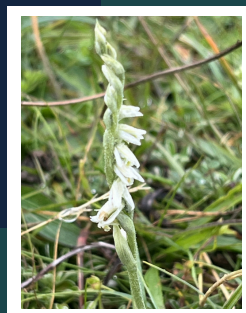




Summer/Autumn Newsletter 2024

The busy Summer season is coming to end in the Burren National Park and the first signs of Autumn are well and truly here. However there is still plenty to delight the senses as bumble bee queens fatten up before their winter sleep and late flowers such as Knapweed, Yarrow and Devil’s-bit Scabious fill the meadows with hues of pink, white and purple.

While most of the beautiful orchids have been and gone, such as the Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis* Magairlín stuaice, and the Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchii sub. fuchii* Nuacht bhallach, (pictured above) you may still be lucky enough to spot Autumn Lady’s Tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* Cúilín Muire.



Autumn Lady’s-tresses

BURREN NATIONAL PARK

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NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúla
National Parks and Wildlife
Service

Cute Critters

The summer months were a great time to spot the larvae, or caterpillars, of some of the wonderful moths found in the Burren. There are around 1400 species of moth in Ireland, most are night flying but many can be found out and about during the day.



The larva to the left is that of the Buff Tip moth *Phalera bucephala*. They can be seen feeding on deciduous trees such as Hazel *Corylus avellana* Coll, Willow *Salix* spp. Saileach, and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* Caorthann, from May to October.

The Buff Tip moth can be seen flying at night mainly from May to August. They are masters of disguise and blend in with the twigs and branches on which they land. It has silver grey wings with a buff coloured head and a buff spot at the end of its wings which it holds vertically flat against its body.

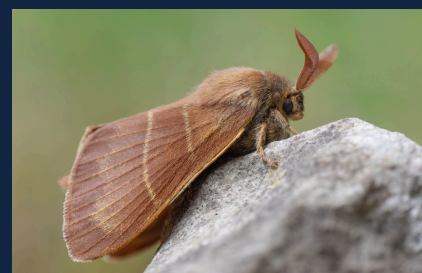


Moths feed on nectar and are important pollinators for many plants including the Lesser Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera bifolia* Magairlín beag an fhéileacáin and Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* Féithleann. Both of these plants emit a sweet fragrant scent in the evening to attract their preferred pollinators. Moths are also a food source for bats and other small mammals as well as birds, amphibians and insects.



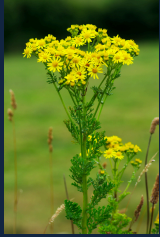
The fuzzy reddish brown, white trimmed larvae of the Fox Moth *Macrothylacia rubi* Leamhan sionnaigh can be spotted in the grasslands throughout the Burren. It can be seen feeding on Heather *Calluna* Fraoch and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* Dris, in the Burren National Park.

The Fox Moth is quite large and can be seen flying from April to mid July. The males are a reddish brown colour with two thin pale stripes on the forewings. The females are similar but are more grey-brown in colour.





These striking black and yellow caterpillars are the larvae of the Cinnabar Moth *Tyria jacobaeae* Leamhan flanndearg. They feed on leaves and flowers of the Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* Buachalán buí. These caterpillars become poisonous from feeding on the Ragwort plant and their yellow and black stripes warn predators not to eat them!

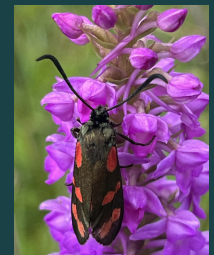


The Cinnabar moth is one of three red and black moths commonly seen in the Burren National Park (see below) and can be spotted on the wing from April to August during the day and at night. This moth has black rounded forewings, each with two red spots and two red stripes. Its hindwings are a pinkish red with black borders.



The Transparent Burnet Moth *Zygaena purpuralis* Leamhan buirnéad trédhearcach is on the wing during the day from May to July. This beautiful red and black moth is largely confined to the Burren, the Aran Islands and around Lough Corrib in Co. Galway. It is presumed extinct in the UK. Its larval food plant is Wild Thyme *Thymus drucei* Tím chreige.

The Six Spot Burnet Moth *Zygaena filipendulae* Leamhan sé láthair buirnéad is the third of the striking red and black moths encountered in the Burren National Park. Most commonly seen during the day from June to August, its larval food plant is Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* Crobh éín.



There are about 1,400 different species of moth in Ireland



Male moths use their antennae to detect the scent of female moths. They can detect a female up to 7km away!



Late Bloomers



There are still plenty of flowers to see in the meadows and grasslands of the Burren National Park. These offer an important source of nectar to wildlife including young bumblebee queens, *Bombus Bombóg*, who gorge on nectar and pollen to fatten up before their solitary winter hibernation. Bumblebees do not store honey in the same way as Ireland's one species of Honey Bee *Apis mellifera* Beach mheala.



Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* Odhrach bhallach is a distinctive long lived perennial plant with blue-purple pincushion like flowers blooming from August to September. It is an excellent food source for many insects and butterfly species including Small Tortoiseshells and Red Admirals. The Marsh Fritillary Butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* Fritileán réisc, favours grasslands with a high density of Devil's-bit Scabious.

The Marsh Fritillary butterfly is afforded protection under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive and is Ireland's only protected insect species. It lays its eggs on the undersides of the basal leaves of Devil's-bit Scabious.



The name Devil's Bit Scabious comes from the folk belief that the Devil, being jealous of its medicinal properties, took a bite from the root of the plant which has a truncated appearance. Scabious comes from the Latin 'scabere' which means 'to scratch' and it was used traditionally to treat scabies, plague sores and eczema. It was also used for cough, fever and as a treatment for worms!



Featured Species: The Red Squirrel



The wooded areas of the Burren National Park provide the perfect habitat for our native Red Squirrel, *Sciurus vulgaris*, lora rua. Red squirrels have a reddish orange coat in the summer, darkening to brownish red in the winter. Their ear tufts also grow fluffier and their tails become bushier during the cold winter months. They are perfectly adapted to life in the trees, have long powerful legs for leaping and can rotate their feet which helps them climb head first down a tree! Bristles on their belly and paws add extra sensory prowess to their movement and perception.



Red Squirrel diets consist mainly of seeds, fungi, berries and nuts. They will also eat insects and bird eggs. The hazel woods in the Burren National Park offer a plentiful supply of hazel nuts which they cache away in several locations in their habitat for retrieval during the lean winter months.



A squirrel's nest is called a drey. A drey is an interwoven ball of twigs lined with moss, leaves, grass or fur. They are often built high up in the fork of a branch against the tree trunk or in tree hollows. A squirrel can have more than one drey and will move their young, called kittens or kits, between nests.



The main threats to Red Squirrel populations in Ireland are habitat loss due to fragmentation and lack of woodland corridors. The invasive Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* competes with the Red Squirrel for food and habitat, and can carry a disease called Squirrel pox.



The Pine Marten *Martes martes* has had a positive impact on Red Squirrel populations by controlling the Grey Squirrel population. Recent studies show a recovery of Red Squirrel populations in areas with a good number of Pine Martens. We are fortunate to have only Red Squirrels in the Burren National Park.



Summer Highlights in the Burren National Park

We had an eventful Summer in the Burren National Park and ran a number of events throughout July and August. For the second year running we ran our 'Fox Cubs Kid's Club'. This lively event ran every Thursday morning for eight weeks and explored the geology, flora and fauna of the Burren and aimed to introduce children to the interconnectedness of all things in our natural environment in a fun educational outdoor setting. We also talked about our own place in the natural world and how the principals of Leave No Trace can help us respect and support our environment.



Also in its second year was the very popular 'Art in the Park' event. This mindful art event gave adults a chance to experience and engage with the beauty and tranquility of the Burren National Park in a creative way. Participants were led in a short guided meditation before beginning their artistic endeavors and invited to reflect on their piece at the end of the session. This event was open to all and focused on the experience of being in nature and the individuals creative response.

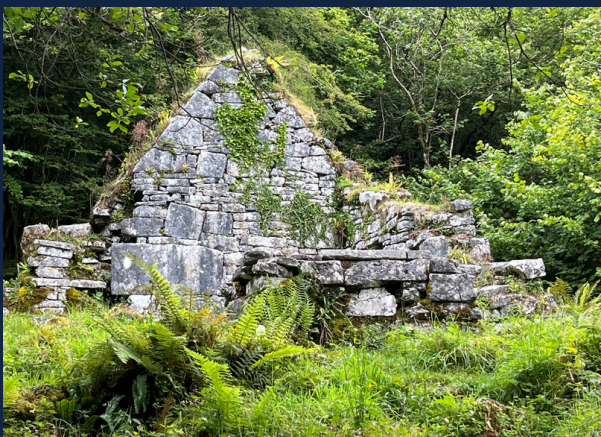




We rounded off our Summer Events with two walks during Heritage Week which incorporated interesting and entertaining stories from Irish folklore and mythology with a walk around our looped nature trail in the Burren National Park. Visitors were regaled with local tales such as the story of the Demon Badger of Lough Raha to the Death of Cú Chulainn.



As well as guided tours in the Burren National Park itself, we also ran a number of scheduled Sunday walks at the stunning Slieve Carran Nature Reserve and to the triple walled fort of Cahercommaun.



St. Coleman's Church on the Brown Trail at Slieve Carran



Signpost to Cahercommaun

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES



The free Burren National Park Shuttle Bus service stopped running on Sunday 1st September after a very busy season. Please keep an eye on our social media for the return of this service in May 2025.

Míle buíochas to all the visitors who chose this sustainable transport option and to our drivers for providing a friendly and professional service!

Upcoming guided walks:

Sunday 8th September @ 2:30pm: **Nature Trail**

Sunday 15th September @ 10am: **Slieve Carran**



Contact us to book



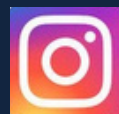
Burren National Park:

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

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