

Site Focus: Slievenacloy

Where can you wander through wildflowers, bask with butterflies and revel in wildlife? If you are looking for somewhere to escape from the traffic, television and the noise of everyday life, then head into the Belfast Hills and take some time to explore the latest nature reserve to be opened up to the public by the Ulster Wildlife Trust.

Slievenacloy Nature Reserve lies in a lush valley, lying between Priest's Hill and Boomers Hill. From first impressions you



may only see fields of wild grasses with cattle roaming free across the slopes, but Slievenacloy is a unique haven for birds, mammals, insects and plants, the cattle helping us to maintain the reserve in the best possible condition for the wildlife that inhabit it. Take a wander through the nature reserve and you may see Irish hare tearing across the hillside or be serenaded by skylarks. On a warm summer's day clouds of butterflies will rise from the profusion of flowers and grasses at your feet, and in the autumn you will find the slopes

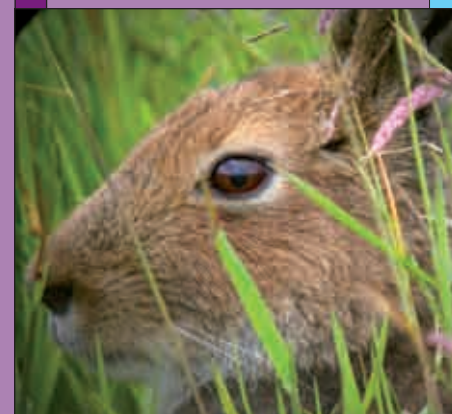
bejewelled with brightly coloured toadstools. Our leaflet and orientation panels will help you to find your way around the site, leading you to places where you can experience the amazing views over NI and helping you to understand what makes Slievenacloy so unique. For directions check out the 'Where to Walk' area of www.belfasthills.org A free evening focusing on Slievenacloy will be held Thurs 26th April, 7pm-9pm Hannahstown Hill Centre, everyone is welcome. **Catherine Bertrand, UWT**

Wildlife Focus: Irish Hare

The Irish hare is found only in Ireland and may be seen in the Belfast Hills. Although once widespread and common, populations have undergone a decline in the last 10-20 years with numbers falling to critical levels in some areas. As a result of this the Irish hare is a Priority Species for conservation and a Biodiversity Action Plan has been produced

to ensure its future conservation in Northern Ireland. The Belfast Hills Partnership are currently undertaking research into Irish hare populations across the Belfast hills. The Irish hare has a russet brown coat, long ears with black tips and eyes set high in the head. It may be seen all year round. If you spot an Irish hare while out and about in the

Belfast Hills please get in contact with the Belfast Hills Partnership letting us know the date and location of your sighting (if possible give a grid reference), so helping us to get a better picture of the Belfast hill's Irish hare population. Dogs are a major cause of disturbance to the hares, so please control any dogs when walking.



Photograph courtesy of Neil Reid

Upcoming events

- **Bears and Bluebells:** Guided walk through Belfast Zoo and Hazelwood woodland. Sat 5th May 10am-1pm.
- **Sight Seeing Bus Tour:** Discover Belfast Hill's hidden gems. Sat 16th June 10am-1pm.
- **Damselfly and Butterfly walk:** Walk through Colin Glen Forest Park and enjoy the amazing insects. Sat 23rd June 11am-2pm.
- **Belfast Castle Fête:** An afternoon of music, side shows and activities. Sun 24th June 1pm-5pm.
- **Bloomin' Butterflies:** Stroll Slievenacloy Nature Reserve and see the orchids and butterflies. Sat 30th June 12pm-2pm.

**For more details
Tel: 028 9060 3466**

Contact the Belfast Hills Partnership

for help and advice with any concerns or questions regarding the hills, their wildlife and people. Also let us know what you would like to read about in future newsletters.

Postal Address: 163 Stewartstown Rd, Belfast, BT17 OHW
Tel: 028 9060 3466, Fax: 028 9030 9867,
Email: info@belfasthills.org www.belfasthills.org

Wild Fire!

Tragically summer fires are all too common in the Belfast Hills. In response to this the Belfast Hills Partnership in conjunction with the site managers across the Belfast Hills have drawn up information packs for the Fire Service. These packs include maps, site access details, water sources and other such essential information. It is hoped that the provision of such information will allow the Fire Service to carry out their job with greater ease and speed, so preventing fires destroying the precious environment of the Belfast Hills.



Partnership's aims and Objectives

- The conservation and enhancement of the natural, cultural and built heritage of the Belfast Hills.
- Management of the existing recreational use of the Belfast Hills.
- Raising of awareness and encouraging individuals to care for the Belfast Hills.
- Active contribution to the economic regeneration of the hills.
- Support and assistance to farmers and landowners under pressure from urban development and from inappropriate forms of countryside recreation.

Paper from a sustainable source: Please recycle when finished reading this newsletter!

Quiz!

Can you identify which of the Belfast Hills the below pictures were taken on? Contact the Partnership at the above address, the first 10 people to answer correctly will receive a mystery prize.



For some clues visit www.belfasthills.org, click on the 'where to walk' section, then virtually explore the different sites.

**Belfast Hills
Partnership**

*Caring for the
Hills, their Wildlife
and people*

Belfast Hills NEWSLETTER

Caring for the Hills, their Wildlife and people

Volunteering Opportunities

Want to play a part in the conservation of the Belfast Hills? Learn new skills? Make new friends?

No matter how much or how little time or experience you have, we have a role for you! Opportunities vary from practical outdoor work to office based help or wildlife surveying. Tel: 028 9060 3466 or email info@belfasthills.org for further details.



- Core Funding:**
- Environment & Heritage Service
 - Belfast City Council
 - Lisburn City Council
 - Newtownabbey Borough Council
 - Antrim Borough Council

**Charity No: XR70288
Company No: NI053189**

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

This year marks a real turning point for the Belfast Hills Partnership with funding for the next three years having just been approved. Looking back, we've come a long way since our launch in February 2005.

We've had our work cut out to tackle major contentious issues in the hills. The Partnership has successfully produced a Waste Management Report, Where to Walk leaflet & Access Code, ran events and a volunteering programme and responded to many planning applications. So what next? A few of the things we plan to do include biodiversity projects, gathering and



publishing information about wildlife of the hills. As a partnership, we hope to establish and improve access routes between public sites. We are initiating a landscape audit which will show the value and potential better management of the Belfast Hills landscapes.

Above all, we will strive to give local people more of a voice in issues affecting the hills and provide opportunities to get involved. So please get in touch with us, tell us what we should be doing - but be ready for us to ask you how you can help us do it!

Carmoney Hill and Glen Road Win 'People's Millions' Award

Two sites within the Belfast Hills are set for a transformation, thanks to a Big Lottery Fund award. The Woodland Trust's Carmoney Hill in Newtownabbey and the Conservation Volunteers NI's site on the Glen Road in Belfast were

awarded £43,000 each thanks to your vote through the People's Millions contest, recently showcased on UTV Live. Both these sites should therefore become fantastic resources of benefit to people and wildlife.



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Inside this issue:

Walking Map and Guide of Hills	2
Farming Focus: Helping hand from Lylehill YFC	2
Wicklow PURE Project	3
Glenside Woodland	3
Review of 2006 Events	4
Site Focus: Slievenacloy Nature Reserve	5
Wildlife focus: Irish Hare	5
Wild Fire!	6
Volunteering Opportunities	6

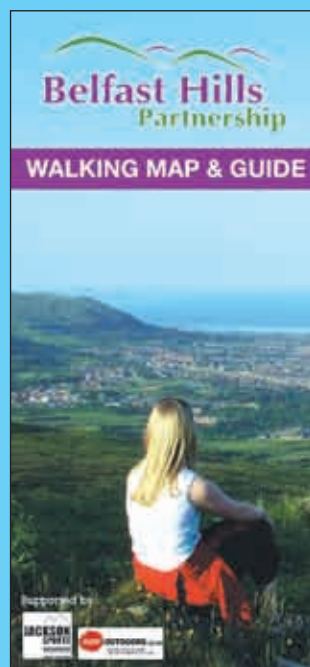
New Events Programme

The Belfast Hills Partnership's new events programme is now available providing you with an opportunity to explore various sites in the hills. To obtain a copy please phone 028 9060 3466.



Walking Map and Guide of the Belfast Hills now available!

Hot off the press is the Belfast Hills Partnership's Walking Map and Guide of the Belfast Hills. This leaflet provides directions to enable you to visit the main sites across the Belfast Hills that are open to the public, namely Carnmoney Hill, Cave



Hill Country Park, Divis and the Black Mountain, Glenside Community Woodland, Slievenacloy Nature Reserve and Colin Glen Forest Park. The Guide will also provide you with a taster of what you might find while out and about in the hills. Not only that, it also includes a Walking Code to help you and others get maximum enjoyment out of walking in the hills.

Production of this Walking Map and Guide was made possible due to the generous support of Jackson Sports and RAW Outdoors, outdoor pursuits shops local to the Belfast Hills.

To get your copy of the Walking Map and Guide contact the Belfast Hills Partnership on 028 90603466 or info@belfasthills.org

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Biodiversity Action Plans Revealed

Biodiversity, "biological diversity" means the total variety of life on earth, this includes plants, animals, fungus and even people! Many councils have appointed Officers to make plans of how best to look after Biodiversity in their areas. Within the Belfast Hills Area Newtownabbey Borough Council have successfully launched their Biodiversity Action Plan, with Antrim and Belfast Council plans soon to be revealed.

Visit www.belfasthills.org and click on biodiversity to find out about the wildlife in the Belfast Hills.

Wicklow- PURE Project

Stunning views, a rich array of wildlife, great walking routes, a convenient location to the urban population-these statements are true not only of the Belfast Hills, but also that of the Wicklow Hills which are situated just outside of Dublin. Unfortunately as well as these shared virtues there are shared problems such as illegal dumping, fly-tipping, vandalism and damage to farmer's property. Over the past number of years the Belfast Hills Partnership and the Wicklow Uplands Council have been



working together to find solutions to their common problems.

In October 2006 staff and board members of the Belfast Hills Partnership travelled to the Wicklow Hills to experience first hand some of the work being carried out. This included an introduction to their newly launched 'PURE Project'; PURE (Protecting Uplands & Rural Environments) is a new initiative which incorporates local authorities as well as Coillte, National Parks & Wildlife Service, and a number of non-statutory organisations, to halt incidents of small scale illegal dumping in the Wicklow/Dublin upland regions. The project includes a dedicated clean-up vehicle to provide an effective and timely clean-up response to dumping



incidents. A lo-call phone-line, established by the Environmental Protection Agency enables the general public to report incidents of illegal dumping and report on individuals who are involved in such activities. The creation of an education programme, in conjunction with public awareness campaigns and the distribution of literature, aims to inform the public on the detrimental affects of fly-tipping/illegal dumping. This work raises the question of do the Belfast Hills need a similar project to deal with illegal dumping?

Introducing Jim



The manager of the Belfast Hills Partnership is Dr Jim Bradley. Jim has been instrumental in the successful development of the Partnership over the past 3 years since its formation. Previous to this post Jim managed Oxford Island in Craigavon, but rose to the challenge of establishing a new organisation to encourage groups and individuals to work together to sustainably manage the Belfast Hills.

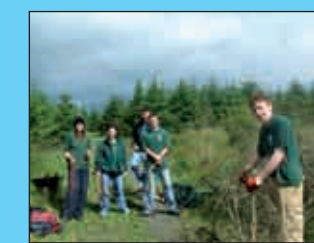
A look back on the Events of 2006

Throughout 2006 the Belfast Hills Partnership has had an action packed programme of events. The first event of the year was a walk up Carnmoney Hill to discover its woodland delights and fantastic views. We also took a walk on the wild side with the 'Bears and Bluebells' event which guided us up through Belfast Zoo and back down through Hazelwood Woodland.



The popular Mystery Bus Tour provided a fantastic overview of the whole of the Belfast Hills, while the Sponsored Walk on Divis allowed us not only to enjoy the hilly ascent up Divis Mountain, but to raise funds to protect and manage the hills at the same time. There were also opportunities to get your hands dirty with a volunteering day, while for the less energetic there were talks on woodlands and birds.

These events provided opportunities to visit new sites across the whole of the Belfast Hills. Not only that but due to the involvement of experts such as John Fisher, Aidan Crean, Brian Poots and Dermot McCann, we were provided with insights into the wildlife and history of various sites.



The new 2007-2008 Events Programme is now available, please contact the Belfast Hills Partnership on 028 9060 3466 to obtain a copy of this leaflet or visit www.belfasthills.org.

Hedge Laying Competition

Representatives of the Belfast Hills Partnership joined forces with TV presenter Darryl Grimason to be awarded a very successful second place in a hedge laying competition held by the Ulster Wildlife Trust one frosty day in February at Dundrod. This event was filmed by the BBC and is to be broadcast this summer, allowing you to see the day's highlights for yourself!



Farming Focus: Helping hand for the Hills from Lylehill Young Farmers Club

An enthusiastic crowd of twenty of the Lylehill Young Farmers Club members joined staff of the Belfast Hills Partnership on Saturday 25th Feb as part of the Partnership's Volunteering programme. The Lylehill Young Farmers arrived armed with spades bright eyed and eager to get stuck into the tree planting project. The project aimed to

help local farmers enhance their land by replacing old hedgerows, planting out new hedges and filling out unused corners of fields with trees, also providing essential new habitats for wildlife. Overall the day was a wonderful success and we hope to repeat it again next year. The Belfast Hills Partnership would like to say a very big thank you to the various

farmers who took part in the event, Mc Quillan's Quarry who provided quarry dust and finally to the Lylehill

Young Farmers club for all their hard work, energy and great craic!



Community Focus: Glenside Woodland

In December 2006 a questionnaire about Glenside, a beautiful Community Woodland near Hannahstown owned by Ready Mix Ltd, was hand delivered to 60 houses in close proximity to the woodland. The results of the questionnaire reveal a very positive outlook on the potential value of the woodland as a local resource. Despite some concerns about the maintenance of the

woodland there was a lot of enthusiasm for community involvement in the site and various suggestions of potential improvements to the woodland. These comments were supported by offers by various residents to carry out practical conservation work on site, to become a volunteer warden or help with any future events held at the site. A big thank you must go to all who took the time to

fill out the questionnaire and return it. If anyone else has any comments that they would like to share regarding Glenside Community Woodland please do get in touch with the Belfast Hills Partnership by phoning 028 9060 3466. For details about how to visit this Community Woodland for yourself please visit www.belfasthills.org and check out our where to walk section.



Where does your waste go?

The opening of municipal waste facilities at Mullaghglass and Cottonmount at the end of 2006 to replace Dargan Road marks a big change for the Belfast Hills. For the first time in many years, domestic waste is being legally landfilled in the hills. Waste management in the Hills concerns everyone — whether it's the companies trying to make a viable

business out of managing waste, the statutory bodies ensuring that it's properly regulated, the local residents with concerns about what these changes will bring and those in much of the eastern part of the province who put anything in their bins. This brings home how our own lifestyles and behaviour directly affect our environment. Whether you throw it in the 'old' bin

or the new recycling bin will decide whether it ends up buried up in the hills or gets recycled. The Belfast Hills Partnership includes many people directly involved or affected by these issues. Together we are trying to work over the long term to ensure that waste is managed in a way that is best for the Belfast Hills, for all of us and for our planet.

