



# Winter Birds of Bog Meadows



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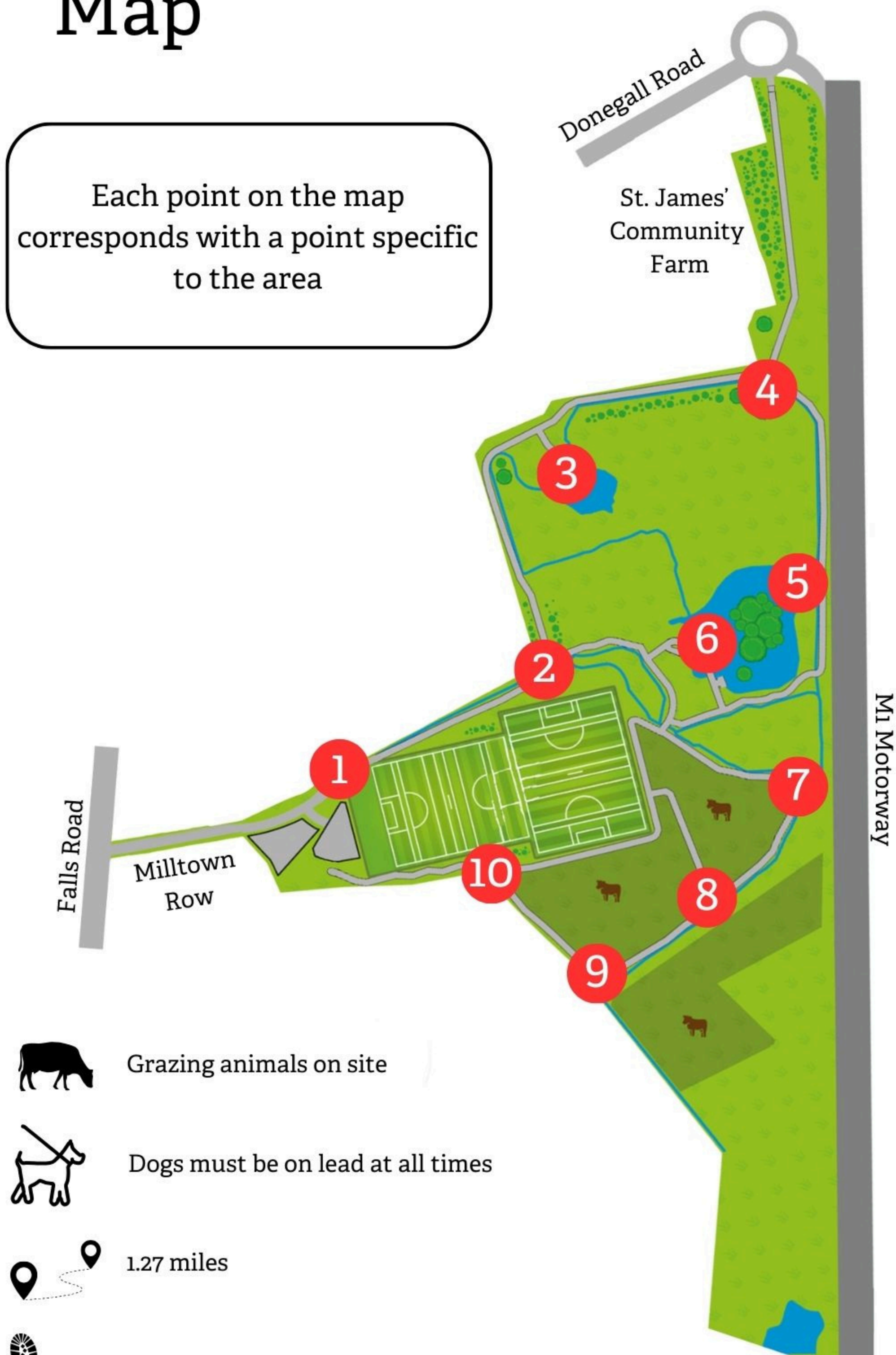


**Ulster**  
**Wildlife**



# 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**

With the leaves off the trees and birds needing energy to stay warm, it's a great time of year to see the winter residents who make Bog Meadows home.

In the summer, Bog Meadows will fill with birds who migrate from as far away as Africa to feed on the many insects that live in the wetland.

Those in residence now need to be very active during the shorter daylight hours and are often more adaptable with their food sources eating berries, nuts, seeds, and insects to survive the harsh months of winter.





## **1. Great tit - Meantán mór**

**Smart, adaptable, and beautiful, great tits are a common sight around Bog Meadows.**

Take a moment to look at one carefully, with its white cheeks contrasted by a black head and yellow underbelly, it really is a striking bird. Males have a thicker black stripe down their chest and belly – the thicker the stripe, the more attractive he is considered.

Great tits have a distinctive song – listen out for a high-pitched sound like a squeaky wheel, or their iconic “teacher teacher” call.



Look out for them hunting out insects and spiders among the smaller branches, they have even been seen using conifer needles to get larvae out of trees. In winter, their diet switches to nuts and seeds, and they are very common visitors to bird feeders.



## **2. Blue tit - Meantán gorm**

**Tiny, colourful, and acrobatic, in winter, blue tits form flocks with other tits, roaming the countryside and visiting gardens to feed.**

Distinguished by their blue cap, white cheeks, and greeny-blue back, Blue tits truly are stunning little birds.



Like great tits, they nest in holes in trees and hunt insects and spiders among the smaller branches and leaves of trees.

They are also excellent problem solvers, and in the 1950s the news of their ingenuity spread across the UK as they began piercing the foil of milk bottles on people's doorsteps to get to the energy-rich cream within! Skimmed milk households could rest easy as these incredible little birds learned to avoid the colour signifying skimmed milk.



### **3. Chaffinch - Rí Rua**



**A beautiful songster calling out from the dense vegetation, the chaffinch's pleasant 'pink pink' song can brighten any dull winter day.**

Although the male's song is a short and simple repetition of notes, they were greatly valued by the Victorians and large numbers were trapped and caged, fetching prices of 50 shillings for good singers.

The Irish name 'Rí Rua' translates to 'Red King', as the male has a beautiful pinkish red breast. The female is more muted in colouration but can be identified by its beak shape and similar wing pattern to the male.

Feeding on insects such as caterpillars in the summer, their diet changes to seeds during the winter months, you may see them feeding both in the trees and on the ground.





## **4. Blackbird - Lon dubh**

**Foraging on the ground, the blackbird is one of our most common birds and one of the easiest to spot.**

Blackbirds are fond of feeding on lawns, you may have seen them with their heads cocked to one side, listening for earthworms in your garden. They will also feed on insects and berries.

Male blackbirds live up to their name, being entirely black with an orange beak and orange ring around their eyes, however, females are mottled brown below and dark brown above.



Their song is beautiful and melodic, did you know Blackbirds like to sing after the rain?



## **5. Moorhen - Cearc uisce**

**The moorhen, sometimes called a swamp chicken, is easily spotted in our pond.**

They are black with an orange-red bill and fluffy, white patches under the tail. The brighter the colours the more attractive they will be to their mate.

You might notice they flick their tails a lot, this is thought to be a signal telling predators they are alert to threats.



When disturbed, they take cover in nearby vegetation.

In spring, they build nests out of twigs among the pond plants and will aggressively defend them. They eat snails, insects, small fish, and berries.

The coots on the pond look similar but have a white beak and patch on their foreheads; they coexist well with the moorhens eating mainly waterweeds and algae.



## **6. Magpie - Snag breac**



**Not just a black and white bird, take a closer look at a magpie in the sun and you will see stunning hues of blue and green.**

This colour is produced by reflecting cells in the feathers reflecting the light and is known as iridescence.

Magpies are loud, chattering members of the corvid family, and with that comes great intelligence. They can make and use tools, imitate human speech, play games, and work in teams!

Magpies gather in groups around other magpies that have died in what is known as a 'magpie funeral'. The reason behind this behaviour is still being researched but possible theories include assessing how the individual died so they do not meet the same fate.

Magpies are also one of the few animals capable of passing the 'mirror test', proving their ability to recognise themselves in a reflection, other animals capable of this include elephants, dolphins, and chimpanzees.





## **7. Grey heron - Corr réisc**

**Hérons are an iconic symbol of wetlands around the world.**

Often seen standing as still as statues on long, thin legs in the shallow waters of our ponds and streams, patiently waiting for their next meal to swim by, a technique known as still hunting.

They are a large grey bird with long legs, a long white neck, bright yellow bill, and black eye-stripe. Make sure you look out for these incredible birds in flight, their slow-flapping wings and long legs held out behind with their long neck folding into an 'S' shape.



Hérons nest in colonies called 'Heronries', often in the top of trees. They are known by many folk names in Ireland e.g. Sheila of the bog, Long Mary and Big Andy in Donegal. Oil collected from Heron was used for medicinal purposes in the past e.g. a cure for arthritis.



## **8. Kingfisher - Cruidín**

**Look for a blue flash flying over low the stream.**



The striking mix of a bright-blue back and metallic copper breast make the kingfisher unmistakable. The orange belly is said to represent sunset and their blue backs the sky.

People believed they promised peace and love. The kingfisher is often seen sitting quietly on low-hanging branches over the water, patiently waiting to catch minnows and aquatic insects below. As they dive into the water, they close their eyes, fishing blind.

Since their beaks are so efficient in diving, Japanese bullet trains were remodelled to mimic them, reducing both noise pollution and fuel use with the new design.

The kingfisher excavates burrows along the riverbanks that can be up to 140cm deep to create a safe place to raise their chicks.





## **9. Common buzzard - Clamhán**

**One of the most skilled predators at Bog Meadows, is the Common buzzard.**

They are incredibly versatile predators, eating anything from tiny beetles to rabbits and everything in between! They have large wings, and their plumage can vary from dark brown to much paler shades, including white. Their broad wings allow them to soar on thermal currents.



Buzzards normally mate for life, defending the

Did you know Buzzards can see an animal carcass



## **10. Wren - Dreolín**

**A loud burst of song from the foliage below may be coming from someone you'd never expect!**



An adult wren weighs about the same as a £1 coin. To put the song volume into perspective, per unit weight, they sing ten times as loud as a crowing rooster!

The best way to spot one is to look along the ground beside a hedge. Wrens can be found in any habitat where there are insects to eat and bushes in which to build their domed nest out of moss and twigs.

The second smallest bird in Ireland after the goldcrest, wrens can be identified by their mottled brown colouration and their stubby, cocked tail.

The miniature bird is widely considered to be an indication of spring and rebirth. Did you know the 26th of December was once known as Wren Day? A few places such as Dingle still have a Wren Day parade to raise money for charity.





Learning how the appearance of different birds at different times of the year conveys the passage of time and the rhythms of nature in a positive way is a great way to connect with nature. From the larger birds of prey such as the common buzzard to the diminutive wren, Bog Meadows has plenty to see even on the coldest winters day. Bird watching is a very meditative activity and many studies illustrate how listening to birdsong alleviates anxiety. We hope you enjoyed connecting with our winter birds today. Do think about helping the birds in your garden at this challenging time of year for them.



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Bog Meadows Nature Reserve?

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