



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2020

MACGILLYCUDDY REEKS

European Innovative Partnerships Project

Welcome to our summer newsletter!

We welcome you to the second newsletter from our MacGillycuddy Reeks European Innovative Partnership (EIP) project.

It has been a busy summer for the project with rhododendron treatment continuing, habitat training with project participants and habitat assessments being carried out, as well as reviewing the sites where cattle were introduced to manage vegetation.

The Reeks EIP now covers over 700 hectares of High Nature Value farmland in the MacGillycuddy Reeks. Numbers of walkers visiting the Reeks for the first time increased this summer, as Covid 19 restrictions were lifted. In this edition we will give you a quick look at work undertaken. The Reeks project is one of twenty two EIP projects currently underway in Ireland.

Find out more about Irish EIPs here:
<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/eip-agri/>



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SOUTH KERRY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP CLG.



Summer work Programme

Results-based Habitat Assessments

The summer period is a wonderful time to visit heath and bog habitats. This is when many of the plants are in full bloom with an impressive display of purple and yellow across many mountains and hillsides in the MacGillycuddy Reeks.

The uplands of Ireland contain a multitude of threatened habitats and species. Unfortunately, recent national assessments have shown that many are in poor conservation status. Mary, our project ecologist, undertakes annual habitat assessments between May and September to monitor the condition of the habitats in the Reeks area over time.

The assessment considers the ecological integrity of the habitats including factors such as the diversity of species, the percentage cover of mosses and lichens, the condition and height of the vegetation and the level of grazing. Existing pressures and threats to these habitats such as the invasion of bracken and rhododendron are also assessed.

The results of these assessments are then used to inform our annual work plans so that the land parcels are managed in a way that improves grazing condition for farmers while simultaneously improving the habitat for the rare and protected plants and animals that live there.



Bracken Treatment

Bracken is a native species but it can become dominant in upland areas if it is not controlled. Repeated trampling and crushing of young fronds as they emerge is one way to reduce its vigour. Cattle may prove to be a useful tool for bracken management, and several of our participating farmers are trialling this method.

The Droimeann cattle, a native breed are being used by some farmers as they are suitable for challenging upland terrain as they are hardy and able to graze on the vegetation found in these areas. This is the first year we are trialling this method, so monitoring of the sites is ongoing. Some farmers purchased these cattle, while more are using a B&B (bed & breakfast) system, whereby they can temporarily borrow cattle from another farmer and add the cattle to their herd.

Controlled Grazing

Our participants remember times past when the tradition of having cattle grazing in the Reeks upland areas was carried out, and many are again seeing the benefit of dual grazing, with both sheep and cattle to manage vegetation like gorse, Molinia/purple moor grass-known by the farmers as fionnán and heather, and therefore limiting build-up of fuel on the ground which could cause upland wildfires.

Our participants have been busy this summer fencing small land parcels to focus grazing in these areas or equally fencing off areas to limit grazing if the vegetation needs to recover. This action is agreed in advance with our participants and informed by assessments carried out by Mary- our project ecologist.



Here you can see the Droimeann cattle being encouraged into the bracken infested area to trample and graze on the Molina. Cattle would have been a common sight in the Reeks about 20/30 years ago, but farm practices have changed to mainly sheep farming since then.

Summer work Programme

Bracken treatment contd.

Application of herbicide spray is another way to manage bracken but is a difficult task, particularly in our upland areas, with uneven terrain, hidden rocks and difficultly accessing sites. Adequate water supply to treat bracken was also identified as a big issue, so water barrels were put out on the hills to gather rainwater allowing for an accessible water supply when required.

However, due to an unseasonably dry spell ram pumps were then trialled to assist in filling the water barrels. Ram pumps are a great solution for areas with poor water sources and to protect water courses. The pump requires no fuel or electricity to work, and are effective at pumping over 100m from the water source.



Rhododendron Treatment

Our collective group have continued with the treatment of Rhododendron ponticum- the invasive species which can be toxic to livestock if eaten. The group is currently focusing their work in the Gap of Dunloe area, to ensure the large heavily infested areas are treated as a priority to prevent the spreading of the seed sources. The main treatment method is by stem injection directly onto the stem of the plant, after exposing the bark, thereby reducing the risk of the glyphosate damaging surrounding vegetation or from entering watercourses. We were recently awarded a tender for baseline mapping of Rhododendron in seven additional sites in the MacGillycuddy Reeks. This work will commence in September, and will help in the development of plans for next year.

QQI Handheld (Pesticides) Knapsack Course

July was a busy month as farmer training continued with 17 local farmers participating in handheld pesticide knapsack training, which was carried out in Beaufort Hall (strictly adhering to the Covid-19 guidelines).

This training crucially raises awareness of the possible environmental impacts of incorrect use of pesticides, the importance of wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment and the importance of accurate record keeping



Habitat Awareness Training

In August 224 hours of habitat awareness training was delivered by Trisha and Mary to our participant farmers. This training was important to explain why the lands in the MacGillycuddy Reeks are protected and designated as Special Areas of Conservation, what this means and what we can do together to improve conditions on the ground.

A first for 28 participant farmers when they successful joined for the morning session online! The presentation was followed by a site visit to view the habitats, species and plants on the ground as well as a practical demonstration in how to use the peatland scorecard.



Many thanks to all who attended and engaged so well with lots of discussion and questions.

KIDS CORNER

Word Search

H F P K D Y J T H W T W G T E
 J E J K X C U B A I U N C R L
 N B A B V G S G B A M P N H C
 Q D S T G U S O I K N P F O Z
 X O C P H I S R T Y M B A D D
 M O T D E E O S A Q F A W O D
 T O Z M R C R E T F I Z X D U
 H Z U E O O I N S L O S J E P
 E H P N F L I E O H N U F N L
 A U C H T J I M S U N N E D A
 T R R V N A H N E N á D R R N
 H B E B X S I B I A N E N O D
 B C E M U N E N Q A N W S N S
 D U K L V H A S P L C N N X B
 C Z S X I J B B R A C K E N Y

rhododendron	droimeann	mountain	fionnán
habitats	Uplands	Molinia	species
heather	heath	bracken	reeks
gorse	sundew	ferns	

School Art Competition

Thanks to all who entered into our art competition “Caring for Wildlife in the MacGillycuddy Reeks’. We had some beautiful entries...

We will be working with our local schools again in the coming year COVID permitting of course! And will be running our art competition again in the New Year.



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New Biosphere Officer

We want to extend a warm welcome to Eleanor Turner, SKDP's newly appointed Biosphere Officer.

Eleanor will be working closely with the MacGillycuddy Reeks EIP team and with other agencies in the UNESCO Kerry Biosphere reserve area.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine



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