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CANN

**Newsletter Edition: 2
June 2019**

The CANN project is supported by the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

CANN Project Springing into the Survey Season

Welcome to the second edition of the CANN newsletter - our bi-annual newsletter which aims to keep you informed and updated about what is happening as part of the CANN project.

The CANN team have been working hard over the past six months, and we have lots of stories to tell and news to share. We have loved watching the sites come "back to life" over the springtime, with beautiful plant and wildlife species emerging and returning to these habitats - visit our twitter feed (@theCANNproject) to see the photos.

The summer fieldwork season is now well underway. With works starting on the ground and surveying and monitoring ongoing, the pace has moved up another gear and we are busier than ever.

We hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter, and wish you a very pleasant summer!

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Spawning Lamprey Spotted at Sliabh Beagh

Eagle-eyed Sliabh Beagh Site Coordinator, Rory Sheehan, spotted spawning Lamprey in the Mountain Water river on Sliabh Beagh in late April 2019.

These vertebrates hold a high conservation status in Ireland. Despite sometimes being called “lamprey eels” and looking like an eel, they actually have nothing but their looks in common with their uncanny lookalikes.

Lamprey are considered to be ecological engineers, maintaining and expanding the habitats of other freshwater species such as salmon and trout. They are very vulnerable to water pollution and human interference, and have seen notable declines over recent years across Ireland and the UK.



The spawning lamprey were spotted by CANN Site Coordinator, Rory, in the Mountain Water River on Sliabh Beagh, Co. Monaghan, during April 2019.

Award-winning Poster at Environ 2019

Congratulations to the CANN project’s Raymond Wilson (Ulster University), who won the “Richard Fitzgerald Memorial” prize for his aquatic environment themed poster presentation at Environ2019.

Environ2019 was held at the Institute of Technology Carlow on 15th-17th April 2019, bringing together some of the best environmental researchers on the island of Ireland. The conference theme for this year’s event was “Engagement for Climate Action”.

Additional Funding for Conservation at Cuilcagh/Anierin

We were thrilled when the Special EU Programmes Body announced that the CANN project was to receive an additional €1.1 million to carry out important conservation work at Cuilcagh Mountain and Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands Special Areas of Conservation in counties Fermanagh, Leitrim and Cavan.



The beautiful Cuilcagh Mountain and Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands SACs cover a large cross-border area over counties Fermanagh, Leitrim and Cavan.

CANN’s funding value now totals €9.4million, and the team hopes to use these additional monies to preserve priority species and restore natural habitats found at these environmentally significant sites.

Through working alongside local communities, the team hope to improve the conservation status of these sites, and that the sustainability of these iconic landscapes, habitats and species can be guaranteed for future generations.

Congratulating the project Gina McIntyre, CEO of the SEUPB said: “The INTERREG funding awarded to this project CANN, reflects the EU’s commitment to supporting much-needed cross-border environmental protection work that will safeguard our shared natural environment today and in the future.”

Media Focus: The Day the BBC Came to Visit

The CANN team were very happy to welcome Conor Macauley, BBC NI Environment Correspondent, to a cold and windy Sliabh Beagh on Friday 29th March 2019. Ready to address all his queries and questions was Sliabh Beagh Site Coordinator, Rory Sheehan.

As one of the project's cross-border sites, Sliabh Beagh was of particular interest to the BBC who were researching and preparing a news piece on the environment after Brexit, and the current and future need for cross-border co-operation for conservation.

This was a somewhat ironic topic to be covering on what was supposed to be "Brexit Day", but Rory made the best of the opportunity presented to highlight the need for environmental conservation at designated sites, and the positive cross-border work being done for the environment through EU funded projects such as CANN.

The recording aired on BBC Newsline on Tuesday 16th April 2019, on the 6:30pm show, and was used as part of an Environment after Brexit discussion for BBC Radio Four's "Costing the Earth" Programme.

If you are interested in hearing what Rory had to say, "Costing the Earth" is downloadable from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00045bc> (fast forward to 8:48 if you are in a hurry!).



Rory explains to Conor the history of Sliabh Beagh, and the complexities of managing a cross-border designated site.



Catherine Cunningham (CANN Communications Officer) and Shirley Clerkin (Monaghan County Council) enjoyed overseeing the filming.



L-R: Conor Macauley, BBC NI Environment Correspondent, Rory Sheehan, Sliabh Beagh Site Coordinator, and Neale Dickson, End Slate Media, at the end of a busy day filming on Sliabh Beagh.



Conor and Rory meet on the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland to discuss the CANN project, and the environment post-Brexit.

The Mystery of the Moneygal Fish and Chip Van

The CANN team reached out to the public to find out more about a mystery fish and chip van, parked up on a CANN project site at Moneygal Bog, Co. Tyrone.

“It’s not quite what we expected to find when we began to survey the plants and animals of Moneygal Bog!” said Trish Fox (Ulster Wildlife).

And we did indeed learn more about the van at a public talk hosted at the Killeter Heritage Centre on Friday 15th February 2019.

“As we suspected, the van was used to provide shelter from the rain for turf-cutters.” confirmed Trish, adding “It was a brave man who pulled it out there with his tractor - there is many a machine has been lost to bogs in Northern Ireland over the years!”

The CANN team loved hearing stories from the locals who attended. Many attendees used to cut turf on Moneygal years ago, and some expressed a keen interest in getting back out onto the bog to learn more about the range of plants and animals that call this peatland habitat home.

It wasn’t only the history of the fish and chip van that the CANN team learnt about that evening. Some attendees talked of a historic bog burst that had sent people running from their homes over a 100 years ago. Others reminisced about “Bogbine”, a foul-tasting traditional bogbean remedy which was used to cleanse the blood. Perhaps the most telling of all was how some attendees spoke about watching the environment here change over the decades, with the notable decline of iconic species such as grouse and curlew which used to be common at this site.

The CANN project team hope that conservation action and collaboration between the CANN team, statutory agencies and local communities will reverse this decline, and these once common species will be common once again.

The information and knowledge gained from the stories shared at the event highlighted again the importance and value of local knowledge and engagement to the environmental conservation and management of our designated sites.



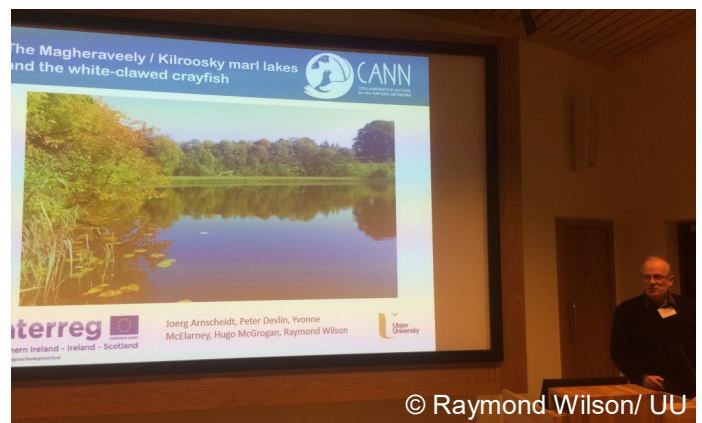
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The fish and chip van in question can be seen on Moneygal Bog, near the village of Castlederg, Co. Tyrone, N. Ireland.

Irish Crayfish Seminar

The CANN freshwater team were in attendance at the Irish Crayfish Seminar on 21st and 22nd May at the Marine Institute in Co. Galway. The seminar was organised in response to recent outbreaks of crayfish plague in Ireland.

One of the invited speakers was CANN’s own Dr Joerg Arnscheidt (Ulster University) who presented on the White-clawed crayfish populations at Magheraveely/Kilroosky marl lakes and the ongoing conservation action being taken for the species as part of CANN. Well done to Joerg and the freshwater team for their hard work in preparing for this event.



© Raymond Wilson/ UU

Dr Joerg Arnscheidt presenting at the Irish Crayfish Seminar which was held on the 21st and 22nd of May in Co. Galway.

The Annual CANN Trip to Islay

The CANN project team made their annual trip to the Island of Islay (Scotland) during May 2019. Here's a short summary of what the team got up to with their time on the island.

Foraging Workshop

The CANN team had the opportunity to learn a thing or two from James, the forager behind the world-famous "The Botanist" gin, which is distilled at the Bruichladdich whisky distillery on Islay. James took the CANN team out on site to teach them about foraging for botanicals and identifying plant species, as well as to talk about the ongoing conservation work of the distillery which complements the work of the CANN project. A big thank-you to James for guiding the session; all attendees agreed the workshop was highly informative and very enjoyable.



James from Bruichladdich distillery guided a workshop in botanical identification.



Sarah Edwards (ACT) provides an update on how the CANN project is progressing on Islay at the CANN in Scotland workshop.

"CANN in Scotland" Workshop

The CANN project hosted a public workshop on Tuesday 21st May at the Machrie Hotel and Golf Links. Attendees were treated to an impressive line-up of speakers. This included CANN project staff such as Sarah Edwards (ACT) who spoke about the progress of the CANN project on Islay, and Claire Masson (SNH) who presented the findings and learnings of the Scottish Conservation Action Plans produced as part of the CANN project. Hazel White from Peatland Action gave a very insightful presentation into pioneering bog restoration methods, whilst Fiona from Islay Natural History trust gave a great overview of the work they are doing with the marsh fritillary butterfly on the island.

Bird Identification Workshop

Marc Ruddock (GET) guided an evening workshop for CANN project staff and other interested parties on bird surveying and identification. This was a very informative session; the weather was pleasant and the notorious Scottish midges were kept at bay by a gentle breeze. A very prolonged dusk led to it being called a night before any bird song was heard, but the team did manage to catch a fleeting glance of a hen harrier on the horizon. Some dedicated team members hung around after most had turned in, and were rewarded with the sounds of snipe "drumming" an hour and a bit later.



The CANN team were out on site at Duich Moss, taking part in a bird identification workshop led by the Golden Eagle Trust.



The weather on Islay was fantastic for the CANN project visit, showcasing the beautiful landscape & scenery the island has to offer.

CANN Workplan Meeting

One of the main purposes of the trip to Islay was to give the CANN project team a chance to meet up, chat about the project works and progress, discuss and problem solve arising issues, and share advice and best practice in a face-to-face setting. The meeting was held at the Columba Centre, Islay's Gaelic College, with beautiful views out over Loch Indaal. The meeting was very beneficial to all who attended, with a lot of positive feedback and engagement.

Many thanks to ACT, the CANN project partner based on Islay, who helped organise all aspects of this informative trip.

CANN Logo Species Sighted on Project Site

CANN project site Fairy Water Bogs SAC (Co. Tyrone) is quite unique, as in it is made up of four separate areas of active-raised bog habitat, interspersed with agricultural land.

During June 2019 the large heath butterfly, which is proudly displayed in the CANN project logo, has been recorded at all four bogs which make up the SAC.

The large heath is currently a species of conservation concern, and is very much confined to peatland habitats such as the CANN project's priority habitats of active raised bog and blanket bog. This is because the large heath feeds on hare's-tail cottongrass, which is restricted to growing on boggy ground.

These butterflies sit with their wings closed, and the size of the eye spots found on the underside of their wings varies considerably depending on the location of that particular colony.

Check out the great photos Simon Gray (UW) got of this beautiful butterfly species whilst on site at Fairy Water Bogs. Stunning!



The Large heath butterfly is represented within the CANN project logo as a species traditionally typical of peatland habitats.

CANN at the Cuilcagh-Anierin Uplands

Since the announcement of additional funding for Cuilcagh Mountain and Cuilcagh Anierin Uplands SACs, all hands have been on deck to get to work on delivering conservation action for one of the largest expanses of blanket bog habitat on the island of Ireland.

Examples of work which have been carried out since the additional funding was awarded include:

- A Wildfire Management Stakeholder Group has been established to ensure cross-border cooperation in tackling the significant pressure of wildfires across both SACs.
- A series of drop-in information sessions have been held to discuss the project with local communities, landowners and other interested groups.
- Bird monitoring surveys identified the presence of hen harrier, golden plover, red grouse and peregrine falcon on the site.



Golden Plover



Red Grouse



Peregrine Falcon



Hen Harrier

Picking the Purple Peril

On Saturday 15th June, the CANN project team were joined by staff from NIEA's Regional Operations and volunteers from Ulster Wildlife, with a purpose of setting out to tackle the "purple peril" that threatens the active raised bog at Peatlands Park - rhododendron.

Rhododendron may look pretty with its nice purple/pink flowers. But the truth is that these shrubs are a highly invasive species which are very harmful to our precious native bogs. They spread quickly, taking over large areas of bog which are home to unique wildlife.

The CANN project has plans to wipe out rhododendron at our project sites, including Peatlands Park, but with each rhododendron flower containing 1000s of seeds it's no easy task!

This event was the one of the first practical stages in tackling rhododendron at Peatlands Park. Thankfully the awful weather and relentless rain did not deter the group who set off for Derryhubbert Bog to



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Before (left) and after (right) pictures showing the great work de-flowering invasive rhododendron shrubs which was carried out by volunteers at Peatlands Park.

remove the flowering heads from the thousands of rhododendron plants. This action may seem simple, but it was highly effective in preventing millions of rhododendron seeds from entering the seedbank and leading to further invasion of the bog at this designated site.

Contractors are due to start rhododendron removal on site in September 2019.

CANN Project Officer Trish Fox (UW) said; "Rhododendron control is costly and this European funding has meant we can plan out excellent control at five raised bogs across Northern Ireland. Contractors will start work in September but it was great to get out with a team now to remove flowers and seedheads from the bushes. Each rhododendron flower can produce many thousands of tiny seed so our work ... will have prevented many future plants from germinating."

A big thank you to all the volunteers and staff who took part, helping to conserve this beautiful and much loved peatland site.



© Trish Fox/ UW

The CANN team were accompanied by a number of very keen volunteers who persisted in the fight against rhododendron at Peatlands Park, Northern Ireland, despite the awfully damp weather.

Piezometer Pictures

In early February 2019, piezometers were installed on the bog at Peatlands Park. These piezometers are 2m long tubes that are inserted into a bore in the ground at predetermined locations, which will allow the CANN project team to monitor the water table on the bog before and after drain blocking. This monitoring is important for the team to determine whether drain blocking works have been beneficial, and to evaluate their ongoing success.



Can you spot the CANN team members and consultants installing the piezometers at Peatlands Park in this aerial image captured via drone?

Upcoming Events

Please check out our website (coming early July) for the most recent list of upcoming events. All details about any CANN project events will be found there under the “Get Involved” tab.

Project Partners

Lead Partner: Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC).

- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI);
- Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT);
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (ABCBC);
- East Border Region (EBR);
- Golden Eagle Trust (GET);
- Institute of Technology Sligo (ITS);
- Monaghan County Council (MCC);
- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH);
- Ulster University (UU);
- Ulster Wildlife (UW).

The CANN project partnership also works very closely with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in Ireland and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).

Project Funding

The CANN project is supported by the EU's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the SEUPB. Match funding has been provided by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Ireland), the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland), and Scottish Natural Heritage (Scotland).

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