly



Croaghan Way

Guided Walk, Croaghan Way



Key Peatlands & Healthlands to visit:
.....
Garry Bog
Altarichard / Croaghan Way
Cam Forest

Urban

Urban green space and gardens have a special importance for biodiversity, as they are where people and wildlife co-exist. Urban parks, amenity and recreational areas, riverside walks, industrial sites, brownfield or abandoned sites and gardens in towns and villages are essential places for wildlife and spaces for people to relax and enjoy nature. Urban green sites and private gardens are where most children first experience wildlife, and where most adults interact with it on a regular basis.

Objectives

- Raise awareness of the importance of urban greenspace and gardens for biodiversity
- Improve and expand the biodiversity value of gardens and urban greenspace
- Increase the connectivity of urban greenspace

Key Threats

- Urban development
- Unsuitable reclamation
- Invasive species
- Lack of appropriate management
- Landfill

Local Actions

- Run wildlife gardening competitions for individuals, community groups, businesses and schools
- Raise awareness of 'wildlife friendly' gardening through public events and the media
- Collaborate with the Council's Parks Department to improve the biodiversity value and interpretation of local parks
- Place wildlife nesting boxes in Council owned sites and hold nest box workshops with schools/community groups
- Create and manage a network of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) in Council owned sites

Urban Greenspace *

Small pockets of greenspace in urban settings can provide ideal habitats for a wide range of plants and animals. Sites such as golf courses, cemeteries, roundabouts and small parks provide safe havens for wildlife in busy towns and cities. There are many examples of small parks and green-spaces in the council cluster area which are of benefit to people and wildlife alike, such as Riverside Park, Armoyn and Somerset Riverside Park, Coleraine.

Parks are generally larger and more mature than gardens, therefore tend to have a more diverse range of wildlife associated with them. Parks are typically managed for formal and informal recreation but many could be developed to enhance their biodiversity value. Good examples of public parks in the area include Riverside Park, Ballymoney, Cottage Wood, Cushendall, Anderson Park, Coleraine and Dungiven Castle Park.

Industrial, Business Sites and Harbours *

Wildlife can flourish in industrial or built-up areas, including business sites and retail parks. Many industrial sites have areas within their premises, such as neglected corners, that can benefit wildlife. Old derelict buildings can provide roosting sites for bats and nesting places for birds such as the swallow, swift and house martin. The development of new industrial sites can provide ideal opportunities to create 'wildlife-friendly' areas through landscaping using native flowers, shrubs and trees. Harbours can provide excellent nesting sites for seabirds such as the black guillemot.

Gardens *

Every garden, however big or small, rural or urban, supports some level of biodiversity. Garden plants, soil, stones and plant pots all provide shelter for birds, insects, frogs and even small mammals such as hedgehogs.

Gardens may be small individually but collectively they make up a large proportion of greenspace in the area. They can create links between urban greenspace and the wider countryside. Gardens are extremely important for the bumblebees and butterflies in the summer as garden flowers provide a rich source of nectar. The insects, in turn, attract birds and small mammals. In the winter, when the weather turns colder, gardens can provide valuable sites for hibernating animals.



Golf Course



Drumaheglis



Wildlife Garden



Key Urban Species

Hedgehog



Hedgehog

The western European hedgehog was selected as a UK Priority Species in 2007 due to a decline in numbers. They were once common in parks, gardens and farmland throughout mainland Britain and Ireland; they prefer woodland edges, hedgerows and suburban habitats where there is plenty of food such as beetles, worms, caterpillars and slugs.

Ladybird

Although often inconspicuous, insects play vital roles in garden ecosystems, by pollinating flowers and controlling insect pests. Ladybirds are small, brightly coloured beetles which vary in the number of their spots, ranging from 2 to 22 spots. Their striking colours (red, orange, yellow or even black) warn predators of their bitter taste. Ladybirds are usually welcomed into gardens as they are voracious consumers of insect pests such as aphids.

Watch out for the harlequin ladybird which is an invasive species that is larger than our native ladybirds. They can out-compete the natives for food and predate on their larvae. For further information or to report a sighting visit

www.invasivespeciesireland.com

Bumblebee

There are six common bumblebee species that can be found in gardens, known as 'the big six', including the white-tailed and red-tailed bumblebees. During the summer bumblebees are 'busy', collecting nectar and in turn, pollinating native plants and agricultural crops. Sadly, bumblebees are in decline due to a loss of natural habitats. Although species-rich grassland is the preferred habitat, urban gardens are becoming increasingly important refuges for our bumblebees.

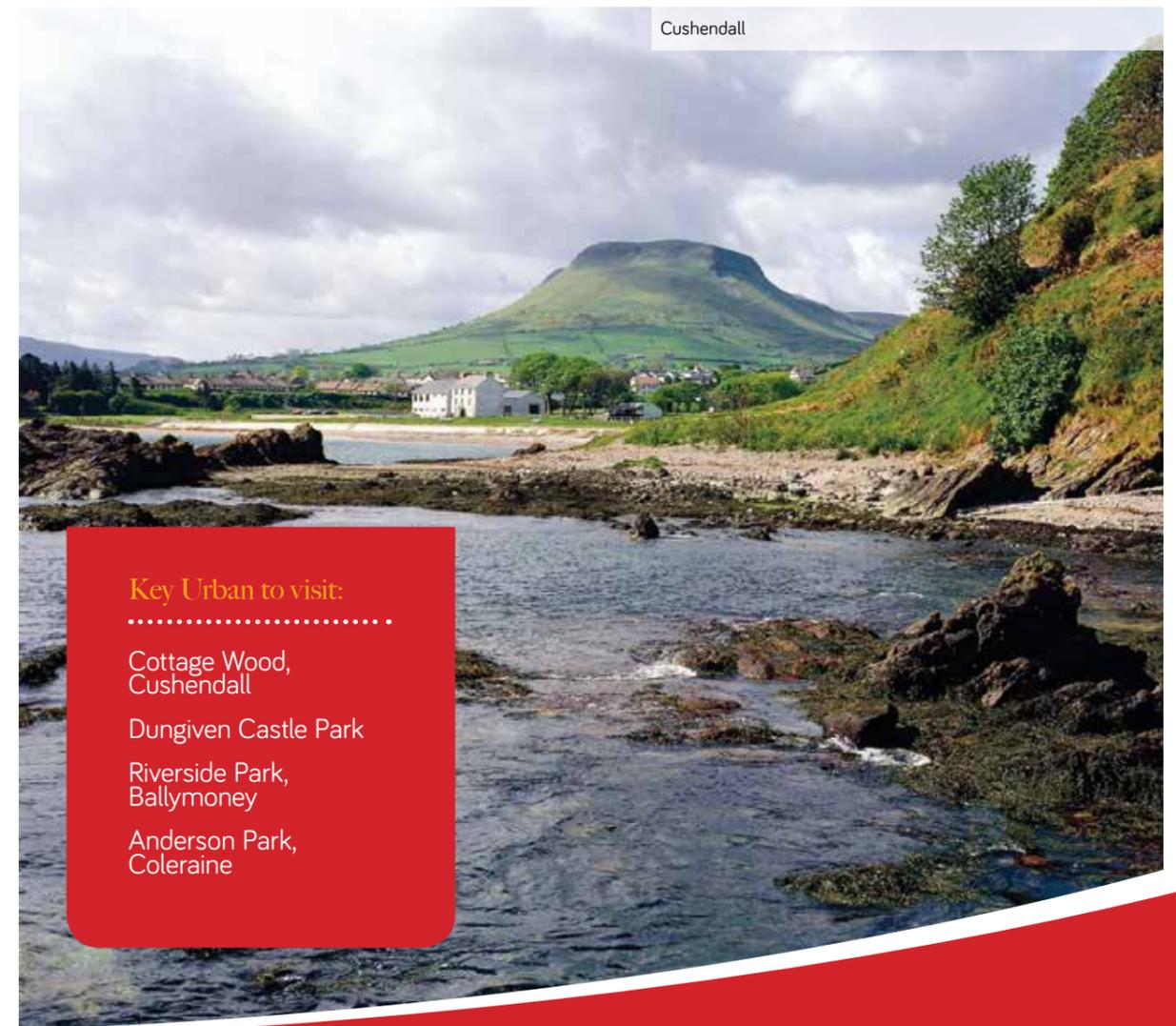
Ladybird



White-tailed Bumblebee



Riverside Park, Ballymoney



Cushendall

Key Urban to visit:

Cottage Wood,
Cushendall

Dungiven Castle Park

Riverside Park,
Ballymoney

Anderson Park,
Coleraine

Woodland

Woodland habitats are an important part of NI's heritage, culture and biodiversity, yet they cover only 6% of the available land. This makes NI the least wooded country in Europe with only 1% of our woodlands comprising native broadleaved species.

Key Threats

- Habitat loss and fragmentation
- Invasive Species
- Overgrazing and bark stripping by feral and domestic stock
- Disease such as Japanese Larch Disease caused by a fungus-like pathogen

Objectives

- Maintain and improve the condition of native woodland
- Promote the biodiversity value of local woodlands
- Raise awareness of the value of native woodland and species-rich hedgerows for biodiversity
- Encourage a sense of community ownership over local woodlands

Local Actions

- Deliver tree-planting events with schools and community groups
- Deliver woodland walks and identification activities in local woodlands
- Maintain existing woodland sites
- Work with The Woodland Trust and other partners to create new woodland sites and hedgerows in the area

Mixed Ashwood *

Mixed ashwoods are woodlands where ash tends to be the dominant species. Other broad-leaf native species such as oak, downy birch and hazel can alternatively dominate. Additional common species include rowan and non-native sycamore and beech. Mixed ashwoods support a rich and colourful ground flora of spring-flowering herbs such as wood anemone, bluebells, primrose and wild garlic. Mixed ashwoods are found at Aghanloo Wood (ASSI), Banagher Glen (ASSI/SAC) and Kilcranny Wood (Bann Estuary ASSI/SAC). Small, unidentified pockets of mixed ashwoods can be found across the area, which may be locally important for wildlife. NI Priority Species found in mixed ashwoods include the bullfinch, starling, red squirrel and bat species.

Oakwood *

Two native oak species dominate oak woodland in NI: sessile oak and pedunculate oak. Other associated species include downy birch, rowan, holly and hazel. The ground layer is typically rich in ferns and woodland wildflowers such as bluebells, wild garlic, great wood-rush and shrubs including bramble and bilberry. Oakwood in the area include Altmover (ASSI), Breen Wood (ASSI/SAC) and Errigal Glen (ASSI).

Wet Woodland *

Wet woodland describes woodlands that occur on poorly drained or waterlogged soils. They typically form around lake shores, along streams, on hill-side flushes, on fens or cutover bogs. This habitat is usually dominated by willow, alder or silver birch. Due to their high humidity, wet woodlands support ferns, mosses and invertebrates which, in turn, support bats and birds. Wet woodlands in the area include Creightons Wood and Aghanloo Wood (ASSI).

Parkland

Parkland is a specialised woodland habitat occurring in designed landscapes, typically associated with stately houses and demesnes. They are usually characterised by veteran or mature trees, set in pasture or heathland and contain specimen trees, boundary features, woodland blocks and watercourses. Parkland has acted as a wildlife refuge within a changing landscape and is important for plants, invertebrates, birds and mammals. NI Priority Species that inhabit parklands include the song thrush, tree sparrow and barn owl. Examples of parkland in the area include Bellarena Estate, Drenagh, Roe Valley Country Park, Benvardin Estate, Agivey House, Ballynacree House and Glenarm.

Hedgerows *

Hedgerows are an integral part of Ireland's landscape and are extremely important for biodiversity. Those defined as species-rich contain five or more native woody species in a 30 metre length. Alternatively, they can have a rich flora of herbaceous plants such as primrose, wood anemone, lords and ladies, bluebell and herb robert at the base. Well-managed hedgerows act as wildlife corridors between habitats and provide shelter for birds, mammals and insects. They provide bats with flight lines from freshwater bodies to woodland areas when feeding.

Hedgerows are found throughout the area, typically adjacent to semi-natural habitats and low intensity farmland.



Roe Valley Country Park, Limavady

Oak Leaves





Red Squirrel

Key Woodland Species

Red Squirrel

Catching a glimpse of our native red squirrel is a moment to be treasured. As a shy creature, the red squirrel spends most of its time in the tree tops of mainly coniferous woods. The biggest threat comes from the grey squirrel, which was introduced from North America. The grey squirrel is bigger, bolder and has a less specialised diet compared to the red. It also transmits the deadly pox virus to the reds. As the grey squirrel expands its range, it is replacing the red squirrel, especially in deciduous woodland.

The Glens Red Squirrel Group and the North West Red Squirrel Group are actively involved in conserving and increasing the red squirrel population through recording and providing supplementary food. For further information visit:

www.glensredsquirrelgroup.com and www.nwredsquirrel.org

Song Thrush

The song thrush is a handsome brown songbird with a white or yellow chest, speckled with arrowhead shaped spots. Unfortunately, its numbers are in decline, mainly due to agricultural intensification and loss of woodland habitats. This large thrush can often be seen smashing snail shells against stones with a flick of the head to expose the tasty morsel inside.

Pipistrelle Bats

There are three species of pipistrelle in NI: common, soprano and the newly recorded, nathusius' pipistrelle. These flying mammals forage along edges such as tree lines, large hedgerows and water edges. Using echolocation (use of echoes), a single individual can eat up to 3,000 insects in one night! Hibernation occurs from November to April after which females give birth to a single pup that they can recognise individually by smell and sound. For further information on local bat species visit the NI Bat Group's website:

www.bats-ni.org.uk



Song Thrush

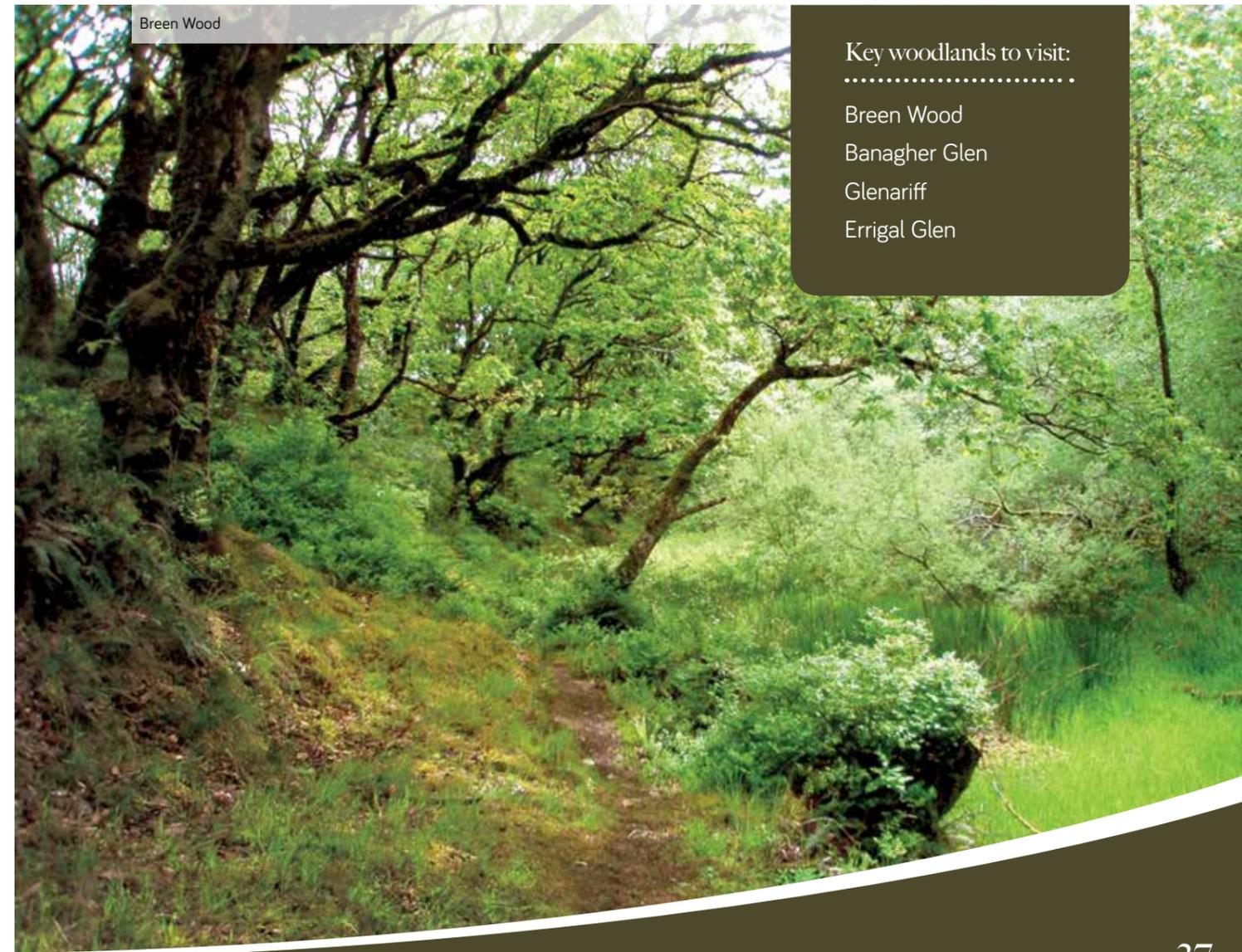
Pipistrelle Bat



Deciduous Woodland



Speckled Wood Butterfly



Breen Wood

Key woodlands to visit:
.....
Breen Wood
Banagher Glen
Glenariff
Errigal Glen

Wetlands

Wetlands are extremely important habitats as they support a variety of plants and animals such as invertebrates, fish, amphibians, mammals and birds. The Causeway Coast and Glens Cluster of Councils has many good quality examples of wetland habitat including lakes, rivers, streams, reedbeds and fens.

Key Threats

- Agricultural run-off
- Drainage
- Invasive species
- Litter
- Recreation
- Inappropriate management
- Changes in land use

Objectives

- Maintain and improve the conditions of wetlands within the area
- Maintain and improve the quality of water bodies to 'good' ecological status by 2015 in accordance with the WFD
- Raise awareness of wetlands and their importance for biodiversity

Local Actions

- Support local Water Framework Directive catchment groups
- Promote maintenance of 'good' water quality through WFD and Nitrates Directive
- Liaise with relevant authorities to identify, monitor and create wetland sites
- Deliver educational events based around wetlands
- Celebrate World Wetlands Day

Rivers and Streams *

No two rivers are alike and neither are their assemblages of plants and animals. Rivers and streams are vitally important habitats for invertebrates, which burrow into the sediment. They are also essential for commercially and ecologically important fish species, birds, plants and mammals such as the elusive otter. Bank-side vegetation acts as a valuable habitat and wildlife corridor for birds and mammals, particularly bats. Rivers in the area include the River Roe (ASSI/SAC), River Bann and the River Bush all of which provides excellent habitat for populations of Atlantic salmon, brown trout and sea trout. Other rivers include the Ballymoney, Dervock, and the Faughanvale.

Lakes and Ponds *

Standing open waters, including lakes and ponds, are one of NI's most extensive natural habitats. They are classified by the level of nutrients that naturally occur in the water. Eutrophic waters have high nutrient levels and, in their natural state, associated high levels of biodiversity. Examples in the area include Downhill Forest Lake, Washing Lough and Lough Guille.

Mesotrophic waters can be defined as those capable of supporting a diverse macrophytic flora but with relatively clear water, reflecting limited growth of planktonic and filamentous algae. They support a higher diversity of submerged macrophytes than any other standing water type. Examples of this include Lough Ash, Dunalis Reservoir and Altnahinch Dam.

Ponds are found across the area, ranging from large pools surrounded by fringes of fen or woodland to small ponds with more extensive fens. Lakes and ponds support invertebrates such as dragonflies, beetles, mayflies and pondskaters. They also support many species of breeding and wintering waterfowl and plants such as the yellow water-lily and duckweeds.

Fens *

Fens are wetlands with permanently high water levels at or just below the surface. They receive most of their water and nutrients from soil, rock and ground water. Fens are typically found in river valleys, poorly drained basins and beside open stretches of water. Fens support a range of invertebrates especially dragonflies, beetles, butterflies and moths. They are also important sites for breeding wading birds. Fens in the area include Ballyriskmore ASSI, Bann Estuary (ASSI/SAC), Creightons Wood, and Garry Bog (LCA)

Reedbeds

Reedbeds are swampy habitats, dominated by common reed, where the water table is at or above ground level for the majority of the year. Reedbeds occur on the margins of streams, estuaries, reservoirs, lagoons and on fens and bogs. They provide cover for a range of specialist bird species, such as the sedge warbler and NI Priority Species, the reed bunting. In the area reedbeds are found in the Bann Estuary (ASSI/SAC), River Bush, River Roe (ASSI/SAC), Drenagh Lake and Lower River Bann.



Riparian Habitat



Altnahinch Reservoir, Banagher

Reedbeds



Key Wetland Species

Atlantic Salmon

The Atlantic salmon is known as the 'king of fish' due to its vast migrations across the North Atlantic. In autumn, adults make their way upstream to spawn in riverbeds, often leaping over obstacles such as waterfalls to do so. One year after moving to the sea, young salmon use their homing instinct to return to the river of their birth to spawn themselves. Major threats include over fishing, introduction of non-native salmon stocks, physical barriers to migration, increased mortality at sea and pollution. These fish can be found in Roe, Bann & Bush rivers, which hold important numbers.

Otter

Otters live on the banks of rivers, lakes and the coast feeding on fish, shellfish, smaller mammals, and birds. Otters are good indicators of water quality as they require clean, unpolluted water to feed and dense areas of bankside vegetation to rest and breed. In the UK, otter conservation efforts have focused on improvements in riparian habitat and water quality, and the declining trend now appears to be reversing. They are quite widespread now and can be found along the Agivey and Macosquin rivers and the Bann (ASSI/SAC) and Roe (ASSI) estuaries, the Bush and Ballymoney rivers.

Lapwing

Named because of their slow wing beat that doesn't look strong enough to keep them in the air. It is a ground-nesting wading bird which frequents a wide variety of farmland and wetland habitats. It has striking dark green and white plumage, obvious crest and distinct calls, which have led to its colloquial names of green plover or peewit.



Atlantic Salmon

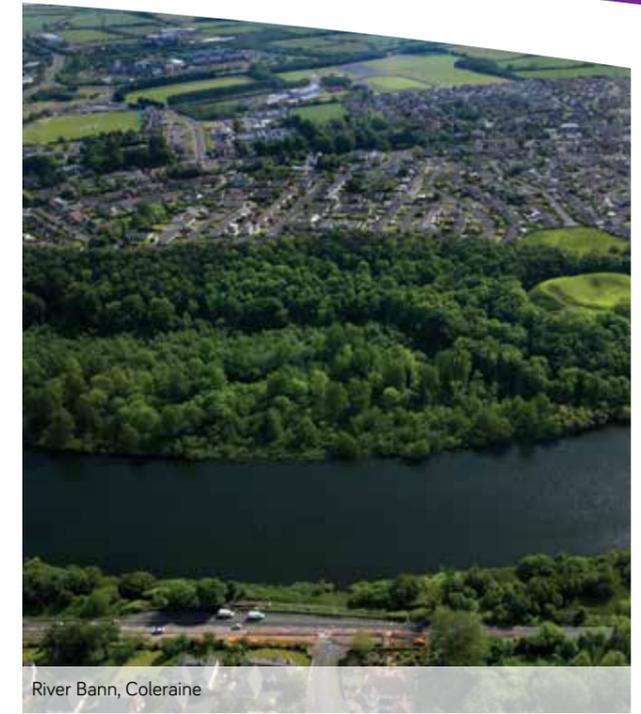


Otter

Lapwing

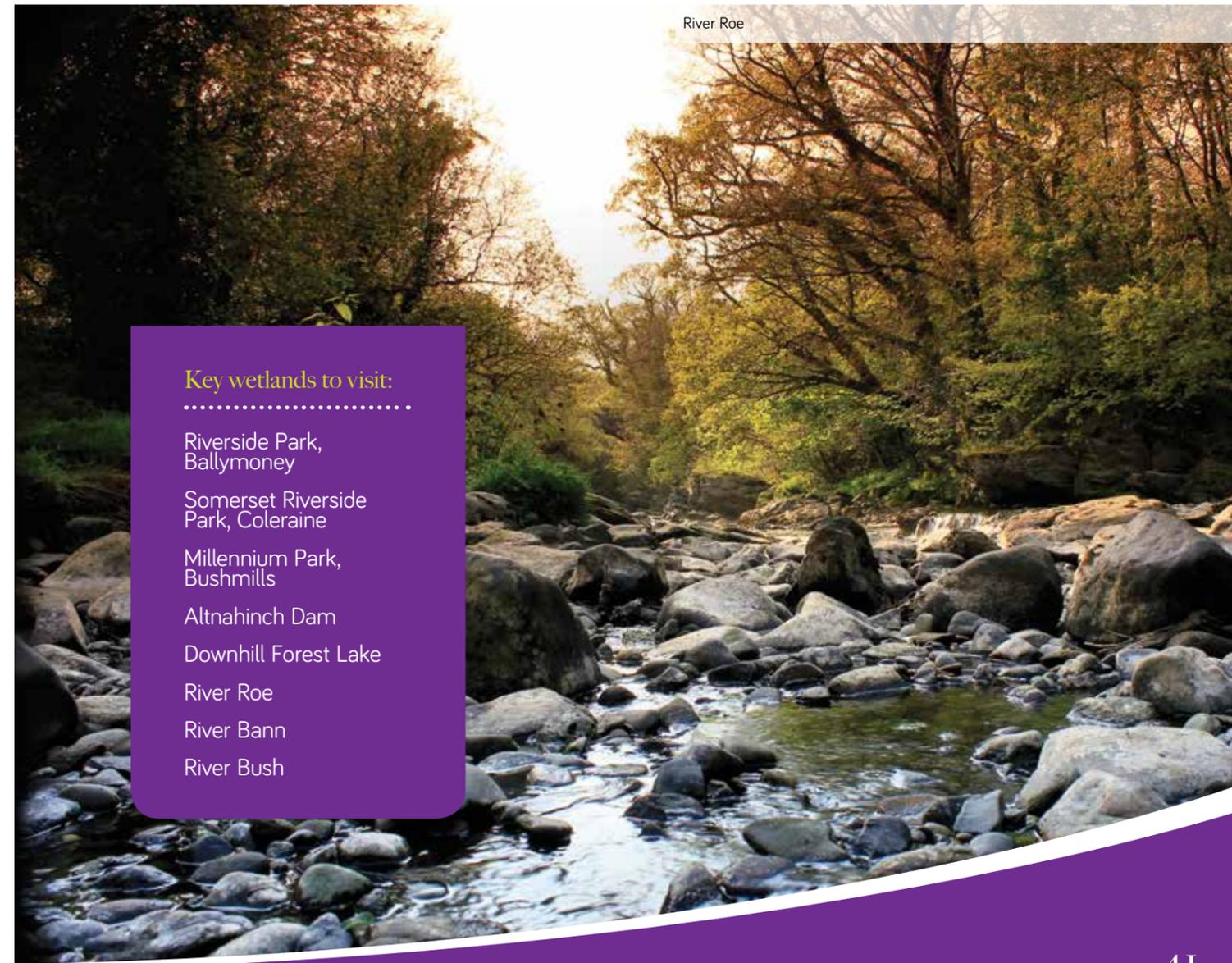


Downhill Forest Waterfall



River Bann, Coleraine

River Roe



Key wetlands to visit:

- Riverside Park, Ballymoney
- Somerset Riverside Park, Coleraine
- Millennium Park, Bushmills
- Altnahinch Dam
- Downhill Forest Lake
- River Roe
- River Bann
- River Bush

Action For Local Species

The biodiversity audit highlighted the variety of species and habitats found in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area. At least 108 of the 481 NI Priority Species have been recorded locally in the area. Ten species have been selected by the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster LBAP Steering Group as priority species for conservation action. Other species not selected for specific action will still benefit from the HAPs and SAPs.



Red-Tailed Bumblebee

Bats

Description

There are eight species of bats in NI; Daubenton's bat, whiskered bat, Natterer's bat, Leisler's bat, Nathusius' pipistrelle, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat. Bats are greatly under recorded in the area.

Objectives

- Raise awareness of bats in the area and their protection by law through the Habitats Directive and the Wildlife Order
- Promote bat recording and bat survey (The Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey)

Local Actions

- Raise awareness of bats through bat walks/talks in the area in partnership with the NI Bat Group
- Carry out an annual Daubenton's bat survey on one water body in the area



Daubentons Bat

Harbour Porpoise

Description

One of 24 cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) recorded off the coast of Ireland. This species is commonly recorded off the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster coast. There is some evidence of a decline in numbers in UK waters since the 1940s, however the status in the UK is largely unknown.

Objectives

- Raise awareness of the species
- Promote recording and sighting scheme for cetaceans through the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group
- Promote code of conducts for behaviour around marine wildlife

Local Actions

- Organise events to promote whale and dolphin watching and recording in the area
- Work to recruit volunteers for constant effort sighting scheme.
- Promote WiSe (Wildlife Safe Marine Ecotourism) and other codes of conduct to prevent disturbance to cetaceans and marine biodiversity by boats and other marine recreation users



Swift

Description

Swifts are dark coloured streamlined birds which speed and scream over our towns and cities in the summer. A swift spends almost all of its life on the wing and it is estimated that a swift will fly, on average, 500 miles each day. Although still widespread throughout the UK and Ireland, numbers have been and continue to decline. It is estimated that swift numbers have plummeted by 47% in the UK in the last 10 years.

Objectives

- Educate and raise awareness of the species
- Raise awareness of recording the swift and other species

Local Actions

- Undertake a publicity campaign to raise awareness of the swift and to encourage public participation in survey work to establish the current status and distribution of swifts within the area
- Increase the number of nesting sites through the installation of swift bricks/boxes in public and private sector buildings, by liaison with developers, builders and property owners



Barn Owl

Description

The barn owl was relatively common throughout Britain and the Island of Ireland but has undergone a serious decline since the 1930s of 69% in GB between 1932 and 1985. The decline in the Island of Ireland is difficult to determine due to lack of data, but it is thought to be in line with GB. The NI population is now estimated to be between 30-50 pairs and remains fragile and fragmented.

Objectives

- Educate and raise awareness of the species
- Raise awareness of recording the Barn Owl and other species
- Educate and raise awareness of the importance of the barn owl and its habitat

Local Actions

- Work in partnership with the NI Barn Owl Group to establish the current status and distribution of barn owls within the area to establish 'hot spot' areas in which to undertake action
- Increase the provision of nesting/roosting sites in appropriate locations through artificial nest boxes and built in lofts in refurbished farm buildings



Yellowhammer

Description

The male yellowhammer is unmistakable with his bright yellow head and chest. These buntings occur in arable and mixed farming areas in the area. During the winter they feed on grain and seeds whereas throughout the summer breeding season they feed on insects.

Objectives

- Raise awareness and recording of the yellowhammer and other farmland birds
- Increase the availability of food by encouraging farmers and landowners to become involved in agri-environment schemes
- Provide additional food sources during winter months

Local Actions

- Increase awareness and recording through at least one press release or event per year
- Support the RSPB in their work with yellowhammers
- Work with DARD to promote entry and commitment to arable options in agri-environment schemes



Otter

Description

Otters live in a variety of habitats including freshwater rivers, lakes and coasts. Signs of otters have been recorded throughout the area.

Objectives

- Educate and raise awareness of the otter and its habitat requirements

Local Actions

- Promote recording and surveying for otter
- Construct an artificial otter holt by way of demonstration to the public



Fish Species

Description

Fish play an important part in freshwater habitats in NI and contribute a great deal to our economy. The Lower Bann and its tributaries, the River Bush and the River Roe and its tributaries are important rivers for salmonids (Atlantic salmon and brown trout) and other migratory fish species including the sea lamprey.

Objectives

- Gain further information on the population of Atlantic salmon and brown trout in the area
- Work with stakeholders to improve the riparian habitat for fish species

Local Actions

- Work to develop fish population studies for important tributaries
- Review effectiveness of fish passes within the area
- Continue the habitat restoration for fish species on selected tributaries



Brown Trout

Scarce Crimson & Gold

Description

In NI, the scarce crimson and gold moth was recorded at three sites during a recent survey; Portstewart Dunes, Magilligan and the Umbra. It is described as one of the UK's rarest moths.

Objectives

- Monitor the population in the area
- Raise awareness of the species and other moths

Local Actions

- Survey existing sites annually during June and early July
- Raise awareness through press work and moth events



Red Squirrel

Description

Our native squirrel is a shy creature of a reddish colour, with a bushy tail and ear tufts. They spend most of their time high in the tree canopy mainly in coniferous woodland. The spread of the non-native grey squirrel is threatening the reds. Strongholds of reds in the area include Glenarm, Glenariff and Banagher Glen (ASSI/SAC).

Objectives

- Collect recent records of the red squirrel in the area
- Educate and raise awareness of its importance
- Maintain and increase existing populations in the area

Local Actions

- Hold events to raise awareness of the red squirrel e.g. Red Squirrel Week
- Promote recording of the red squirrel by members of the public and local groups
- Work with the local red squirrel groups to raise awareness
- Support local efforts to re-establish or increase red squirrel populations



Bumblebee

Description

There are 13 bumblebee species in Ireland, six of which are common in gardens, including the White-tailed bumblebee and Carder bumblebee. Bumblebees are in decline, mainly due to loss of flower rich grassland and fragmentation of suitable habitats.

Objectives

- Raise public awareness of bumblebees, solitary and honey bees
- Increase the area of suitable grassland habitat and urban greenspace
- Monitor the local bumblebee population
- Support local bee keepers

Local Actions

- Raise awareness through press work and events
- Promote nectar rich planting



Common Carder Bumblebee

What can you do for Biodiversity within the Causeway Coast & Glens Council Cluster area?

Regardless of our age, job or experience, we can all take positive action for local biodiversity. This may take the form of volunteering with an environmental organisation, taking part in a beach clean or simply putting on your walking shoes, getting into the fresh air and taking notice of the wildlife that surrounds you.

Seven Spot Ladybird

Wildlife Gardening

We can all directly help local biodiversity by gardening with wildlife in mind. Simple steps can make a huge difference such as feeding the birds or planting nectar-rich flowers for garden insects. You could plant native trees or even create log piles which provide damp, dark sites for a variety of insects. By simply placing a bird feeder in your garden, you will be amazed by the diversity of garden birds that visit: robins, starlings, goldfinches, house sparrows, blue tits...the list goes on!

Gardening for wildlife need not be expensive as you could build your own bird table from recycled wood or use old buckets, tyres or boots as plant pots. Even if you do not have a garden you can plant window boxes or hang flower baskets which will attract wildlife and increase the attractiveness of your home. To find out more about the simple steps to convert your greenspace into a 'wildlife garden' please contact the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster Biodiversity Officer.

Are You a Landowner or Farmer?

If so, you can greatly contribute to this LBAP through managing your land or sections of it in a way that will benefit local wildlife, particularly farmland birds. You can find out more about Agri-environment schemes by contacting your local DARD office.

Volunteer

Have you ever thought about taking time out of your life to volunteer to help local wildlife? Within the area, there are many organisations actively looking for extra hands to help in local conservation projects. You could help by carrying out practical conservation work such as tree planting, sowing wildflower seeds, hedge laying, fence construction or scientific surveys. Alternatively, you may wish to pass your wildlife knowledge onto others at local reserves or events. Through volunteering you can learn new skills, meet like-minded people and best of all, contribute to the conservation of our local wildlife. Why not give it a go? For further information on volunteering in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area please contact the Biodiversity Officer.

Record Wildlife

Do you enjoy being out and about spotting wildlife? If so, please take a notebook and pencil with you the next time and become a wildlife recorder. The biodiversity audit process highlighted some gaps in habitat and species records in the area. We need wildlife records in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area, whether rare or common. This will help us to monitor how well our local wildlife is doing. You can submit your records to the Biodiversity Officer or directly to the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR). Perhaps you will be lucky enough to discover a species that has not been recorded in the area before!



Butterfly Safari at Dungiven Castle Park



Guided walk at Ballykelly, Lough Foyle

Explore your Natural Environment

As this LBAP has highlighted, Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster area is rich in biodiversity. The best way to see wildlife is to put on your walking shoes, pack a flask of tea and go for a walk, it's as simple as that. You don't need professional equipment to spot wildlife – just keep your eyes and ears peeled. In the area there are many places to walk,

which cater for a broad range of fitness, ability and experience. For further information on walking routes in the district visit your local council website or www.walkni.com. Why not visit a local woodland or take a peek under a few rocks along the seashore? You may be surprised what you find!

The Causeway Coast & Glens Council Cluster's Biodiversity needs you!

To find out more about the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster LBAP please contact:

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Fishing in Roe Valley Country Park

Want to know more?

Please visit the websites listed below for further information:

Biodiversityni
www.biodiversityni.com

Ballymoney Borough Council
www.ballymoney.gov.uk

Butterfly Conservation
www.butterfly-conservation.org

Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR)
www.nmni.com/cedar

Coleraine Borough Council
www.colerainebc.gov.uk

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)
www.dardni.gov.uk

Forest Service
www.dardni.gov.uk/forests-service

Limavady Borough Council
www.limavady.gov.uk

Moyle District Council
www.moyle-council.org

Northern Ireland Bat Group
www.bats-ni.org.uk

Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
www.doeni.gov.uk/niea

National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI)
www.habitas.org.uk

National Trust
www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
www.rspb.org.uk

Ulster Wildlife Trust
www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org

Walkni
www.walkni.com

Woodland Trust
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Glossary

AONB

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These are designated under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985 to protect and enhance large areas of landscape.

ASSI

Area of Special Scientific Interest. These areas of land, often in private ownership, have been identified through scientific survey as being of the highest degree of conservation value. Designated under the Environment (NI) Order 2002.

CEDAR

Centre for Environmental Data and Recording

DARD

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

HAP

Habitat Action Plan

LBAP

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

LCA

Landscape Character Area

LNR

Local Nature Reserve

NMNI

National Museums Northern Ireland

Ramsar

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable utilization of wetland.

SAC

Special Area of Conservation. These sites support habitats and species of European importance. Designated under the EU Habitats Directive.

SAP

Species Action Plan

SPA

Special Protection Area. These are places of international importance for birds which are classified under the EU Birds Directive.

WFD

Water Framework Directive

Acknowledgements

The Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster LBAP is a product of contributions from many individuals and organisations. The Steering Group provided advice and support throughout the process, this group is comprised of individuals from Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady & Moyle Councils, NIEA, DARD, Forest Service, CCGHT, Planning Service, National Trust, University of Ulster, Rivers Agency and Coleraine Rural and Urban Network.

Special thanks to the following individuals for their help, advice and guidance: Nigel McKeown, Aidan Mullan, Jonathan Wilson, Richard Gillen, Valerie Richmond, Sharon Bateson, Renny McKeown, Marcus Austin, Carly Wright, Gareth Greer, Mark Edgar, Danielle Begley, Julie Corry and the photographers who contributed photographs to this publication.

Finally, thanks to YOU for picking up this LBAP, through your support we hope to enhance the biodiversity of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council Cluster.

Photography by:

Awakin.com
Ballymoney Borough Council
Bumblebee Conservation Trust
Butterfly Conservation
CCGHT
Coleraine Borough Council
Limavady Borough Council
Moyle District Council
NIEA
NITB
Ulster Wildlife Trust

Roy Anderson
Rachel Bain
Laurie Campbell
Christine Cassidy
Eugene Clarke
Timmy Currie
Richard Gillen
Claire Goodwin
J O'Brien
Bernard Picton
Tracey Platt
Robert Thompson
Art Ward
Ruth Wilson

This project is jointly funded by Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady & Moyle Councils and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency



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BIODIVERSITY

www.biodiversityni.com

