

## IRELAND

# Environment & climate action

### Location

Golashane

### Programming period

2014 – 2020

### Priority

P4 – Ecosystem  
management

### Measure

M10 – Agri-environment-  
climate

### Funding (EUR)\*

Total budget 7 200

EAFRD 4 200

Private 2 000

Other 1 000 (Agenda 21)

\* annual

### Project duration

2014 – 2020

### Project promoter

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Farm Nature Reserve.

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[www.wildlifesurveys.net](http://www.wildlifesurveys.net)

Using RDP support to turn a farm into a nature reserve; contributing to tackling biodiversity loss.

## Summary

An environmentally aware farm in Ireland started a project to address the problem of biodiversity loss. Supported by the Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS), which is the agri-environment scheme of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, the Golashane Farm Nature Reserve owners organised a series of activities aimed at supporting biodiversity.



The project contributed to providing species-specific habitat enhancement for bats, other mammals, birds and insects. The local community was also involved in research projects, and a wildlife festival is held on the farm every two years.

## Results

Twenty-two species of bird on the farm, including new species which were never recorded before on the farm, e.g. buzzards, mallard ducks, jays, woodcocks and grasshopper warblers.

Approximately 150 people were trained on the farm in 2016 and another 150 people at the 2018 festival “Moynalty Goes wild” which was organised by the farm.

The bat box hibernation plans developed on the farm are now currently being used throughout Ireland during the repair of traditional farm buildings under the guidance of the Heritage Council.

The farm has given advice on farm nature reserves to many groups in conjunction with the Irish Wildlife Trust. As a result, a network of farm nature reserves is being established

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Simple approaches to supporting biodiversity can make a big difference, such as not cutting a hedgerow every year so there are flowers for pollinators and berries for birds.
- ❑ Tackling everything at once can be overwhelming. Picking one species a year can be a good approach, focusing on all their needs from food to habitat.
- ❑ Open days are helpful to demonstrate how simple it can be to support biodiversity, as well as demonstrating specific methods and local knowledge that works in local contexts.
- ❑ Some species take longer than others to revive and develop. Persevere and results will emerge.

## Context

According to the WWF about 60% of the world's wildlife has been lost since 1970. Both farm owners studied ecology and are passionate about making a contribution to preserving biodiversity. They understand the issues that Irish wildlife is facing and they set about trying to design cheap and easy methods to reverse habitat loss using their 43 acre farm to test their inventions. Their farm has been monitored by teams of zoologists over the last 18 years.

Initially the farm comprised of three large fields of intensive grassland with little plant or animal diversity. Now, parts of the farm area are covered with forests and produce biomass from willow and silage. Occasionally the owners breed horses and rent out rooms through AirBnB so that people can come to see the animals and wildlife.

In order to improve biodiversity, a series of problems needed to be overcome. Bats need temperatures of 7°C in order to hibernate. This has been achieved in Britain by building costly underground structures but the farm owners wanted a cheaper and easier alternative. They also needed to design a bat box that would maintain ideal breeding temperatures of approx. 30°C for Natterer's bats. This rare bat species was found flying on the farm, but there were no roost sites available.

The farm owners also wanted to introduce newts on their land. Thus they needed a wetland to provide a habitat for amphibians.

Creating deadwood habitats would provide shelter for insects. Another missing species from the farm was hedgehogs which had not been seen around since the heavy snowfalls in 2010. The farm needed cereal crops for birds to eat, and hedgerows.

Another problem identified was that many local farmers did not have the knowledge, or skills to attract wildlife and had a negative attitude to badgers.

## Objectives

The farmers and project holders wanted to increase biodiversity on their farm. They have an annual BioBlitz which is an intense biological survey recording all living species within a designated area. The farm is also monitored by zoologists and botanists.

The farmers provide community education about wildlife on farms by running wildlife festivals and classes; all of which are free of charge. Finally, their ongoing research in collaboration with the charity Bat Conservation Ireland, into bat box design will feed into national policies for bat habitat enhancement.

## Activities

The bat box research has taken place over 18 years with the support of the Bat Conservation Ireland association. Over 50 bat boxes were installed on the farm. The farmers noticed that a lot of bat activity took place in the barn, which however, was not a roost. Thus they designed false rafters backed with felt (which cost less than €20) and managed to achieve the 7°C needed to entice bats to hibernate there (six pipistrelle bats hibernated last year).

A heated bat box was also built around a standard reptile heat mat, bought from a pet shop and is currently being monitored. It is hoped that this will prove to be a cheap and widely replicable maternity roost box. To date, only one bat box in Ireland has been successfully used as a maternity roost, as they are generally not warm enough.

This year they trialled stonework boxes for Natterer's bats, when the community came together to design stone boxes in the 'Moynalty Goes Wild' Event.

15 years ago, 15 acres of woodland were planted to increase biodiversity. Jays first appeared on the farm two years ago and are back again this year.

Two orchards of heritage Irish apple trees were also planted along with a wildflower meadow. Two years ago, they planted an acre of wildflowers for pollinators.

Finally, over the last six years, the farmers have planted approx. 1km of hedgerows. They reintroduced hedgehogs from the hedgehog hospital last year and were approved by the Kildare Animal Foundation last year as an official wildlife release site.

Under the GLAS scheme, the project holders planted 7½ acres of bird seed crop – oats, linseed and kale. This increased the number of overwintering birds and rodent eaters such as buzzards.



They also created a wetland of over an acre to encourage amphibians, and in 2016 with the support of the local community they built an artificial badger sett.

The farm owners have worked with NPWS (badger talks), the Irish Wildlife Trust (five events), the department of Agriculture (Woodland scheme talk 2018), the Maio National School (organising a field trip every June), Bat Conservation Ireland (bat box building every year), Green Foundation Ireland (Moynalty goes wild festival), An Taisce (Ellison award nomination 2016), Mullagh Scout Group (walks and talks every year), Birdwatch Ireland (Habitat enhancement talk 2018), Irish Farmers Association (Moynalty festival 2016), PATCH Ireland (Events every year – children’s’ event 2018), the Irish Environmental Network, the Environmental Pillar (bi-monthly meetings), representing the BatLife Europe monthly meetings and participated at the Irish Farmers Association meeting in 2016. All of the above mentioned have taken part in events organised on the farm within the last two years.

## Main Results

**Direct benefits:** There are now twenty-two species of birds on the farm, including new species which were never recorded there before, e.g. buzzards, mallard ducks, jays, woodcocks and grasshopper warblers. Newts moved into the newt lake after four years. The wetland also acts as a carbon sink and cleans the water which runs off the fields. Hedgehogs are now breeding throughout the area after the release of the rescued hedgehogs and pine martins were sighted on the farm for the first time this year.

Approximately 150 people were trained on the farm in 2016 and another 150 people at the 2018 festival “Moynalty Goes wild”. A further 400 people attended the 2016 online festival talks. Approximately one third of the participants in the festival and events for the general public were children. The broadcaster, Duncan Stewart, took a rough poll of the people attending in 2016 and found one third to be farmers. He also found that no politicians attended. Therefore politicians were a target audience for the 2018 event and some did participate. Other events, for the scouts and local schools, were specifically aimed at children, with approx. 100 children coming every year. Presentations were given to the

*“Our main goal is to bring back biodiversity, both new species and to increase the numbers of species we already have on the farm. GLAS has helped us to create the habitat. We now have an extra kilometre of hedgerow on the farm and hedgehogs for example have somewhere to hibernate.”*

Donna Mullen, Golashane Farm Nature Reserve.

children, although they were more interested in experiential learning. For example, in 2018 the children were taken to the river to do their own water sampling with litmus paper. Then they were asked to splash and do kick sampling, and identified the insects found to make a biological water quality assessment. Follow up information on biodiversity is made available after visits and events (e.g. leaflets on the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, posters from Bat Conservation Ireland).

**Networking value:** The farm has worked with NPWS, The Irish Wildlife Trust, the Department of Agriculture, the Maio National School, Bat Conservation Ireland, Green Foundation Ireland, An Taisce, Mullagh Scout Group, Birdwatch Ireland, the Irish Farmers Association, PATCH Ireland, and the Irish Environmental Network; all of whom have taken part in events organised on the farm within the last two years.

**Transferability:** The bat box hibernation plans developed on the farm are now currently being used throughout Ireland during the repair of traditional farm buildings under the guidance of the Heritage Council. The farm has given advice on farm nature reserves to many groups in conjunction with the Irish Wildlife Trust. As a result a network of farm nature reserves is being established. In collaboration with the Organic Centre, the farm is working on the maternity heated roost, to see about rolling these out in polytunnels throughout Ireland. The impact of the artificial sett building is currently being monitored. Much of this research work should be replicated across Europe.

**Synergies with other EU policies:** The farm’s activity contributes to the ambitions of the Habitats Directive in increasing numbers of Annex IV species. Its wetlands and native forest help to achieve better water quality (Water Framework Directive). The farmers have also taught the local schoolchildren how to monitor their own local streams. Their research has contributed to input from the Environmental Pillar on the CAP consultation and they have also contributed to the EU consultation on Pollinators. The badger sett and education of local farmers has contributed to protect badgers, which are protected under the Bohn and Bern Convention. Finally, increasing bird numbers and species contributes to the objectives of the Birds Directive.

### Additional sources of information

[www.greenfoundationireland.ie/moynalty-goes-wild-october-2016-video/](http://www.greenfoundationireland.ie/moynalty-goes-wild-october-2016-video/)

[www.greenfoundationireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/REPORT-Moynalty-Goes-Wild-2018.pdf](http://www.greenfoundationireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/REPORT-Moynalty-Goes-Wild-2018.pdf)

[www.greenfoundationireland.ie/moynalty-goes-wild-2018/](http://www.greenfoundationireland.ie/moynalty-goes-wild-2018/)

\*This project has been categorised under ‘Environment & Climate Action’ by the nominating National Rural Network