



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



Comhairle Contae Mhuineacháin
Monaghan County Council

DISCUSSION PAPER

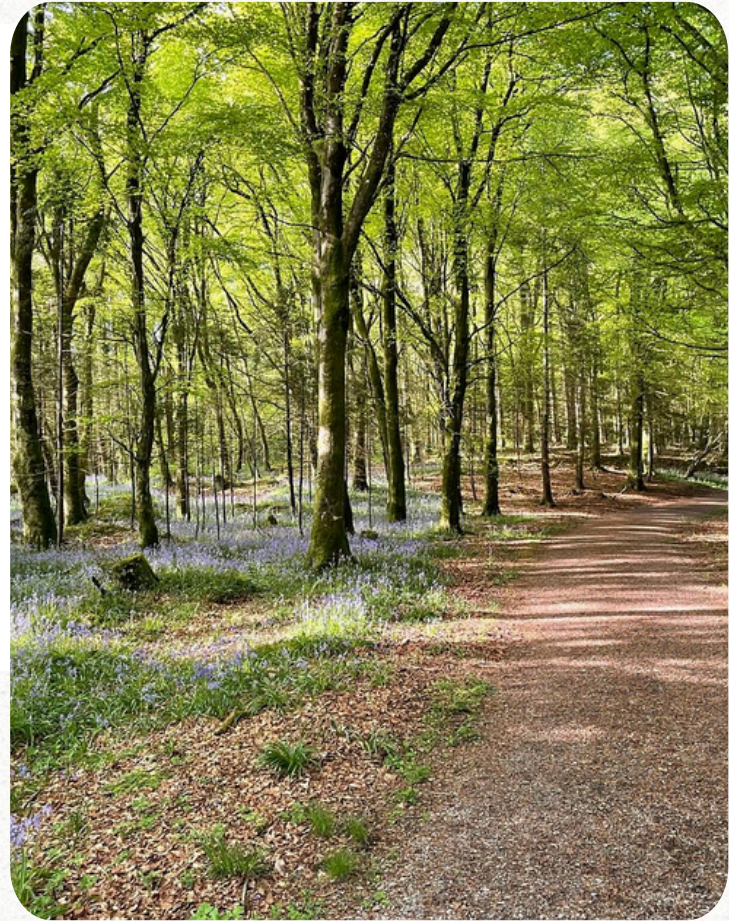
MONAGHAN BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

2025-2030





Rossmore Park



Introduction

Monaghan County Council is preparing a new Local Biodiversity Action plan (LABAP) supported by the Heritage Council. Following the launch of the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan in January of this year, all Local Authorities are required to have Biodiversity Action Plans in place by the end of 2026. With the recent appointment of a Biodiversity Officer, under the Heritage Council's Biodiversity Officer Programme, Monaghan County Council are commencing this process and plan to finalise a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan by early 2025. The aim of this plan will be to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity within County Monaghan over the next five years.

This short discussion paper is the start of that process. Its purpose is to kickstart dialogue on biodiversity - outlining issues and potential solutions. It should open the door for everyone in the county to give their views on nature and the environment, in your local area, and within Monaghan. It is imperative we hear your ideas on how we should be addressing the biodiversity crisis at a local level.

This is your opportunity to highlight the key issues affecting biodiversity in your locality and assist in identifying what we should be aiming to achieve over the period of the County Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 – 2030. Everyone has a role to play in the protection and restoration of nature and it is important that we all play our part.

Aims of this Discussion Document

To hear your views on nature/biodiversity/natural heritage

To better understand what solutions/actions we need to take to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity

To increase the understanding of biodiversity within the county

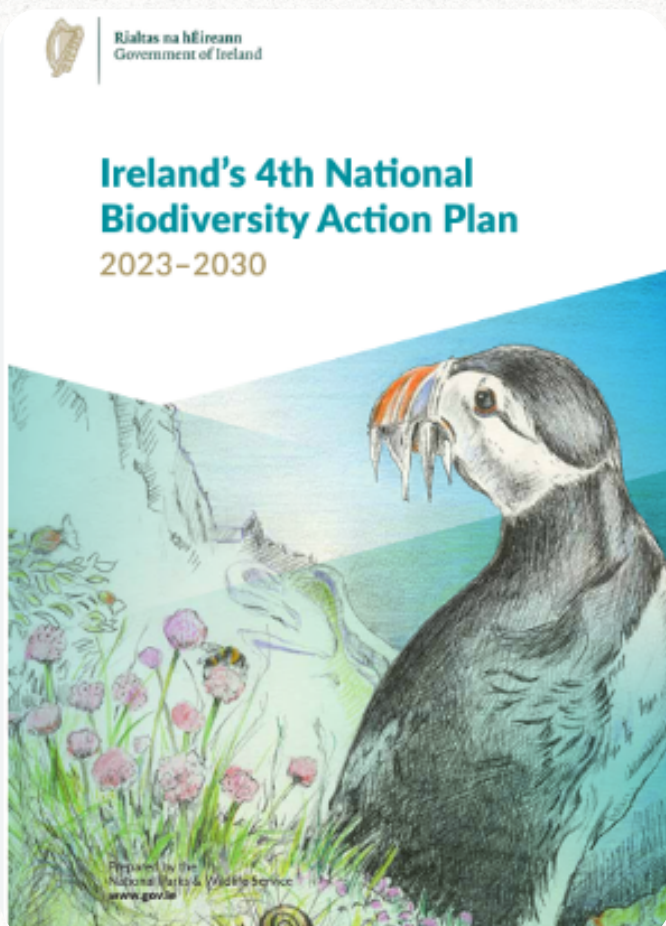
What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of all life on earth, in all its forms and interactions. It is the wealth and diversity of all living things we see throughout County Monaghan, from plants, birds and mammals, to insects, microbes and fungi, and the ecosystems – bogs, forests, rivers, lakes, grasslands, etc. – that they are a part of.

As humans, we play a key part in biodiversity, both as an integral part of it, but also, our activities change and shape the landscape and have a wide-ranging influence on the biodiversity around us.

Why is it Important ?

Healthy ecosystems are vital for human health and wellbeing, underpinning food production and food security, giving us clean water and fresh air, protecting against climate change, providing the basis of many modern medicines and enriching our lives both culturally and spiritually.



In May 2019 Ireland became the 2nd Country in the World to declare a Climate & Biodiversity Crisis

In January 2024, the Government launched the 4th National Biodiversity Plan

This Plan advocates a “Whole-of-Government & Whole-of-Society” approach to stemming biodiversity loss

Biodiversity In Crisis

Scientific assessments of the state of nature in Ireland have found that 85% of our EU protected habitats are in unfavourable status, with almost half (46%) demonstrating ongoing declines. This is having negative impacts on wildlife.

Almost a third of our EU protected species are in unfavourable status, over half of native Irish plant species have declined.

Over half of our 100 bee species have undergone substantial declines and 30% are threatened with extinction.

21% of breeding and 52% of key wintering bird species were reported to have short term declining trends.

Almost half of our lakes (46%) and rivers (45%) are not meeting biological quality targets according to EPA's 2023 Indicators Report.

National Biodiversity Action Plan - Overall Strategic Objectives

1. Adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society approach to Biodiversity Loss
2. Meet Urgent Conservation & Restoration Needs
3. Secure Nature's Contribution to People
4. Embed Biodiversity at the Heart of Climate Action
5. Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity
6. Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

Monaghan County Council competes for biodiversity funding each year from the National Parks and Wildlife Service under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund. If successful, the funding available is in the region of €100,000 annually, which is matched by approximately €30,000 of council funds. In 2024, this funding is being allocated to local biodiversity projects as follows :

1. A county-wide Barn Owl Survey with Bird Watch Ireland
2. A Complete Flora of County Monaghan Book by local botanist Alexis Fitzgerald
3. A Woodland Bat Survey at Rossmore & Dartry Forests with Bat Conservation Ireland
4. A Survey of Selected Wetlands in Monaghan with Flynn Furney Consultants
5. Catchment Mapping of the Dromore River with Friends of the Dromore Group
6. Biodiversity Awareness in County Monaghan (events, equipment, talks)
7. River Mayfly Survey with UCD ecologists (National Programme)



Daubentons bat - a native species found close to rivers and lakes. There is a need to increase our knowledge of this bat in Monaghan as it is a key indicator species in wetland habitat.

What is a Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan (LABAP)?

A Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan is designed to provide a structured approach to biodiversity conservation at the local authority level. It outlines objectives, strategies and actions needed to protect and enhance biodiversity within a specific local authority area. The Plan will be developed within the context of both national and international biodiversity commitments as well as regional and local policies and priorities. Local consultation will form a large component of the process. The Plan will be aligned with existing environmental policies and legislation.

A Local Authority Biodiversity Action Plan provides the context for the local authority to work with, and support, local communities, agencies, NGO's and landowners to develop projects to record and conserve their local biodiversity within a regional and national context. Monaghan's LABAP aims to record, conserve, restore and promote biodiversity, and to increase its awareness, understanding and appreciation among the local communities of the county.

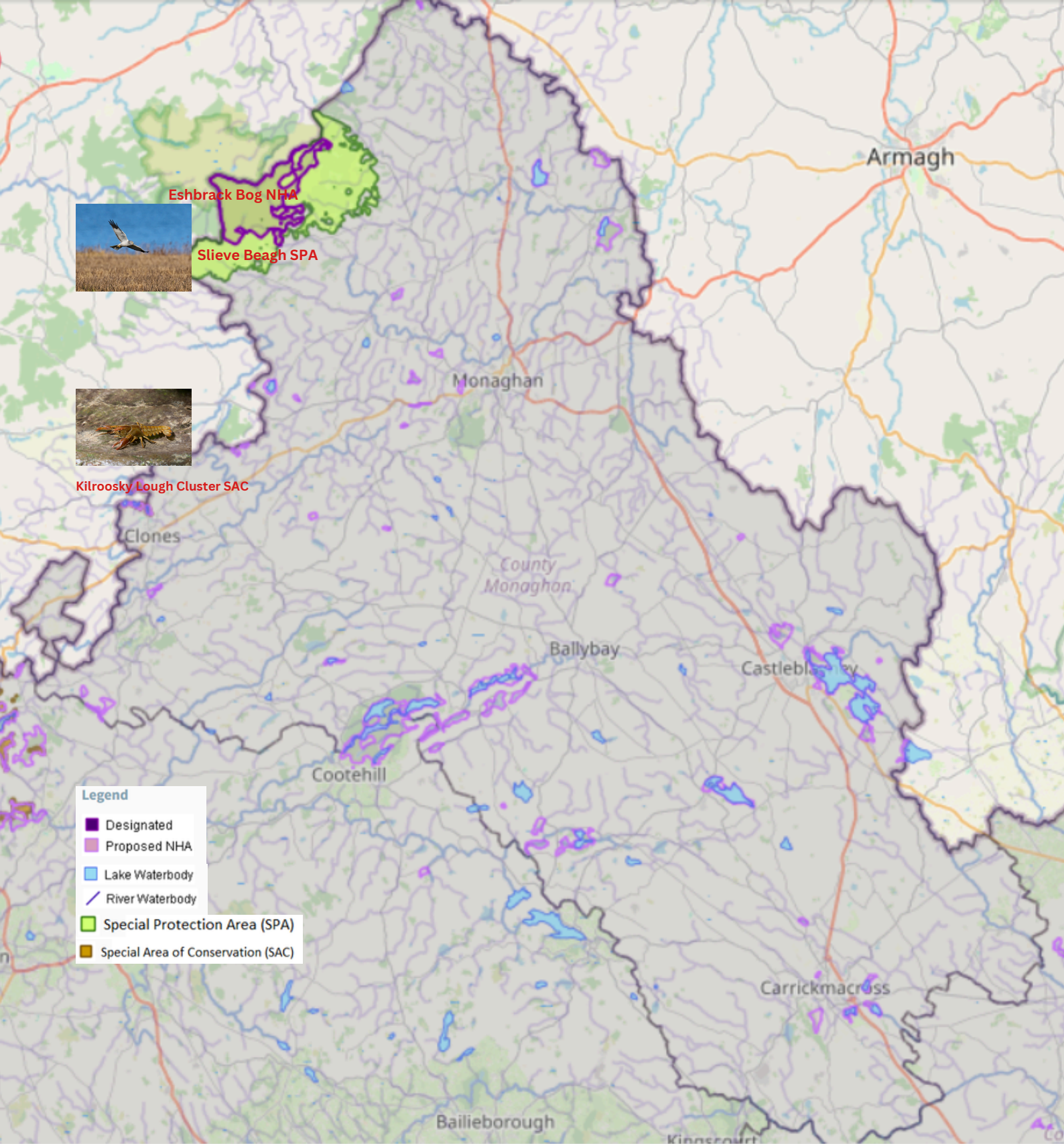
Monaghan County Council Biodiversity Working Group (BWG)

A Biodiversity Working Group, which will operate as a subset of County Monaghan's long-standing Heritage Forum, is being assembled as part of this process. Operating as a non-statutory advisory group, it will provide observations on the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Members will be drawn from a wide range of representative groups across the sectors of agriculture, landowners, community and voluntary groups, NGOs, local heritage and biodiversity groups or organisations, State agencies of relevance to biodiversity conservation, etc. The Group will meet regularly during the creation of the Biodiversity Action Plan and quarterly during the implementation phase of 5 years.



*Lough Naglack,
Carrickmacross*

*Photo credit : Marija
Cernikova, age 14, Inver
Collage. 2nd Prize winner in
Monaghan's Wonderful
Wetlands Photography
Competition.*



Map of Designated Sites in Monaghan for the conservation of nature.

Note : Data source is NPWS, mapping tool provided by EPA

Monaghan has two European designated conservation sites :

SAC Kilroosky Lough Cluster, Clones - designated for White Clawed Crayfish

SPA Sliabh Beagh, North Monaghan - designated for Hen Harrier

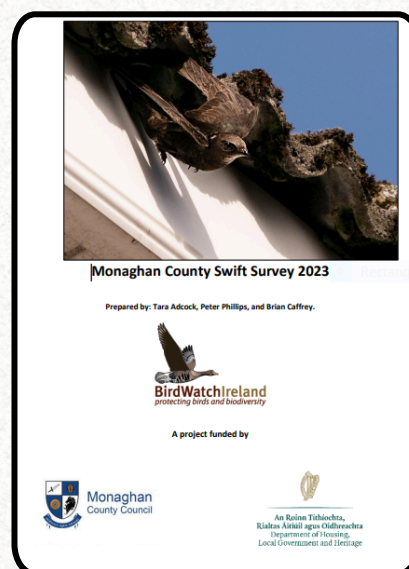
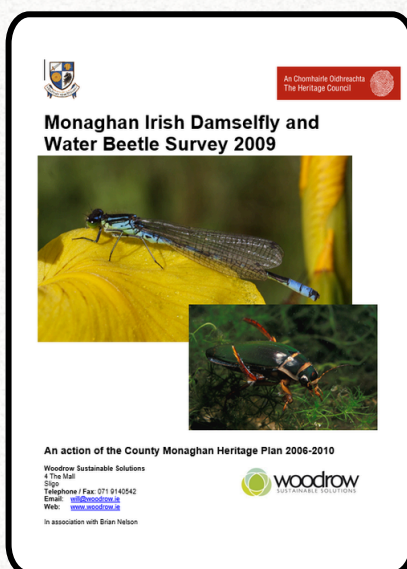
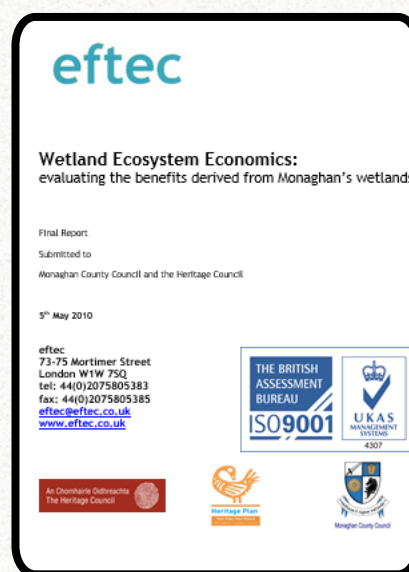
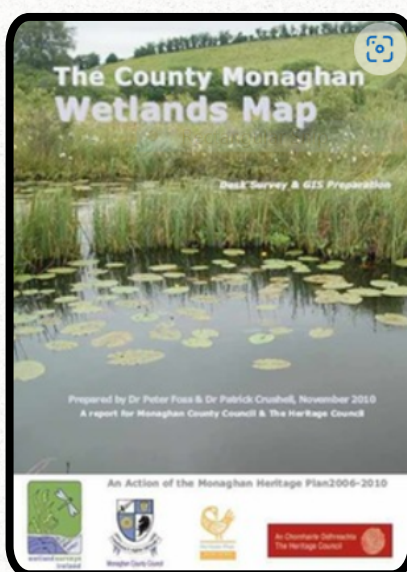
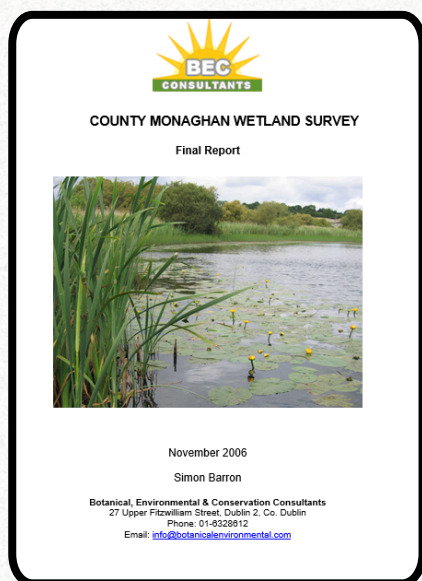
And one National Designated Site :

NHA Eshbrack Bog, Sliabh Beagh - designated for Blanket Bog

There are 38 proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA's)

Biodiversity in Monaghan

Monaghan has a rich variety of natural habitat from the huge expanse of blanket bog at Sliabh Beagh in North Monaghan, through the rolling drumlin landscape that characterises the county and taking in Lough Muckno, the largest of our lakes, set in 900 acres of wooded terrain. The entire county is criss-crossed with a network of wetlands, and their associated species of high international and national importance. Due to the varying topography, hydrology, climate and soils present it has wetland habitats ranging from degraded cutover raised bogs, blanket bogs, fens, marshes, large riverine systems, an abundance and variety of lakes, springs, wet woodlands and many more. Monaghan is likely to contain some of the finest examples of transition mire fens and mesotrophic inter drumlin lakes that occur in Ireland.



A small selection of biodiversity reports prepared for Monaghan County Council over the past few years

Spotlight on some of our Biodiversity

Austropotamobius pallipes



White Clawed Crayfish

Crayfish are freshwater relatives of marine lobsters. They are found in limestone rivers and lakes in Co. Monaghan. They are listed on Annex II and Annex V of the Habitats Directive and the species is protected in Ireland under the Wildlife Acts. They are under threat from introduced species and a disease called crayfish plague.

Hen Harrier

Hen harrier are famous for their mating ritual called the Sky Dance - the male and female perform aerial acrobatics, this can be observed on Sliabh Beagh. Males are pale with black wing tips, females are larger and brown. Loss of habitat and illegal persecution are key factors in their decline.

Circus cyaneus



Lutra lutra



Otter

The Otter is protected under the Irish Wildlife Acts (1976 & 2000) and is also listed on Annexes II and IV of the EU Habitats Directive. Despite this, it is in poor conservation status across Ireland. Otter are found in many wetlands in Monaghan.

Marsh Fritillary Butterfly

This attractive butterfly is the only Irish insect listed on Annex II and is present in the county. The caterpillar larval stage can be found within silken webs on the leaves of the foodplant Devil's-bit Scabious, *Succisa pratensis*. Habitat destruction is one of the main threats to this species.

Euphydryas aurinia



Threats to Biodiversity

Despite Monaghan's rich biodiversity and natural heritage, regrettably our natural areas and native flora and fauna have suffered biodiversity loss. Our ecosystems are under ever increasing pressure with many native species in decline, and in some cases, at serious risk of extinction. These pressures include, but are not limited to, :

- Climate change
- Habitat loss and fragmentation
- Pollution
- Invasive species
- Over exploitation
- Disturbance
- Nutrient enrichment
- Drainage

The effects of each of these pressures is a measurable decrease in the availability of high-quality habitat for biodiversity. Transforming our behaviour and the way we operate as a society is crucial if we are to reverse the trends of loss.

Lapwings over Ballybay Wetlands by Colette Gemmell
3rd Prize Winner in Monaghan's Wetland Photography Competition



The need for a Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan

Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan highlights the key role that Local Authorities have in promoting biodiversity conservation and coordinating biodiversity issues at a more local level. A County Biodiversity Action Plan increases focus on the issues facing Monaghan.

Effective action begins with a thorough assessment of the biodiversity challenges and opportunities for success within the county. The Biodiversity Action plan is a policy document setting out strategies for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through a series of targeted actions.

We will have many challenges to face and overcome in creating a climate resilient county and achieve no net biodiversity loss by 2023. These challenges are significant but not unsurmountable. The development of a new County Biodiversity Action Plan presents a timely opportunity to reassess the priorities for County Monaghan and ensure resources and effort are focused on the right areas for measurable success.



There was an estimated 12,845km of hedgerow in Monaghan in 2010. In the absence of abundant natural woodland, hedgerows act as vitally important biodiversity corridors.

Timeline for Monaghan Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-'25



The Biodiversity Action Plan is a framework document that sets out a series of actions, for a five year period, through which we aim to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of Monaghan. This will be achieved by prioritising, coordinating and initiating actions to ensure effective conservation and raising of biodiversity in partnership with local communities.

'WE ARE THE FIRST GENERATION THAT HAS
A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE VALUE OF
NATURE AND THE ENORMOUS IMPACT WE
HAVE ON IT. WE MAY ALSO BE THE LAST
GENERATION THAT CAN ACT TO REVERSE
THIS TREND'.

LIVING PLANET REPORT 2018



Get Involved!

It's important for you to share your views on what is important to you in terms of Monaghan's biodiversity. You know your local area best!

Sharing your views helps identify local issues and needs and will help identify and develop the actions required. Don't assume someone else has put forward your proposed action - the more voices, the better this Plan will be.

Ways to get involved

There are a number of ways that you can share your views or make a submission at this pre-draft stage.

In person at public walk-in events as outlined below:

Ballybay Library 2-4pm Monday 15th July

Carrickmacross Library 5-7pm Monday 15th July

Monaghan Library 2-4pm Tuesday 16th July

Clones Library 1-3pm Wednesday 17th July

Castleblaney Library 5-7pm Wednesday 17th July



More ways to get involved

Online at public online event on Thursday 18th July 7-8pm :
Email biodiversity@monaghancoco.ie for link to Teams Meeting

By Email at biodiversity@monaghancoco.ie

By Post at Biodiversity Officer, Monaghan County Council, MTEK1 Building, Knockaconny, Monaghan.

On Monaghan County Council Website you will find a link to this Discussion Paper and submission template

By appointment email biodiversity@monaghancoco.ie or phone the Heritage Office 047 73722 to arrange

****** All submissions are due by 5pm on 31st July 2024******



Have Your
Say!