

4) A meeting is planned between NPWS, Mayo County Council and landowners whose lands are associated with the Bangor Trail. This will facilitate communications and liaison about planned routes and suggestions regarding the use of the trail by National Park visitors for trekking etc.

A new Trails Officer has recently been appointed by Mayo County Council. The Trail Development Survey Report that has been completed by a National Trails advisor will also be discussed. Landowners will soon be notified about date, location etc of this meeting by post.

5) The Parks Aerial mapping project of the National Park should get under way this spring (weather depending). This will supply us with good quality digital and print images of the topography of the area and allow overall baseline images off the condition of vegetation cover for future comparisons.

6) A meeting recently took place in Ballycroy between NPWS and Ballycroy Community Futures Steering Group (BCFSG). Issues discussed included the group's wishes/ideas for community related development when the Visitor Centre is up and running, updates on the National Park and a talk was given by Conservation Ranger Cameron Clotworthy. Thank you to the BCFSG for inviting us to attend this beneficial and informative evening.

7) Conservation Ranger Leonard Floyd is currently reviewing the history of the Nephin Beg mountain range before the creation of the National Park. Any contributions from local people that relate to the mountains will be gratefully received.

### **Did you know?**

Have you ever come across a whitish jelly like substance on the ground when you were out and about? The old wives explanation is that it was left behind by a shooting star. However it is in fact the uneaten glands of the oviduct of a frog. These glands, which are distasteful to the frog's bird predators, swell up, burst and decompose into masses of jelly on exposure to moisture. There's something to keep at the back of your mind for future table quizzes.

### **Contact us**

If you would like to receive further newsletters on the National Park please contact Nicola Carroll. We will only be posting out future editions to those who express their interest in receiving it. Otherwise copies can be obtained from certain local post offices, shops and tourist offices.

The NPWS office is in Lagduff and we can be contacted with any queries on

**TEL:** 098 49996

Information on NPWS can be obtained on the Website [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)



Comhshaol, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
Environment, Heritage and Local Government

**Ballycroy National Park**

**National Parks &  
Wildlife Service**

## **Newsletter February 2008 – Issue 2**



View from Srahmore up Altaconey river

### **For your information:**

The Department has a new logo (see above) which is inspired by the idea of 'Comhshaol' or 'Shared life'. The symbol used is reflective of how all our lives and actions are interdependent. The symbol also interprets the three core functions of the Department i.e. Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

### **National Park Visitor Centre update:**

The construction of the Visitor Centre has been making steady progress since the last newsletter. The roof is on and the building and grounds are on target for completion later this year.

The contract has been awarded for the planning of the interpretation display to Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (WWT) Consultancy. WWT is a UK charity conservation organisation based in Gloucestershire. It was founded in 1946 by the naturalist and artist the late Sir Peter Scott. WWT Consultancy was established in 1989 and provides professional services in designing, creating, restoring and interpreting wetlands around the world. All profits raised through the consultancy are filtered back to WWT to support its conservation work.

The interpretation will not just be on ecological features but also on the history of the surrounding areas. If you have any images, suggestions or ideas please do contact Conservation Ranger Lee McDaid. Original copies will be returned to sender.

WWT have had on-site visits and plan to hold a stakeholders presentation talk on the 21<sup>st</sup> of Feb. They will present their proposed ideas on the Visitor Centres information/interpretation content and layout. We invite appointed representatives from the local communities groups/concerned bodies to contact the office at Lagduff with names and we will inform the appointed representatives in due course with details.

### **What's happening in the National Park and Owenduff/Nepin SPA at this time?**

**1)** Numerous bird surveys in conjunction with Bird Watch Ireland (BWI) and other National/International concerned bodies are taking place including,

**Bird Atlas:** Bird Atlas 2007-11 aims to produce distribution/abundance maps of all bird species breeding and wintering in the Ireland and the UK and will run for four years. Changes in distribution, additional knowledge and conservation status can then be compared to the last similar breeding Atlas from 1990 and wintering Atlas in the 1980's. Methodology includes timed tetrad (a tetrad is a 2km x 2km square, labelled A to Z within each 10km square) visits and roving records submitted by people who signed up to partake in this exciting survey. If you wish to take part you can do so by signing up with BWI on [www.birdatlas.net](http://www.birdatlas.net) or call BWI on 057-9151676.

**Red Grouse:** This is an Annex II species under the Birds directive. This is the first national survey in the Republic of Ireland which started in 2006. A total of 12 sites in the Owenduff/Nepin SPA were surveyed last season, grouse were recorded in eight of these with recent evidence of grouse in another one.

Red grouse rely on a mix of different heights of heather. High heather provides cover from predators while young shoots are necessary for the chicks to feed on.

**Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WEBS):** I-WEBS is a national survey tool for monitoring wintering waterfowl populations and wetlands. This is a joint scheme of Birdwatch Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service and The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. It comprises of monthly co-ordinated site counts over the Sept to April season i.e non breeding season.

**Greenland White-Fronted Geese (GWF):** This year's survey is the 26<sup>th</sup> annual census of GWF geese co-ordinated in Britain by the GWF goose study. These are an Annex I species i.e. rare, vulnerable and endangered, protected by European law under the EU Birds Directive 1979 and by the Wildlife Act 1976 and Amendment 2000.

The population breeds in the low arctic coastal fringe of west Greenland and migrate south through Iceland in September/October to winter exclusively in Ireland and Britain on bogs and agricultural land. They depart again late March/April. The biggest numbers gather in Co Wexford Slob Nature Reserve, with over 9000 in spring 2006. We do have small numbers here in the Erris area though. They are remarkably site-loyal.

In the Owenduff/Nepin area the geese forage mostly on Bog cotton (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and White beaked Sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*). These plants have withdrawn nutrients back down into the lower bulbs for the winter and it is these nutritious bulbs that the geese feed on.



Greenland White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*)

**2)** Just a reminder that the off wintering for stock on the Owenduff/Nepin SPA starts again on the 14<sup>th</sup> Feb to the 13<sup>th</sup> of May. On the ground vegetation regeneration monitoring is continuing by local staff. Aerial monitoring of the SPA will continue during this period. This is to facilitate NPWS with ensuring that there is compliance with the agreed agri-environment farm plans which will assist in the recovery of damaged habitats within the SPA.

**3)** Rhododendron mapping on National Park lands has commenced and we hope to clear the land of this invasive species in the future. However it will be a long term project as it can be labour intensive.