


Conference 2019: Field Trip Options, *Wednesday 2nd October*

Field trips depart from the Europa Hotel and are due to return by 5pm.

A - Cuilcagh Mountain SAC & Cuilcagh Anierin Uplands SAC

Depart 8:30am

 2 hours each way



Walking boots - terrain mostly boardwalk & track.




Cuilcagh Mountain in Co Fermanagh is a 2751ha Special Area of Conservation designated primarily for its blanket bog habitat of which it is one of the most extensive areas in Northern Ireland. It also forms an important part of the wider [Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark](#). Together with the adjacent Cuilcagh Anierin Uplands SAC in Co Cavan it includes one of the largest areas of upland blanket bog in Ireland.

In the early 2000's Fermanagh District Council undertook extensive restoration work to an area of the site which had been heavily impacted by turf extraction. Using various techniques to block drains and revegetate areas they significantly reduced the incidences of flash flood events in the Marble Arch Showcaves which lie downstream. In recent years access to the site has increased due to the popularity of the boardwalk that leads to the summit of the mountain. This has brought challenges to the sensitive summit habitat in particular but has also introduced thousands of people to an important peatlands habitat.

The [Conservation Action for the Natura Network Project \(CANN\)](#) funded through INTERREG is currently working on a number of activities to help restore and enhance the sites habitats and species including further blanket bog restoration, wildfire management, and montane heath restoration.

B - Killyconny Bog & St. Kilians Heritage Centre

Depart 8:30am

 2 hours each way



Wellington boots required. Terrain is rough, wet & unstable.



[The Living Bog](#) (LIFE14 NAT/IE/000032) is the largest single raised bog restoration project ever undertaken in the Republic of Ireland. Thanks to the EU LIFE programme and the Irish government it is restoring 12 raised bogs in 7 counties. We will visit one of these, [Killyconny Bog](#) SAC in Mullagh, Co Cavan, a protected site of some 191 hectares.

Restoration works previously undertaken between 2006–2010 on Killyconny Bog SAC have shown encouraging results. Works included the blocking of drains both on the high bog and the cutover, the grading of face banks and the installation of a 1.7km barrier dam/bund parallel to the bog road on the western side. Results of the barrier dam were very positive with pioneer Active Raised Bog vegetation occurring less than 8 years after the works were undertaken. 4.6ha of Sphagnum-rich regenerating plant communities was recorded on the western cutover in 2018. The works demonstrated that restoration and agriculture can live side by side - in that one side of the road is a re-wetted bog and the other side is a dry, agriculturally improved field.

Coillte also removed 11ha of conifer plantation on the southwest cutover as part of LIFE04 NAT/IE/000121. A 2017 survey recorded 0.4ha of regenerating bog from within the Coillte restoration area.

As part of The Living Bog, further restoration works are about to commence on site with almost 1,000 peat dams planned. Community-led amenities are also being developed (while ensuring compatibility with conservation objectives) to ensure a wide scale appreciation of the bog.

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C - Ballynahone Bog SAC & Peatlands Park

Depart 9:00am



1 hour each way
+ 45 minutes
between sites.



Wellington boots required.



Morning site: Ballynahone Bog SAC

Ballynahone Bog in Co Londonderry is a 243ha Special Area of Conservation designated primarily for its lowland raised bog habitat. The site is a remnant of a once extensive system of bogs in the Lower Bann valley and is one of the largest lowland raised bogs found in Northern Ireland.

The majority of Ballynahone Bog was purchased by the Department of Environment in 1994, subsequently leased to [Ulster Wildlife](#) from 2000, and managed as a nature reserve ever since. Earmarked for commercial peat extraction Ballynahone Bog was negatively impacted by drainage before it was brought under conservation management. Habitat restoration works have included drain-blocking works that in recent years have been informed by the use of LiDAR and an accompanying water level monitoring network. Additionally, an extensive monitoring network has been set up at Ballynahone Bog to measure the impacts of ammonia deposition across the site, which will help inform future actions at this and other sites across Northern Ireland.

Ulster Wildlife is part of the [Conservation Action for the Natura Network Project \(CANN\)](#) funded through INTERREG – a range of activities are taking place across Ballynahone Bog to help restore and enhance the sites habitats and species including non-native species and scrub control as well as a comprehensive drain-blocking programme.



Afternoon site: Peatlands Park

Established in 1979, [Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Peatlands Park](#) was the first of its type in the British Isles. The Park opened to the public in 1990 and attracts over 90,000 visitors annually. The peatland areas are designated as ASSI and SAC, with a 245 acre (100 hectare) Nature Reserve set amidst its 680 acre (275 hectare) tapestry of bog, wooded hills and lakes.

A short stroll around the Bog Garden will provide the visitor with a chance to see virtually all the flora species associated with the peatland habitat. Amongst the rare plants present on the site are Long-leaved Sundew *Drosera anglica*, Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus*, which occurs in the wet woods and Marsh Clubmoss *Lycopodiella inundata*, for which Peatlands Park is the only known locality in Northern Ireland.

A Conservation Management Plan for the site has been developed with [Ulster Wildlife](#) under the [CAAN INTERREG VA Programme](#).

This includes removal of invasive rhododendron species from Mullenakill and Annagarraff NR to allow it to recover and help to protect this valuable habitat for native flora and fauna. This work will begin in September 2019 and run until 2021. As part of the visit to Peatlands Park delegates will be taken on a guided walk along Mullenakill to look at the problems associated with the removal of rhododendron off the site. They will return to the Education Centre across the boardwalks and woodchip paths of Derryhubbert bog where they will look at management issues associated with providing visitor access on this fragile habitat.

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Field trip departs from the Europa Hotel and is due to return by 5pm.

D - Garry Bog National Nature Reserve & Garron Plateau

Depart 9:00am



1 hour each way
+ 40 minutes
between sites.



Wellington boots required.
Terrain includes crossing uneven
waterlogged ground.



Morning site: Garry Bog

Garry Bog is part owned by [Northern Ireland Environment Agency](#) and [DAERA Forest Service](#) and has been managed by NIEA Regional Operations as a National Nature Reserve since 1994, under a 99 year agreement with Forest Service. The site extends for 154.76Ha, consisting of Part I, 122.25Ha and Part II 32.5Ha. Management of the site has consisted of drain blocking, exclusion of livestock, scrub and invasive control and permitting controlled public access and education.

The reserve is a small representative section of a much larger low lying raised bog. The vegetation is typical of a very wet acid habitat. Various Sphagnum species are present, sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and bog asphodel, *Narcethium ossifragum* are common. The cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus* is a particular feature of the reserve.

A Conservation Management Plan is currently being developed under the CAAN Interreg Va program which incorporates the wider peatland basin.

Delegates will be taken along a maintained rampart to view the dome before travelling a short distance to access areas of drain blocking and re-wetting in Part I along the edge of an assumed drain which separates parts I & II for discussion around conflicting issues between peatland restoration works and conservation and surrounding land uses including a clay pigeon club, forestry and agriculture.



Afternoon site: Garron Plateau © Peter Lytle

Garron Plateau Special Area of Conservation is Northern Ireland's largest Blanket Bog. The [Co-operation Across Borders for Biodiversity \(CABB\)](#) project is working in partnership ([Northern Ireland Water](#), [RSPB](#), [Northern Ireland Environment Agency](#), [Queen's University of Belfast](#)) to facilitate the restoration of 493 ha of peatland through drain blocking.

The RSPB is preparing a Conservation Action Plan for the SAC and conservation grazing is in place across the SAC. Priority species include Northern Ireland's only location of Marsh Saxifrage. Base line and continuous monitoring has been established by Queen's University of Belfast and RSPB.



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Half day trip. Departs from the Europa Hotel

E - Montiaghs Moss

Depart 09:30



40 minutes each way

Return by: 13:00



Wellington boots



Montiaghs Moss © Katy Bell

Habitat Management for Marsh Fritillary, Irish Damselfly and botanical feature on a historic cut over bog resulting in a mosaic of habitats: wet woodland, fen, wet grassland, bog pools and wet heath. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/projects/co-operationacross-borders-for-biodiversity-cabb/>

Work is part of the [Co-operation Across Borders for Biodiversity \(CABB\)](#) project is working in partnership ([Northern Ireland Water](#), [RSPB](#), [Northern Ireland Environment Agency](#), [Queen's University of Belfast](#)) project and is delivered by RSPB and [Butterfly Conservation NI](#).



March Fritillary © Katy Bell

Warm clothes and waterproof coats are required for participation in fields trips.

Walking boots are the minimum requirement as suitable footwear. Some field trips will include crossing uneven, unstable, water-logged ground, including drainage channels, and require wellington boots - please see individual descriptions above.

The field trips are primarily outdoors and will go ahead unless weather conditions are prohibitively severe. The peatland sites offer little or no shelter and the weather can be quickly changeable.

Packed lunches will be available for delegates to collect prior to boarding the coaches at the Europa Hotel, Belfast.

Toilets will be available on the coaches and food may be consumed on the coach.

Facilities at the different sites vary. Bringing your own water bottle and flask to fill before leaving the Europa Hotel is highly recommended.

These field trips have been kindly organised by Ulster Wildlife, Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA), The Living Bog project, RSPB NI, NI Water, Queen's University Belfast and Butterfly Conservation NI.

Please submit your field trip preferences [here \(please click link\)](#) by Friday 20th September.

Please note all field trips are subject to