



Summer Wildlife



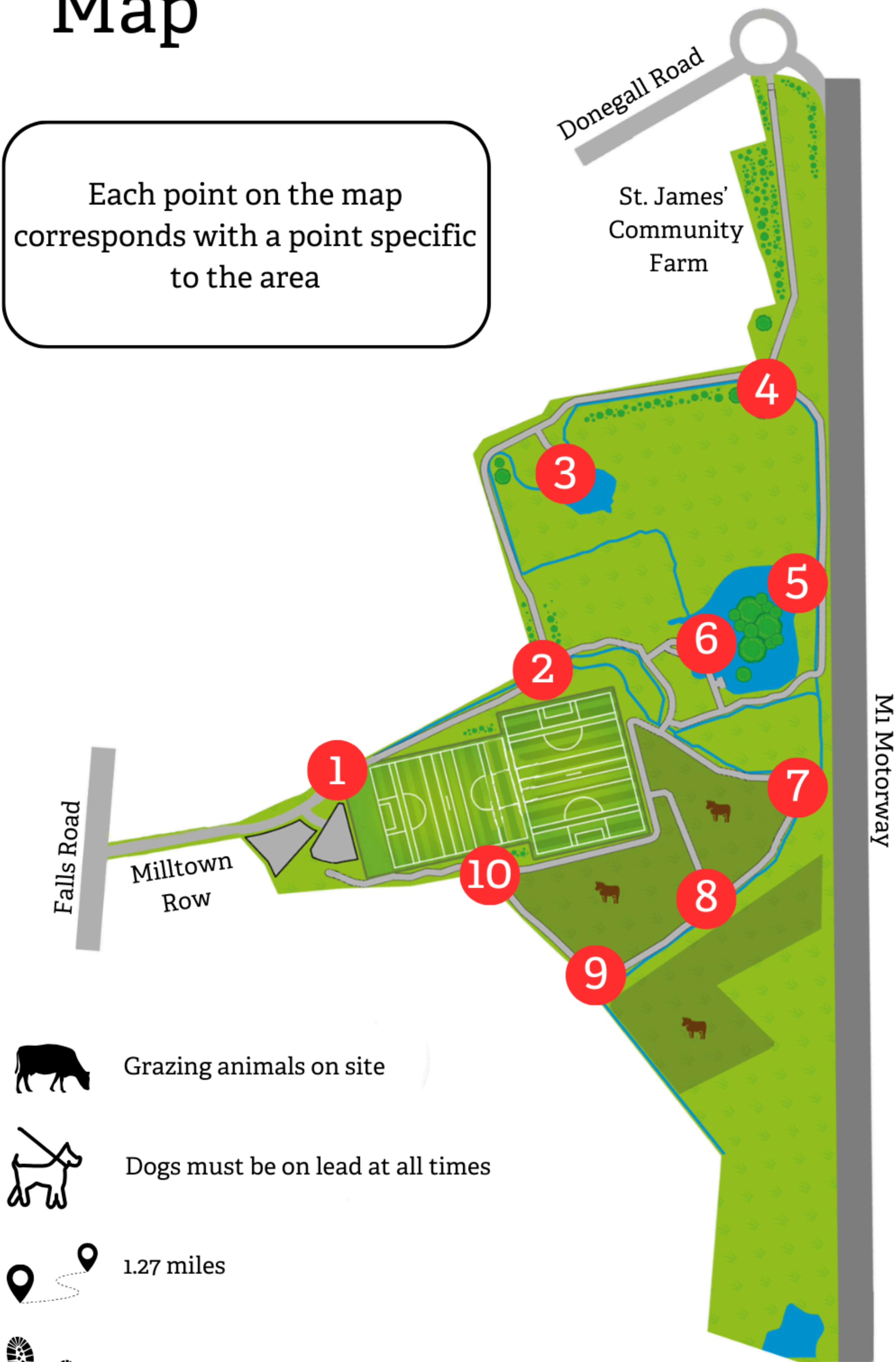
COMMUNITY
FUND



Ulster
Wildlife

Map

Each point on the map corresponds with a point specific to the area



Grazing animals on site



Dogs must be on lead at all times



1.27 miles



3,000 steps



Easy Terrain



Introduction

Towards the end of summer chicks are fledging, flowers are setting seed and insects are laying eggs. Everything is getting ready for winter.

Many of our favourite visitors to Bog Meadows such as swallows and willow warblers will soon be flying south. The swifts may already have left, but if you are lucky, you may get one last glimpse of them flying low to drink from the pond.



1. Speckled wood

The speckled wood butterfly makes its home in the dappled sunlight of the hedgerows and trees.

A commonly spotted butterfly at Bog Meadows is the speckled wood. They are dark brown with creamy yellow spots; with three small, cream-ringed eyespots on each hindwing.

Adults don't feed on flowers but instead feed on honeydew, a sticky sugary liquid produced by aphids. This is the substance that can sometimes cause a sticky mess on a car parked under a tree.

Speckled wood caterpillars feed on a variety of grasses. A good reason to cut back on mowing the lawn.



2. Holly Blue

Keep your eyes peeled for a stunning blue butterfly fluttering quickly by, the beautiful holly blue.

Blue is the rarest colour in nature, making this little butterfly an extra special find. Brilliantly blue from above, the holly blue can be difficult to spot at rest, with its wings closed, as its light bluey-silver underwings provide fantastic camouflage to protect it from predators.

Holly blues can be distinguished from other blue butterflies by small black spots on the underwings. This butterfly favours holly and ivy, both good plants for wildlife in the garden.

Holly blue populations fluctuate enormously from year to year as they are parasitized by an ichneumon wasp. The wasp's eggs are injected into the caterpillar and the larvae hatch and feed inside the caterpillar. An adult wasp emerges from the butterfly's chrysalis. In turn, the decreased number of holly blues affects populations of the wasp, allowing time for holly blue populations to recover and the cycle to start again.



3. Common knapweed

A tall, striking flower, deep purple with beautiful dark green leaves, knapweed brings a great burst of colour in late summer.

This meadow flower has bright pink-purple 'flowers' made up of many small 'florets', surrounded by a crown of long, ragged, pink bracts (leaf-like structures).

In the 14th century Britain this wildflower was known as 'Matfellow', and it was eaten with pepper at the start of a meal to stimulate the appetite.

The thistle-like flower is also known as ‘black knapweed’. It can grow to 1m tall and provide a rich source of nectar for bees, butterflies, and moths.

When it goes to seed birds, such as goldfinch enjoy the seeds. It makes a great addition to any garden wildlife area.



4. Brambles

Although bramble has a bad reputation among gardeners, as its thorny stems quickly cover large areas, it is brilliant for wildlife.

It is actually part of the rose family and makes small pinkish-white flowers in late spring.

In autumn there will be thousands, of juicy blackberries to enjoy. Many animals, (e.g. blackbird, hedgehog, and badger) rely on these highly nutritional berries before winter arrives.

Brambles also provide an important source of nectar for bees, hoverflies, butterflies, and moths. In Bog Meadows the tiny chiff chaff, a ground nesting bird which visits from Africa makes use of brambles to hide its nests.

They also provide nursery sites for young trees to grow protecting them from animals that would eat them.



5. Common ragwort

Common ragwort is a tall plant with yellow flowers and feathery, highly lobed leaves.

Ragwort is a plant with a bad reputation as it contains toxins which can cause liver poisoning in cows and horses. Luckily ragwort has a bitter taste so animals find it unpalatable and will not eat the live plant.

When it is cut and dried in haymaking it loses its bitterness, but not its toxicity, causing problems for farmers.

Despite this, ragwort is a fantastic plant for wildlife, providing a vital source of nectar to around 30 species of bee, beetle, and other insects. During the summer months ragwort is the food source for beautiful cinnabar moth caterpillars, and the striking 5 spotted-burnet moth often seen in our meadows.



6. Leaf Cutter Bee

There are over 100 types of bees on the island of Ireland.

They are vital workers in the ecosystem pollinating not only wildflowers but also much of the food crops we eat.

One interesting bee is the leaf-cutter bee. Have you ever noticed round holes in a leaf? This may be the work of a leaf-cutter bee. They nest in hollow plant stems and dead wood, commonly seen left overwinter around Bog Meadows.

They are famous for cutting disc-like holes out of leaves and gluing them together with saliva to build nests for their eggs. Inside the chamber, they leave pollen for when the young hatch, then lay another egg and create another chamber repeating the process up to 20 times. Watch carefully and you may see one carrying pieces of leaves back to their nest.



7. Grasshopper

When was the last time you heard a grasshopper?

Grasshoppers sing at a very high pitch between 12-20 kHz, a range too high for many adults to hear. Male grasshoppers sing for females by rubbing their legs against their wings. As we get older our ears can't detect the higher frequencies produced by some insects.

Grasshoppers go through a development cycle known as "incomplete metamorphosis", larval stages of the insect "nymphs" look like miniature, wingless adults. They go through a series of moults before they finally reach their winged, adult form.

Once they have mated and laid their eggs in the soil, the adults cannot survive the cold winter.

Grasshoppers symbolize good luck globally. In some cultures their ability to understand sound vibrations is believed to connect you to your inner voice.



8. Hawthorn shieldbug

Hiding within the spiky hawthorn tree lives the tiny hawthorn shieldbug.

Shieldbugs are named after the shape of their bodies which resembles a shield. It is bright green, covered in hundreds of small black dots, with pointed shoulders and red-brown wings.

Females lay their eggs in spring, allowing them to hatch and feed on hawthorn berries, with their piercing mouthparts in August.

There are 18 different types of shieldbug in Ireland, they are sometimes known as 'stinkbugs' thanks to the smelly liquid they excrete to put off hungry predators.



9. Poplar Hawk-moth

Moths are a very large group of insects that often go unnoticed. Many like the poplar hawk-moth are nocturnal.

Moths are crucial to the Bog Meadows ecosystem. Not only are they pollinators, they are also part of the food chain, feeding many of the other animals e.g. bats and frogs.

The poplar hawk moth is attracted to light and often found in our moth trap. It is a large, 6.5-9cm, striking moth with scalloped wings, a distinctive shape and sometimes purple tinge.

The caterpillars are large and vibrant green with faint yellow lines diagonally across the body. They feed on poplars, willow, and aspen.

Adult moths do not feed but rely on fat reserves laid down during the caterpillar stage - they are very hungry caterpillars.

Between May and August they fly at night, looking for mates. Females release pheromones, to attract males.

Caterpillars hatch and feed between June and October then come down to the ground to pupate and overwinter under the soil.



10. Ladybug/Ladybird

A favourite beetle regularly spotted at Bog Meadows is a ladybird (also known as ladybug).

They are easy to recognise, the most familiar have bright red wing cases with black spots. There are also yellow, black, orange and even striped ladybirds.

The most common species here is the seven-spot ladybird. The number of spots on a ladybird indicates what species it belongs to not how old it is.

Adults hibernate in hollow plant stems, sometimes clustering together in a large group. The bright colours warn predators that they taste horrible, some birds may still try but are not likely to try twice, as ladybirds excrete a foul tasting fluid.

In winter, adults hibernate in cracks, crevices, leaf litter, and emerge in April to find a mate.

The larvae are blue with creamy-yellow spots and look very different from the adults. They eat huge numbers of aphids. Over a few months, they moult several times then emerge as adults to feed for a few weeks before seeking a sheltered spot to hibernate.

If you haven't seen a ladybird for a while in your garden, try leaving things a little messy, clearing hollow plant stems in autumn may mean you have cleared away the ladybirds too.



During the summer, Bog Meadows really does buzz with activity. Soon things will quieten down as we say goodbye to our summer visitors, some will hibernate over winter and some to fly away to warmer, brighter places.

We are grateful to get the opportunity to see the birds that travel thousands of miles to enjoy the natural habitat at Bog Meadows, and the small insects that allow our wildflowers to thrive for the years to come.

Take a few minute to enjoy the last few moments of beautiful summer sunshine and come back to see autumn's interesting changes.

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