



CANN

COLLABORATIVE ACTION
for the NATURA NETWORK



EYE SPY WILDLIFE ON SLIABH BEAGH

Déamao spiaireacht ar
fhiadhúlra Shliabh Beatha

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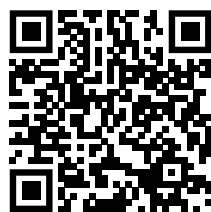


This booklet will help you to explore some of the special species found on Sliabh Beagh, including:

- five bird species
- five terrestrial animal species
- five insect species
- five plant species

cúig speicis éan
cúig speicis ainmhí tálun
cúig speicis feithid
cúig speicis phlandai

When you are out wildlife spotting, please use the Leave No Trace principles and keep dogs on a leash. We have focussed on species that we hope will be easy enough for a beginner to spot with a pair of binoculars or sharp eyes.  Each animal or plant has been given a "spotter point score", reflecting how easy or difficult it is to find. It is important for looking after these uplands that all the species you spot are officially recorded. Unless we know what species live where, it is difficult to conserve them. Citizen Science is vital and makes a real difference. Please scan this QR code on your phone to open the Biodiversity.ie website to submit a record of what you see. Use this for any species you spot, however common you may think it is.



This booklet is part of the Keep Well campaign aimed at showing people of all ages how we can mind our own physical and mental health and wellbeing by adding healthy and helpful habits to our daily and weekly routines. Recording wildlife on your regular walks adds an extra richness and will encourage you to go out more often.

Partners in the CANN project (Collaborative Action for the Natura Network), including the Heritage section of Monaghan County Council, the Golden Eagle Trust, and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, are working to improve the

conditions of the blanket bog on Sliabh Beagh. The CANN project, which is supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), aims to improve key wetland habitats and to support the priority species found in them. Blanket bogs are a valuable natural resource and provide vital ecosystem services. Some of the works being carried out on Sliabh Beagh include blocking drains and removing invasive conifers. These projects will raise the water table level and will re-wet the bog so that it can start to grow again.

Why are blanket bogs important?

- They are great stores of carbon.
- They combat climate change by removing excess carbon dioxide from the air and placing it into long term storage (Carbon Sequestration).
- They are a natural solution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- They purify water and reduce the potential for flooding because they absorb, hold and slowly release water.
- Blanket bogs are an important habitat that supports several protected species such as hen harriers, merlin and red grouse.

The Sliabh Beagh uplands are an extensive area of rolling sandstone hills, rising to the summit of Doocarn at 380m. The area straddles Counties Tyrone, Fermanagh and Monaghan's borders, with the international border running across the summit from NE to SW. The upland's Northern edge has a broken surface with flat-topped, boggy hills and rounded ridges separated by deep valleys and punctuated with lovely small rounded lakes. The southern edge is formed from a long line of hills and summits, which command tremendous views of Fermanagh and Monaghan's lowlands. The lower slopes are cloaked in conifer plantations, broken by rushy pasture, lakes and streams, often fringed with broadleaf scrub and woodland. Sliabh Beagh mountain has many internationally important habitats, including blanket bog, European dry heath, and some of the best naturally dystrophic (low nutrient and acidic) lakes and ponds in Europe.



Hen Harrier

An Cromán na Gcearc

- Hen Harriers are a protected species nationally and under the EU Birds Directive.
- Male – Strikingly pale below with grey upperparts & jet-black wingtips.
- Female/Juvenile – are difficult to tell apart. They are brown with white rump & dark rings on the tail; they are sometimes called ringtails. The female is always bigger than the male.
- These birds hunt by sound, and the shape of their owl-like faces focuses the sound and helps them locate prey in long vegetation.
- Hen Harriers are ground-nesting birds, although here on Sliabh Beagh they prefer to nest in deep banks of long heather, but they sometimes nest in scrub and pre-thicket forest plantations if they have no other choice.
- You can usually only hear them in the breeding season near the nest site when they call to each other or sound an alarm to chase away intruders.
- To claim territory and a mate in Spring (around March and April), male Harriers engage in spectacular courtship displays (the sky dance). Males fly very high into the sky, then free fall, spinning and somersaulting.
- Another amazing and spectacular trait of the Hen Harrier is the food pass. The male, carrying prey in his talons, will call to the female as he approaches the nest area. The female will rise to meet the male, and as she comes near him, will somersault upside down, and the food is passed from his talons to hers in mid-air.
- Found in moorlands, grassland, wetlands, upland bog/heath.



Use a QR reader on your phone to hear this recording of a hen harrier's quick chattering call (with a cuckoo in the background)

“Eye spy” a hen harrier



Date	Place	I earned
		20 spotting points

Red Grouse

An Chearc Fhraoigh

- The Red grouse is reddish-brown with very finely marked feathers. Females are lighter in colour with more yellow on the feather edges. Males are darker and redder and display a bright red eyebrow in the breeding season.
- This ground-dwelling bird will not usually be seen in flight unless disturbed. It takes off explosively and flies with a series of rapid wing beats followed by a short glide.
- Males can be seen in the breeding season standing on high clumps or rocks to give them a good view of the surrounding bog. If you accidentally flush a bird up out of the vegetation, move away as you may disturb a nest during the spring and summer.
- Red Grouse nest on the ground, laying clutches of 5-10 eggs.
- Found on mountains, moorland, blanket bogs and raised bogs, where they are associated with heather, which they use for food, shelter and nesting.



Scan the QR code to hear the Red Grouse's distinctive call, an accelerating series of loud nasal clacks ending in a trill. Sometimes it sounds as if the bird is shouting 'Go back! Go back! Go back!' as it flies fast and low above the heather.



“Eye spy” a red grouse

Date	Place	I earned
		30 spotting points

Photo by: Jonny Rosborough

Common Snipe

An Naoscach

- A snipe is the wader you are most likely to see on Sliabh Beagh, but unless it is disturbed, it will stay well hidden. Its numbers are declining, and it is an amber listed species.
- Snipe are medium-sized, wading birds with short legs and long straight bills. Both sexes are brown above, with paler buff stripes on the back, dark streaks on the chest and pale underparts.
- The snipe breeds in wet flushes on moorland, damp pasture and frequently found at the edges of watercourses.



Scan the QR code to hear the snipe drumming. Snipe make this eerie goat bleating sound as part of their display flights over nesting territory in summer. The drumming is produced by stiff feathers sticking out at the sides of the tail that vibrate as the bird flies in a roller coaster pattern in the sky. In winter you are more likely to hear an abrupt “scratch” as a flight call.

“Eye spy” a common snipe

Date

Place

I earned

30 spotting points



Photo by: Breffni Martin/ Louth Nature Trust





Skylark

An Fhuiseog

- The Skylark is declining in numbers and has been placed on the red list because of this. They can be found throughout Ireland in uplands and areas of farmland.
- The skylark is a small brown bird, somewhat larger than a sparrow. It is streaky brown with a small crest, which they raise when excited or alarmed, and a white-sided tail. The wings also have a white rear edge, visible in flight. Juveniles have much of the black streaking replaced by spotting and lack the crest.
- When flying from the ground, skylarks keep low, unlike the similar Meadow Pipit, which typically rises straight up. Although when singing a display song, they can fly so high it is almost impossible to see them.
- Skylarks breed in a variety of habitats, including cultivated areas, ungrazed grasslands and upland heaths.



Scan the QR code to hear the skylark's song. It is sweet on the ear, with its high pitch, exuberant tone and effortless delivery. But its special property is its sustained nature; when a lark is singing there is no break, no real phrasing, just a stream of unbroken sound like the flow of a small brook.

“Eye Spy” a skylark



Date	Place	I earned
		20 spotting points

Photo by: Breffni Martin/ Louth Nature Trust

Meadow Pipit

An Riabhóg Mhóna¹ or an Banaltra na Cuaiche²

- The Irish names of this bird are very descriptive. Directly translated, they paint an accurate picture of a meadow pipit as the “little grey stripy one of the bog”⁽¹⁾ or even better, the “nursemaid of the cuckoo”⁽²⁾, which refers to them raising baby cuckoos instead of their own offspring when they are parasitized by the mother cuckoo.
- Once one of the most common bird species found in Ireland, the meadow pipit is a songbird found in bogs, uplands and areas of scrub and pasture but is also now red-listed due to extensive declines.
- Meadow Pipits are greyish-brown above, with black streaking on a white breast and belly. The beak and legs are pinkish. It looks very similar to a skylark, but it is slightly smaller and lacks the broad white stripe above the eye that marks the skylark.
- When flying from the ground, Meadow Pipit typically rises straight up and is often seen “parachuting” back down, unlike the similar Skylark, which keeps close to the ground when disturbed.
- Nests are well camouflaged and found near the base of a tuft vegetation and can be easily trampled (so always stick to paths when walking).



Scan this QR code to listen to the call given when the bird is alarmed or flushed from cover, a rapid “vist-vist-vist”.

Scan this QR code to hear the meadow pipit performing a short song flight from a post. The bird flies straight up, before parachuting back down to the original perch



“Eye Spy” a meadow pipit

Date

Place

I earned

30 spotting points



Pine Marten

An Cat Crainn

- The Pine Marten is native to Ireland and at one time was nearly extinct. It is now protected and is making a come-back.
- These mammals are a rich brown colour with a patch of pale-coloured fur over their throats and chests. The pattern of markings is unique to each individual and can be used to identify them.
- They are mainly solitary animals unless you are lucky enough to see a mother with her kits.
- Their diet includes berries, fruits, insects, frogs and birds.
- They are mostly active at night but are often seen at dawn or dusk.

Did you know?

The pine marten has been present in Ireland for thousands of years, hence its descriptive name in Irish of cat crainn (tree cat) and its use in place names, such as 'Líos na gCat' and 'Cathair an chaitín'.

"Eye spy" a pine marten



Date	Place	I earned
		50 spotting points





Irish hare

An giorria sléibhe
Éireannach

- The Irish hare is one of Ireland's longest established indigenous species of mammal.
- They are distinguished from brown hares that you might see in the North by their stockier build, pure white tail and shorter ears.
- They are much larger than rabbits and have a more upright way of standing. They do not hop but run fast and low.
- Hares do not burrow underground like rabbits. Instead they occupy ground-surface dens called 'forms'.
- Hares are herbivores feeding on heather, grass, willow and gorse.

Did you know?

If you are lucky enough to see hares "boxing" in the spring, it is likely that it is a female boxing a male to say she is not interested in mating.

"Eye Spy" an Irish Mountain hare



Date	Place	I earned
		40 spotting points

Photo by: Ruth Hanniffy/Vincent Wildlife Trust

Red Deer

An Fia Rua

- Red deer are one of the largest deer in the world and are closely related to American Elk.
- The deer have a large head with widely spaced eyes. Their most distinguishing feature is the stag's antlers. They are highly branched, and the branches increase as the deer gets older. The antlers are cast during March/April and begin to regrow to be fully formed and clear of the velvet that covers them by August/September.
- Red deer are a distinctive rusty red colour in summer, turning to a brown winter coat. Adults are not spotted, but their young can be. (if you see a spotted adult deer, it is probably a fallow deer which are found on Sliabh Beagh too).
- A stag will stand at 1.37m at the shoulder (not including the head and antlers), and they can weigh up to 190kg. By comparison an average adult man in Ireland stands at 1.78m and weighs 80kg.



Scan this QR code to hear the call of the Red Deer stag. When they are competing for mates in the rutting season (end of September to November) stags return to the hind's home range and compete for them by engaging in elaborate displays of dominance including roaring, parallel walks, and fighting.

“Eye Spy” a red deer

Date

Place

I earned

30 spotting points



Photo by: Charlie Newman/British Deer Society



Common Frog

An Froga

- Frogs are amphibians which means they can survive in the water and on land.
- Look out for them on the edges of ditches and pools on the mountain.
- Their skin colour and markings vary enormously. The basic colour ranges from a pale green-grey through yellow to a dark olive-coloured brown. They can change their colour to match their surroundings. This change takes about two hours.
- Frogs feed on slugs, insects, worms, spiders and similar prey.
- Look out for frogspawn in early spring and tadpoles in early summer. In winter, frogs hide in frost-free refuges, under tree stumps or in rock piles where they doze until the following spring.

Did you know?

Frogs feature in one of Seamus Heaney's most famous poems, *Death of a Naturalist*:
...but best of all was the warm thick slobber
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water
In the shade of the banks...
the fattening dots burst, into nimble
Swimming tadpoles

“Eye Spy” a frog/ frogspawn or tadpoles

Date

Place

I earned



15 spotting points



Photo by: Marie McCartan



Red Squirrel

An t-Iora Rua

- Red Squirrels are our native species of squirrel. Grey squirrels (natives of North America) were introduced into Ireland from Britain in 1911 and nearly wiped out our red squirrels from a combination of competition (reds are fussy eaters, greys will eat pretty much anything) and being carriers of a fatal squirrel pox.
- However, an increase in Pine marten numbers has helped the red squirrel to recover in recent years, as the greys cannot cope with this predator as well as the reds can.
- The red squirrel is a smaller, more delicate creature than the grey and is an acrobatic tree climber, rarely seen on the ground.
- They vary in colour from very red to darkish red-brown or even black and have greyish sides. They have distinctive tufts of fur on their ears.
- Look out for them in conifer plantations and native woodlands on the lower slopes of Sliabh Beagh.

Did you know?

Red squirrels don't hibernate, although they do shelter away from the worst weather, so don't look for them in the pouring rain! In winter, they rely on food they have previously buried, and they can locate their food supplies in over a foot of snow

"EyeSpy" a red squirrel

Date	Place	I earned
		40 spotting points

Photo by: Marie McCartan

Marsh fritillary butterfly

An Fritileán Réisc

- The Marsh fritillary butterfly is one of Ireland's few legally protected butterflies.
- It is protected under Annex II of the European Union Habitats and Species Directive but is in rapid decline.
- They have an orange and cream square pattern on their wings and can be identified by the distinctive cream bands on their underwings. Marsh Fritillaries on Sliabh Beagh are much more clearly marked than those in the UK.
- Usually seen in flight during May and June. Look out for them on wet grasslands with lots of tussocks as well as around mires and heaths.

Did you know?

The little black caterpillars spend most of the year from August onwards in webs low down on the leaves of Devil's-bit Scabious. These groups of caterpillars can generate temperatures up to 35°C at their core, even in winter, so not only is there safety but also warmth in numbers



“Eye Spy” a marsh fritillary butterfly 

Date	Place	I earned
		40 spotting points



Peacock butterfly

An Phéacóg

- Peacocks become active on the first warm sunny day of spring, sometimes as early as the end of February.
- After mating, the female lays up to 500 eggs in sunny areas with lots of nettles, the caterpillars' favourite food. The caterpillars are black covered with short spines and are speckled with white spots.
- They hibernate from mid-September to February or later, often in houses or in hollow trees or other crevices.
- Peacock butterflies are strong flyers but rest with closed wings showing only the camouflaged dark brown/black underside, which look like dead leaves.
- They get their name from their red upper wings with superbly coloured large peacock-feather-like eyespots designed to scare away predators.

Did you know?

If a peacock butterfly is threatened, it will flash its 'eyes' and hiss by rubbing its wings together

"Eye Spy" a peacock butterfly or a peacock caterpillar

Date	Place	I earned 
		15 spotting points

Photo by: Christin Cassidy

Large Heath Butterfly

An Fraochán Mór

- This butterfly breeds in open wet areas, and the lower slopes of Sliabh Beagh (below 500m) provide the perfect habitat for it, especially on old, hand-cut bogs.
- Its caterpillars eat Hare's-Tail cotton grass, and the adults get most of their nectar from Cross-leaved Heath heather.
- The adults will fly even on a dull day, as long as the temperature is above 14°C.
- Its numbers have decreased by nearly 60% since the 1970s.

Did you know?

All animal and plant species have a Latin or scientific name as well as an English or Irish one. The large heath is called *Coenonympha tullia*. Try to say it: "SEE-no-nimf-uh TOO-lee-uh"

"Eye Spy" a large heath butterfly



Date	Place	I earned
		30 spotting points

Photo by: Simon Gray/Ulster Wildlife



Garden Tiger Moth

An Leamhan Tíograch Garraí

- You might think this is a butterfly, but it is actually a moth. It is on the wing towards the end of summer during July and August, and you might spot it in the evenings, although it is mainly active at night.
- The garden tiger is a stout, hairy moth. Its forewings are chocolate-brown with cream patterns. Its hind wings are orange-red with black spots that it flashes to warn predators that it tastes bad.
- This moth likes a cool climate with a good cold winter. Global warming with warmer winters are causing them problems.



Did you know?

Garden Tiger caterpillars are often called “Hairy Marys” or “Wooley Bears”. The hairs are irritant and protect it from predators - be warned in case you pick one up. They get their poison from the plants they like to eat.

“Eye Spy” a garden tiger or a Hairy Mary

Date	Place	I earned
		15 spotting points

Photo by: Brian Nelson



Four-spotted Chaser (dragonfly)

An Ruagaire
Ceathairbhallach

- Both sexes of the Four-spotted Chaser dragonfly are golden-brown, getting darker towards the tip of the body, with yellow spots along the sides. Two dark spots at the front edge of each wing give this dragonfly its name and an easily recognisable appearance.
- The Four-spotted chaser is on the wing from May to September, sometimes even into October and as it can be up to 48mm long with a wingspan of nearly 80mm, it is easy to spot.
- Look out for them at the margins of shallow ponds and lakes with good emergent vegetation and some open water. Here they hawk over the surface for insect prey and mark their territories, but these strong fliers will also sometimes hunt a fair distance from water, so keep your eyes open for them everywhere.
- If you listen on a quiet summer's day, you can hear the whirr of their wings. If you see one dipping its tail end into the water everyso often, this is her laying eggs.

Did you know?

Dragonflies spend years living as larvae hunting underwater and only fly for one season of a few weeks when they mate and lay eggs. Look out for see-through papery dry larvae cases on plants on the water's edge, these are left behind when the dragonfly sheds its skin and changes from underwater beastie to flying insect

“Eye Spy” a four spotted chaser

Date	Place	I earned
		15 spotting points

Photo by: Brian Nelson

Cranberry

An Mhónóg

- The cranberry mainly grows on wet, acidic sphagnum bogs.
- The familiar Cranberry fruit is red/pink in colour and round. If the bog floods, the berries will float as they have air pockets in them. Commercial berry farms in America flood their fields to make it easy to harvest the floating berries.
- Cranberries are either born on dwarf, evergreen shrubs or on trailing vines lying flat on the ground. They flower from June to August.
- Red Grouse love to eat these tasty berries, which are full of anti-oxidants. Red grouse know a superfood when they find one!

Did you know?

You can have a go at making cranberry sauce or freeze them to make it for Christmas? Put 100g light muscovado sugar and 100ml orange juice into a pan, then bring to the boil. Stir in 250g fresh or frozen cranberries, then simmer until tender but still holding their shape – this will take about 8-10 mins. The sauce will thicken as it cools.

“Eye Spy” some cranberries

Date	Place	I earned
		15 spotting points



Heather

An Fraoch

- There are two common types of heather on Sliabh Beagh, ling and bell heather. You can also look out for cross-leaved heather, but it is rarer
- Bell heather has a loose bright reddish-purple flower spike and flowers earlier(June) than ling heather with its mass of tiny tight pink or pale purple flowers starting in July. By early autumn, the blooms will have transformed the bleak, windswept moorland into a sweeping blanket of colour.
- They are mainly found on acidic soil over mountains and bogs.
- Heather is one of the most common types of plant found on Sliabh Beagh's slopes.
- Ideal habitat for a range of animals such as ground-nesting birds, e.g. hen harrier and red grouse. Please keep dogs on leads and keep to footpaths to avoid disturbing these birds.

Did you know?

Heather is great for bees, and dark, fragrant Heather honey is highly prized for its health and healing benefits as it's rich in antioxidants and has anti-bacterial properties. It's traditionally used to treat digestive disorders and kidney infections.

"Eye Spy" some heather

Date

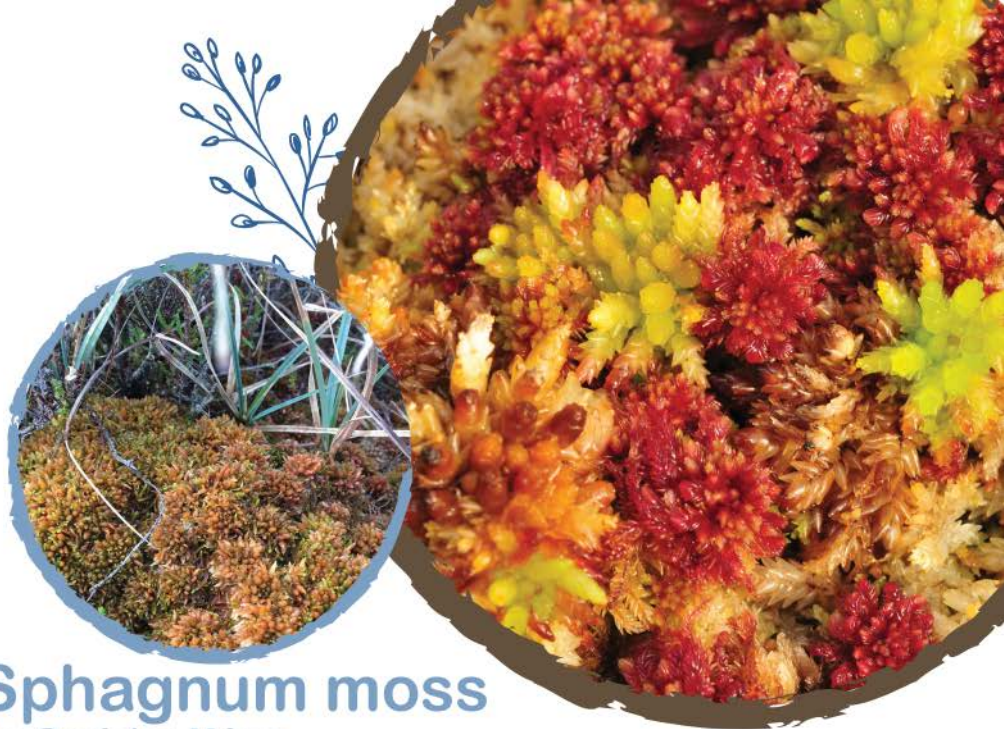
Place

I earned

5 spotting points



Photo by: Simon Gray/Ulster Wildlife



Sphagnum moss

An Smúdar Móna

- Sponge-like Sphagnum mosses carpet the ground with colour on the bogs, heaths and moors of Sliabh Beagh. They play a vital role in the creation of peat bogs: by storing water in their spongy forms, they prevent the decay of dead plant material and eventually form peat
- If you squeeze sphagnum, you will see that it holds huge amounts of water, eight times its own weight, in fact.
- It can survive in waterlogged conditions having very few nutrients.
- You can help our precious peatland habitats by buying peat-free products for your garden, make your own compost and buying plants that have not been grown in peat.

Did you know?

Because of its absorbency and anti-viral and anti-bacterial properties, sphagnum used to be used for wound dressing and also as a filling in babies' nappies

“Eye Spy” sphagnum

Date	Place	I earned
		5 spotting points

Photo Top Left by: Trish Fox/Ulster Wildlife



Bog asphodel

An Sciollam na Móna

- Bog asphodel is unmistakable when found on the damp, peaty soils it prefers.
- Look for the pyramidal flower spikes, which carry a dense cluster of yellow, open flowers with protruding, woolly, orange-tipped stamens.
- They flower from June to August.
- The leaves are narrow and rigid, set in a flattened fan around the stem.
- After it flowers, most of the plant turns dark orange/brown in colour, and reddish, egg-shaped fruits appear.

Did you know?

Farmers used to think that Bog asphodel caused sheep to have brittle bones (its Latin name *ossifragum* means fragile bones). It is really the calcium-poor pastures that caused the brittle bones in livestock. However, the plant can cause liver damage and sensitivity to light, so it is better not to have stock feeding on it!

“Eye Spy” some bog asphodel

Date	Place	I learned
		15 spotting points

Photos by: Eddie O'Donnell

Sundew

An Drúchtín

- Sundews are “flypaper” plants that trap prey in sticky hairs on their leaves. They make up one of the largest groups of carnivorous plants. Long tentacles protrude from their leaves, each with a sticky gland at the tip. These droplets look like dew glistening in the sun, thus their name.
- They are commonly found around bog pools. These acidic areas are low in the nutrients that plants need, so sundews trap and digest insects to provide the nitrogen and minerals they need.
- Sundews have round green leaves with red tentacles. The glands produce nectar to attract prey, powerful adhesive to trap it, and enzymes to digest it. Once an insect becomes stuck, nearby tentacles coil around the insect and smother it.

Did you know?

The ‘dew’ of Round-leaved sundews once formed the basis of anti-ageing potions as people believed it was a source of youth and virility - the sundew itself glistening and moist even in the fiercest sun. Later, the plant was also used as a love charm because of its power to lure and trap helpless insects.

“Eye Spy” some sundew

Date

Place

I earned

5 spotting points



Photos Left by:
Mel Flexen



Want to know more?

We hope that you enjoyed finding out about some of the animal and plant life of Sliabh Beagh and that you were able to record what you saw. Please remember to record ALL the species you see, not just the ones in this guide. Monaghan County Library service has loads of books to help you identify the species you see.

Avoid books that cover Ireland and Britain as there are many more species in Britain, there is no point wading through lots of pictures of species that are not seen in Ireland.

The Wildflowers of Ireland

by Zoe Devlin is a good starter book for plants and flowers

The Insects of Ireland, a field guide

by Eugenie Regan and Stephen McCormack, is really well illustrated

Range of swatch identification guides

from www.Biodiversity.ie covers trees and shrubs, bumblebees, butterflies, terrestrial mammals, ladybirds, shieldbugs, and dragonflies. These are handy pocket sized guides that focus on one particular group at a time.

It is also useful when you are learning to identify species to join a dedicated Facebook group , simply post a photo to get identification help. Examples include [Insects/invertebrates of Ireland](#), [Dragonflyireland](#) and [Wildflowers & Fungi of Ireland and UK](#) but there are many others.

For more information please visit

www.thecannproject.org

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