



BURREN NATIONAL PARK

Summer Newsletter 2025

It's been an exciting summer season so far in the Burren National Park. In this issue we take a look at some of the delights to be encountered in the meadows along the orange and white trails in the park. Read about the festival of Bealtaine and the importance of flowers in marking this ancient Celtic rite. We also take a look at the elusive slow worm and important surveying work currently underway in the Burren National Park and Slieve Carran Nature Reserve. The end of June saw the launch of the NPWS Discovery Van by Minister Christopher O'Sullivan, which some of you may have already seen out and about in the park. Keep up to date with our planned July events, from art in the park to photographing wildflowers and wellness walks. Or why not join our family-oriented mini meadow safari or bug hunt, there is something to suit almost everyone!

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In the meadows...

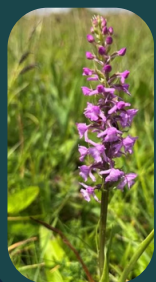
The species-rich calcareous grasslands of the Burren National Park are resplendent with colour at the moment. The orange and white walking trails in the park are host to stunning wildflower meadows that provide important habitat for all manner of creatures including bees, butterflies, hoverflies and beetles. Below are a few of the highlights you might see in the park during July and August.



In the Burren, it is possible to see 23 of the 28 true native **orchids** that grow in Ireland. A combination of factors including habitat diversity, soil conditions and temperate climate converge to provide perfect growing conditions for orchids and many other species of flowering plants.

Pictured left is the Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis* **Magairlín na stuaice**, which can usually be seen from late June until September, and the Common Spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* **Nuacht bhallach** which is currently flowering. Look out

for the species pictured below which will be in flower in the coming weeks and months.



Fragrant Orchid
Gymnadenia conopsea
Lus taghla



Broad-leaved
Helleborine
Epipactis helleborine
Ealabairín



Frog Orchid
Dactylorhiza viridis
Magairlín an ioscáin



Autumn
Lady's-
tresses
Spiranthes spiralis
Cúilín Muire



The National Park is an excellent location to see butterflies, with 27 of Ireland's 35 butterfly species recorded in the Burren. During August and September you may be lucky enough to spot the elusive Brown Hairstreak *Thecla betulae* **Stiallach Donn**. Their larval food plant is Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* **Draigeán** and their preferred habitat is hedgerow and open scrub near limestone pavement, making the Burren one of the best places to see them.



Female Brown Hairstreak lay tiny white eggs on young blackthorn bushes often at the base of new growth side branches. The caterpillars emerge in spring to feed on the new blackthorn leaves.





In the meadows....



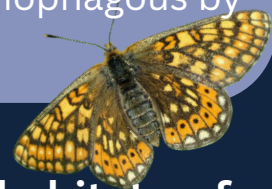
The Cinnabar moth *Tyria jacobaeae* **Leamhan flanndearg** is a striking red and black day and night flying moth which can be seen in the park from May to early August. The larvae of this moth (left) are also very distinctive. Clusters of black and yellow caterpillars can be seen feeding on ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* **Buachalán buí**, often stripping it bare. The larvae absorb toxic alkaloids from the plant which makes them

unpalatable to most animals. The vivid colouration of both the adult moth and the larvae act as warning sign to potential predators. Unlike many other larvae they do not spin webs but instead burrow into the soil and pupate in a silk-lined chamber through the winter emerging as adult moths in the summer.



Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* **Odrach bhallach** will be in bloom in the park from late summer into autumn. These beautiful lilac-purple, globular pincushion flowers dominate the meadows and provide a source of nectar for pollinators when many other flowers have gone to seed. The plant gets its name from a story that the devil was so jealous of its many medicinal properties that he bit its roots, giving rise to their truncated appearance.

Devil's-bit scabious is also instrumental in the life cycle of Ireland's only protected insect, the Marsh Fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* **Fritileán réisc**. Female marsh fritillaries lay batches of 200-300 eggs on the underside of devil's-bit scabious leaves in late May or early June. After 2 to 3 weeks caterpillars hatch and feed solely on the leaves of this plant. Species whose larvae feed on only one type of host plant are described as monophagous by ecologists.



Help us protect the biodiversity and habitats of the Burren National Park. Please do not move rocks, pick or uproot any plants and refrain from any type of foraging within the park.

Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints



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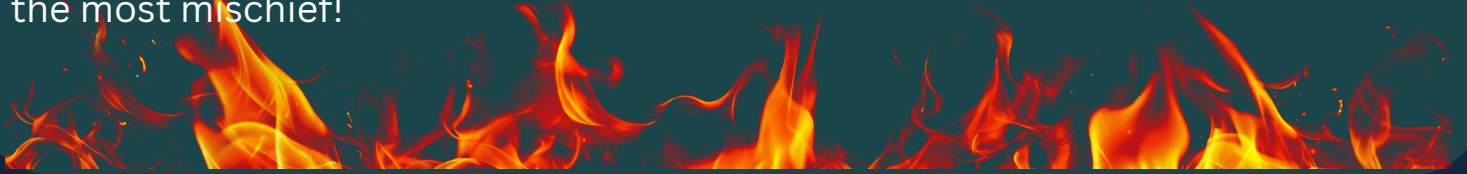
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Bealtaine



Lá Bealtaine, or Mayday, heralds the start of our Celtic summer on the 1st of May. The word Bealtaine stems from the old Irish word, Bel Taine, meaning 'bright fire', and is a time between the spring equinox and summer solstice, when we welcome the return of long, brighter days. The spiritual meaning of Bealtaine honours the joyful union between earth and sun, celebrating the abundant growth that emerges from balance and harmony. It is associated with fire, fertility, and the renewal of life, and is rooted in pre-Christian Pagan Celtic mythology. Bealtaine was traditionally celebrated from sunset on April 30th to noon on May 1st.

Fires hold special significance at Bealtaine. In ancient times, a huge bonfire was lit at the geographic centre of Ireland, in Uisneach, County Meath. People gathered on surrounding hills and fires would be lit, linking people across the whole Island, as ceremonial Bealtaine bonfires burnt brightly in celebration. People and herds of cows walked between two bonfires for purification and good luck as animals were led to their summer meadows for grazing. Young men and women in search of their beloved, jumped the bonfires reciting spells for love and fertility. During this time of year, witches and fairies were thought to be up to the most mischief!



In the more recent past every village would host a May parade and many homes and schools would create a May or Mary altar, decorating it with flowers from the meadows and blooming hawthorn boughs. Another tradition on May 1st was to wash your face in the May morning dew to reveal your true essence, allow your inner beauty to shine forth and boost your chances of eternal youth. Gathering primrose, buttercup and cowslip flowers to sprinkle on doorsteps was believed to keep out bad luck.

These traditions and rituals are an opportunity for us to remember and connect with the rhythms of not only the year, but also with life as a whole. May this be a time where you remember your ancestors who have gone before, and to gather round picnics and bonfires to celebrate Bealtaine, with friends, family and neighbours, honouring the richness and wisdom of our heritage and the wonderment of nature.

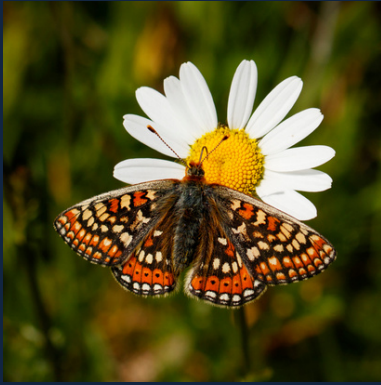


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Species profile: Oxeye daisy



Oxeye Daisy, *Leucanthemum vulgare*, **Nóinín mór**

Family: Asteraceae

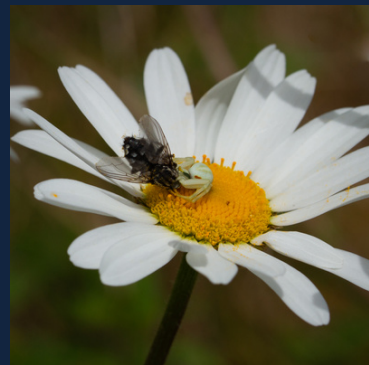
Genus: *Leucanthemum*

Species: *L. vulgare*

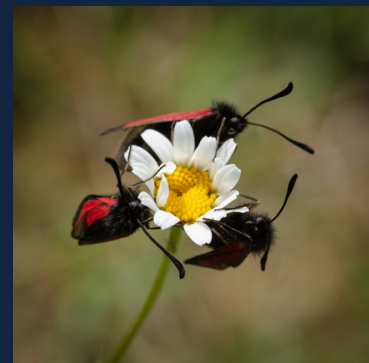
Common names: Ox-Eye daisy, dog daisy, field daisy, moon daisy.



The oxeye daisy is the largest of the daisy family found in Ireland and is widespread in the Burren. It grows in grassy meadows and pastures, field margins and roadside banks, and is particularly associated with calcareous grasslands. Oxeye daisies flower from May to August and into September if the weather stays mild. It is very tolerant of drought, so it thrived in the dry spell in May this year.



Flower structure - The plant is shallow-rooted, rhizome-bearing, almost hairless, 30-80 cm tall, carrying large white and yellow flower heads on long stalks. Oxeye daisies have a composite flower structure. Flower heads are large, (25-60 mm in diameter) and solitary. When you look closely, oxeye daisies do not have single flowers but a bunch of numerous tiny flowers, called florets, grouped together like pins on a pincushion. Up to 26,000 seeds can be dispersed from a single plant.



Traditional Uses - The Oxeye daisy is not poisonous but the taste of the dried herb is bitter. In the past the plant has been used in herbal medicine as it has antispasmodic and diuretic properties. An infusion of the flowers has been used to treat chronic coughs and night sweats. It was also made into a lotion to treat wounds, bruises, ulcers, inflammation and skin diseases.



Biodiversity - Oxeye daisies are particularly good for wildlife. The flowers attract a range of insects, from moths and flies to beetles and solitary bees, with two or more species often visiting the same flower at once.



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Slow Worms



If you are lucky, you may encounter the elusive Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis* **Earcán**, especially on warm, sunny days when they might occasionally be seen basking on the warm limestone pavement. Those unfamiliar with these fascinating creatures may think they have encountered a snake, but they are in fact a species of legless lizard. The origin of the Slow Worm in Ireland is a topic of much debate, with some believing they were introduced either deliberately or by accident during the 20th century. However, recent research and DNA analysis from slow worm populations in Co. Kerry, suggest they are closely related to populations found in Central Europe. This indicates some sort of post-glacial human introduction as there is no genetic divergence from the European *Anguis fragilis* populations. The stable and well-established populations in different parts of Ireland also suggests that a more recent introduction is unlikely, making an earlier introduction more probable.



Conservation rangers in the Burren National Park are currently conducting a distribution survey for slow worms within the park. This builds on surveys undertaken in the 1990s and it is intended that the data will feed into future academic research.



The survey involves the placement of hard corrugated felt mats in a number of locations around the park. These mats heat up faster than the surrounding vegetation, making them attractive to slow worms. The locations were chosen based on previous sightings in preferred areas of habitat. Open calcareous grasslands, particularly those growing near limestone pavement, offer a warm, well-drained environment with plenty of invertebrate life to feed on.



A lizard that looks like a snake...

Despite its snake-like appearance, there are key anatomical differences between the slow worm and the snake:

- Unlike snakes, slow worms have movable eyelids and can blink
- Slow worms have visible ear openings, which are absent in snakes
- Slow worms can shed their tail This is known as autotomy and allows escape from predators like foxes, badgers and corvids.



Did you know?

Slow worms are semi-fossorial, which means they spend part of their lives underground making use of existing cracks in the soil, leaf litter, turf or limestone. This may explain why they can go undetected even in gardens. It also affords them protection from predators, helps maintain body temperature and provides access to damp habitat and the soft-bodied invertebrates they prefer to eat.



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News and Events:

Launch of the NPWS Discovery Van



Monday 30th June 2025 marked the launch of the NPWS Discovery Van by Christopher O’Sullivan, Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage with special responsibility for Nature, Heritage and Biodiversity.



Minister Christopher O’Sullivan with Rachel McHugh, Alex Bowie, David Lyons, Sean Forde, Catriona Ryan, William Cormacan, Eddie Hellewell, Phoebe Larkin and Eamonn Twomey.

The NPWS Discovery Van is the first of its kind in the country and will serve as an important mobile point of information and education for both visitors to the Burren National Park and the wider community. The van was proposed by supervisor guide, Niall O’Reilly, to address the need for information on site in the national park. NPWS guide staff will be on hand to offer friendly advice on visiting the park as well as information on geology, flora, fauna and the hiking trails. The van will be used for outreach work from autumn to spring, visiting primary and secondary schools and other community groups, organisations and events.





July Events



Sunday 13th 10:15am Photographing Wildflowers



Thursday 17th 2:15pm White Trail Guided Walk



Monday 21st 10:15am Art in the Park



Saturday 26th 10:15am Mini Meadow Safari for families



Sunday 27th 10:15am Mindfulness Walk



Monday 28th 10:15am Bug Hunt for families



*Events are free but booking is essential as places are limited. Please contact us at burrennationalpark@npws.gov.ie or phone 065 6827693 for more details and to book.

The Burren National Park is delighted to be collaborating with the Michael Cusack Heritage Centre in Carran to offer visitors two new tour experiences, running every Tuesday and Thursday until the end of August. These tours include a visit to the home of the founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association of Ireland as well as a guided bus or walking tour with an NPWS guide.

Click link below for details and to book tickets.

<https://www.nationalparks.ie/app/uploads/2025/06/Michael-Cusack-Event.pdf>



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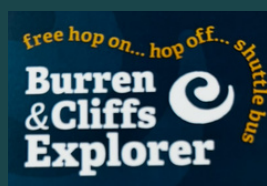


ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

**Burren National Park Information Point
opening hours: 9:30am - 5:30pm daily**

**Our free shuttle bus service from Corofin to the
Burren National Park is running 14 times daily
from 9:30am.**

**A free bus is now also available to Slieve Carran
Nature Reserve from the Burren Information
Point 4 times per day.**



Scan the QR code for information
about both of these services as
well as other Burren and Cliffs
Explorer routes in North Clare.



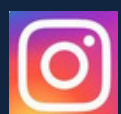
Email us at burrennationalpark@npws.gov.ie to
book a free guided tour with one of our experienced
guides to learn about and enjoy this beautiful and
unique landscape.

Burren National Park:

Information Point: Clare Heritage Centre, Church Street, Corofin, Co. Clare
V95 T9V6

Páirc Náisiúnta Bhoirne Ionad Cuairteoirí, Sráid an Teampaill, Cora Finne, Co an
Chláir V95 T9V6

Keep up to date with upcoming events this Summer on
our website or follow us on Facebook or Instagram.



Website: <https://www.burrennationalpark.ie>

Email: burrennationalpark@npws.gov.ie

Phone: 065 6827693



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