



WILDFLOWERS OF LOUGH CARRA PART ONE

A selection of 14 species of native wildflowers and some associated insects that occur in the Lough Carra Catchment in unconverted 'natural' grasslands





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There are well over 400 species of 'higher' plants (i.e. trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses, sedges, etc.) growing around the lakeshore of Lough Carra and in some parts of it's Catchment. This is around two thirds of the number found in the Burren in Co. Clare, or well over a third of those found in the whole of Ireland. For such a small area, this is an extremely rich flora and, like the Burren, it contains some very special plants that occur in only a very limited number of places in Ireland.

WHAT ARE WILDFLOWERS?

A wildflower is a native flower that grows naturally in the wild and has not been intentionally planted or seeded.

WILDFLOWER GRASSLANDS

Wildflower grasslands are now very rare and important habitats that support a wide variety of native flowering plants and grasses. They provide a rich habitat for many species of birds, invertebrates, amphibians and mammals. In particular, they are a very important source of pollen and nectar for bumblebees and other insect pollinators.

The plants provide food and shelter for larval insect forms such as caterpillars, the flowers offer a great nectar source for pollinating insects which in turn are food for bats, birds and amphibians and the seeds provide food for birds and small mammals. The roots help bind the soil, cycling nutrients and retaining water.



Managed wildflower grasslands would normally be cut in the late summer once the plants have gone to seed. Light grazing would take place in the autumn and spring. Wildflower-rich grasslands were once a common part of the farmed landscape, however many have been converted by re-seeding and the wide range of flowering plants and grasses has been lost. Wildflower grasslands that are rich in ant hills should not be mown but sympathetically grazed by livestock.

DISTRIBUTION MAP FOR EACH SPECIES

Each of the species illustrated is accompanied by a distribution map from the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The coloured block indicates presence of the species in that location.



For more information visit www.biodiversityireland.ie

BEE ORCHID

	Latin name	<i>Ophrys apifera</i>
	Irish name	Magairlín na mbeach
	Height of plant	25 to 30 cm
	Flowering time	June and July
	Where to find	Dry limestone grassland
	Pollinated by	Self-pollinating in Ireland but pollinated by a solitary bee species in the Mediterranean
	Scarce throughout Ireland but does occur around Lough Carra in natural wildflower grasslands on limestone. The flowers look like and smell like a bee hence the name. The plant has a symbiotic relationship with fungi for its survival which makes it very vulnerable to any chemicals that would reduce the presence of the fungi.	





CARLINE THISTLE

	Latin name	<i>Carlina vulgaris</i>
	Irish name	Feochadán mín
	Height of plant	15 to 60 cm
	Flowering time	July to September
	Where to find	On dry, nutrient poor, limestone grassland
	Pollinated by	Bees, wasps and butterflies
	This plant is biennial which means that it has a two-year cycle and only flowers in the second year. The flowers feel dry and spiky and are referred to as 'everlasting flowers'. The Carline Thistle is a nectar source for a wide variety of butterflies including the Brimstone butterfly which occurs around Lough Carra.	





FLY ORCHID

	Latin name	<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>
	Irish name	Magairlín na gcuileanna
	Height of plant	20 to 60 cm
	Flowering time	May and June
	Where to find	Open limestone grassland, fens and flushes
	Pollinated by	Despite the flowers looking like flies, they actually attract digger wasps. They release a scent which mimics a female wasp's pheromones, luring in males that attempt to mate with them. The male wasps get a dusting of pollen, which they carry on to the next flower.
	Classed as Near threatened in Ireland in the Red List of Vascular Plants 2016. It is found in several locations around Lough Carra in undisturbed habitat	





DEVIL'S-BIT SCABIOUS

	Latin name	<i>Succisa pratensis</i>
	Irish name	Odhrach bhallach
	Height of plant	Up to 75cm
	Flowering time	July to September
	Where to find	Damp grasslands and marshes
	Pollinated by	Insects including butterflies and bumblebees
	It is the main food plant for the caterpillars of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly which is protected under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. The butterfly lays its eggs on the leaves of Devil's-bit Scabious. The Marsh Fritillary occurs in several locations around Lough Carra where the habitat is undisturbed.	



PRIMROSE

	Latin name	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>
	Irish name	Sabhaircín
	Height of plant	5 to 20cm
	Flowering time	February to May
	Where to find	Open woodlands, hedgerows and well-drained natural grassland
	Pollinated by	Bumblebees including Buff-tailed bumblebee and early flying butterflies such as the Brimstone.
		The Primrose's common name comes from the Latin 'prima rosa', meaning 'first rose' and thus describing its early spring flowering.
		





BIRD'S-FOOT TREFOIL

Latin name	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>
Irish name	Crobh éin
Height of plant	5 to 60 cm
Flowering time	June to September
Where to find	Dry limestone grassland
Pollinated by	Bumblebees, butterflies and moths
	<p>This plant gets its name from its black seed pods which look like a bird's claw. This flower is an important food plant for the caterpillars of several butterfly species including Common Blue, Green Hairstreak and Dingy Skipper. It is a member of the pea family.</p>
	




COWSLIP

	Latin name	<i>Primula veris</i>
	Irish name	Bainne bó bleachtáin
	Height of plant	10 to 30 cm
	Flowering time	April to May
	Where to find	Well-drained natural limestone grassland and woodland edge
	Pollinated by	Pollinated by insects with a long proboscis that can penetrate the tubular flower such as bumblebees and butterflies
		The Cowslip is related to the Primrose. Because they flower in early Spring the flowers are an early source of nectar for various insects including bees, beetles and butterflies such as the Brimstone. The Lough Carra catchment is a stronghold for the Brimstone butterfly where the larval foodplant, the Buckthorn tree, occurs.
		




COMMON Knapweed/BLACK Knapweed/BLACKHEADS

Latin name	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Irish name	Minscath
Height of plant	30 to 180 cm
Flowering time	June to September
Where to find	Grasslands. It does not like shade and is resistant to drought.
Pollinated by	Butterflies, bumblebees and other insects such as moths
	This plant is extremely popular with a wide variety of butterflies, bumblebees and other insects. Birds such as Goldfinches and Greenfinches feed on the flower seeds in autumn. It is a member of the daisy family.
	




LADY'S SMOCK / CUCKOO FLOWER / MILKMAIDS



Latin name	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>
Irish name	Biolar gréagháin
Height of plant	15 to 50 cm
Flowering time	April to June
Where to find	In damp grasslands and lawns
Pollinated by	Orange-tip and Green-veined White butterflies
Distribution Status	Found throughout Ireland where there are flower-rich grasslands.
	This plant is the larval foodplant for the Orange-tip butterfly and the Green-veined White butterfly. The specific name 'pratensis' is the latin for grassland. Its common name cuckoo flower derives from the formation of the plant's flowers at around the same time as the arrival each spring of the Cuckoo.
	




RAGGED ROBIN / MEADOW PINK

Latin name	<i>Silene flox-cuculi</i>
Irish name	Plúr na cuaiche
Height of plant	35 to 100 cm
Flowering time	June to August
Where to find	Widespread throughout Ireland in damp grasslands that have not been drained.
Pollinated by	Butterflies and other insects with a long proboscis
	Good nectar source for bumblebees, butterflies and honeybees. It gets its name from the ragged shape of the bright pink flowers.
	




YELLOW RATTLE / HAY RATTLE

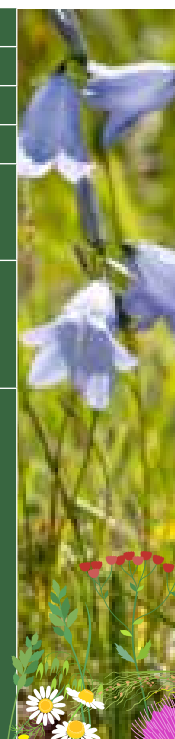


Latin name	<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>
Irish name	Gliográn
Height of plant	10 to 50 cm
Flowering time	May to July
Where to find	Dry grassland.
Pollinated by	Bumblebees
	This is a flower of old, species-rich grasslands and now greatly reduced by modern farming practices. It is a root-hemiparasite and takes the water and minerals from grasses thus reducing their vigour. This makes it beneficial in restoring grasslands because more wildflowers can flourish as competition from grasses is reduced.
	




HAREBELL / LADY'S THIMBLE

Latin name	<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>
Irish name	Méaracán gorm
Height of plant	15 to 50 cm
Flowering time	July to September
Where to find	Dry, undisturbed and nutrient poor, limestone grassland and heaths
Pollinated by	A variety of insects
	The Irish name translates into English as 'blue thimble'. Provides nectar for honeybees and bumblebees. It is the floral emblem of Sweden.
	




SPRING GENTIAN

Latin name	<i>Gentiana verna</i>
Irish name	Ceadharlach Bealtaine
Height of plant	5 to 10 cm
Flowering time	April to June
Where to find	Dry limestone grassland
Pollinated by	The plant relies on a variety of insects to pollinate its flowers, but the flowers are adapted to prevent self-pollination.
	It is considered vulnerable and near-threatened. It has been found in 5 sites around Lough Carra where grassland has not been modified or over-grazed. For pollination, the petals of the flower are fused together forming a long tube for access by insects with long tongues.
	



MARSH HELLEBORINE

Latin name	<i>Epipactis palustris</i>
Irish name	Cuaichín corraigh
Height of plant	40 to 60cm
Flowering time	June to July
Where to find	Calcareous marshes and fens, on lake-shores and wet meadows.
Pollinated by	Small wasps, hoverflies, beetles and ants.
	'This beautiful orchid is found in colonies around the shores of Lough Carra. As well as being pollinated by insects they also multiply by new shoots from their rhizomes. It has disappeared from much of its range due to land drainage.'
	



SOME POLLINATING INSECTS



Marsh Fritillary
on Meadow Thistle.



Transparent Burnet moth
on Wild Thyme



Peacock
on Knapweed.



White-tailed Bumblebee
on Knapweed.



Green-veined White
on Lady's Smock



Red-tailed Bumblebee
on Knapweed



Marsh Fritillary
on Red Clover.



Brimstone
on Knapweed.



Small Tortoiseshell
on Common Spotted Orchid.



Orange-tip
on Lady's Smock.



Narrow-bordered
Bee Hawk-Moth.



White-tailed Bumblebee on
Devil's-Bit Scabious.



For more information please visit:

www.loughcarra.org • www.loughcarralife.ie
www.irishwildflowers.ie • www.biodiversityireland.ie
www.wildflowersofireland.net • www.bsbi.org



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