

# Ballydangan Bog Red Grouse Project

## Project Report: 2022



*Heritage week – August 2022*

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



September 2022

## Summary

Established in 2009, the Ballydangan Bog Red Grouse Project aims to prevent the decline and, in the long-term, increase the numbers of Red Grouse and other birds of conservation concern including breeding Curlew on Ballydangan Bog, Co. Roscommon.

Building on the original project management plans 2010-2015 and 2016-2020, this conservation plan (2021-2025) provides the local community (e.g. Moore Gun Club, Moore Community Council and local farmers) as well as the partners involved with detailed guidance on how to improve the ecological conditions of the site in a manner that supports a diversity of wildlife species and existing conservation priorities.

The project utilises the best biological methods available for Red Grouse and breeding Curlew conservation. The management is achieved through a range of strategies, including habitat improvement, predator control, monitoring, disturbance control, public awareness and education.

An unintended consequence of the project has been the arrival of breeding Curlew to the project site. This plan sets out to better incorporate the needs of this critically endangered species into the conservation programme building on experiences learned.

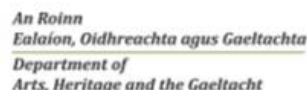
As a community-based venture, the project also aims to engage with the local community to create awareness about the importance of Red Grouse conservation on raised bogs. Some of the public awareness activities include the development of educational material, hosting school visits and disseminating the project's outcomes through site visits and local press.

This conservation plan is intended to be dynamic and will be reviewed annually. It recommends actively consulting with stakeholders and encouraging participation and involvement from the local community in the management programme.

Monitoring, evaluation and active dissemination of the results and lessons learned will remain integral parts of the project and its aftermath.

This project is managed by Moore Gun Club and Roscommon Regional Game Council in conjunction with Bord na Móna, Moore Community Council, the National Association of Regional Game Councils, FÁS/Department of Social Protection, the Heritage Council, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Roscommon County Council. The project has been also supported by the Local Agenda 21 (Environmental Partnership) Grant Scheme.

[www.ballydanganbog.com](http://www.ballydanganbog.com)



## **Acknowledgements**

The project team would like to acknowledge the grant aid from the Heritage Council of €6,000 to the project in 2010, 2011, 2012; €5,000 in 2014, €4,000 in 2015, €8000 in 2016, €5,500 in 2017, €7,000 in 2018 and €4,500 in 2021 and 5,500 in 2022. This significant financial support is greatly appreciated.

Through Moore Community Council, the Department of Social Protection (DSP) has annually allocated personnel to work on the project site for the duration of the project. This contribution from FÁS/DSP is set to continue for the foreseeable future.

The project would like to acknowledge the financial support of €4,000 per year (from 2010-2015) from the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC) through their Irish Habitat Trust Fund.

Bord na Móna has generously agreed to provide the use of Ballydangan Bog for the Red Grouse project. The project would not be possible without this support. Bord na Móna has also provided funding for several actions and ongoing technical support towards the project's management practices.

The project would like to acknowledge the contribution from Dr. Mark McCorry from Bord na Móna as well as David Fallon and Dr. Catherine Farrell, who previously worked for Bord na Móna. David Fallon has remained actively engaged in providing ecological advice on the project's implementation.

The project team would like to acknowledge the ongoing support and grant aid from National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of €3,000 in 2011 and €1,500 in 2017 and €4450.00 in 2018/2019 under the NPWS Curlew Conservation Partnership. The project team would also like to acknowledge the assistance from NPWS during the translocation exercise (2014) and the donation of one tonne of grit supplied in December 2013.

The project would like to acknowledge the support of €3,000 from the NPWS Peatlands Community Engagement Scheme for 2021.

The project would like to acknowledge the grant of €5,000 to purchase a heather cutting machine under the Co. Roscommon LEADER Programme in 2021.

Moore Gun Club and Roscommon Regional Game Council would like to acknowledge the grant of €500 provided by Roscommon County Council under the Community Heritage Bursary 2013.

The project team would also like to acknowledge the grant of €1,500 from Roscommon County Council under biodiversity Action 1.16 of the County Roscommon Heritage Plan to: "Promote and encourage participation wildlife projects and surveys, which gather information on habitats and species throughout the county" (2013-2014).

Finally, the project team would like to acknowledge the Local Agenda 21 (Environmental Partnership) Grant Scheme (2013-2014) for a grant of €1,000; and in 2015 for a grant of €500 towards the development of environmental and awareness resources for primary and secondary schools.

## Introduction

For a number of decades, members of the local Moore community (in Moore Gun Club and Roscommon Regional Game Council) expressed concern about declining Red Grouse populations on raised bogs throughout County Roscommon. Many Gun Club members recall numerous populations of Red Grouse in the past, however, there has been a continuous decline with several local extinctions. This is primarily due to habitat loss via commercial peat extraction, which has since ceased.

In late 2009, Moore Gun Club and Roscommon Regional Game Council undertook an effort to initiate a conservation project to address the declining Red Grouse population on Ballydangan bog, Co. Roscommon.

The original project conservation plan (2010-2015) produced by Scallan (2009) established a framework to achieve community-based conservation actions on Ballydangan Bog in a manner that supports Red Grouse, a healthy diversity and abundance of wildlife species and human uses. Moore Community Council played a key role in providing resources to implement the project's actions through a community employment scheme.



*Initial meeting between project team and Bord na Móna (2009)*

The plan recommended actively consulting with Red Grouse stakeholders and encouraged participation and involvement from the local community in the management programme. At the time, it was decided that the plan's working time-frame shall be five-year intervals. In 2015, a decision was taken to develop a new conservation plan from 2016-2020. A revised Conservation Plan (2021-2025) was produced in 2021 with support by the Heritage Council and the NPWS Peatlands Community Engagement Scheme:

## Aims of Project

The main purpose of this project is to limit the specific factors affecting Red Grouse and breeding Curlew on Ballydangan Bog while supporting existing conservation priorities for the site. More specifically, the Ballydangan Bog Red Grouse Conservation Project aims to:

- Provide best-practice management strategies aimed at increasing the Red Grouse, breeding Curlew and other ground nesting birds on Ballydangan Bog;
- Implement management strategies in a manner that supports wider biodiversity goals, particularly for the conservation of raised bog habitat other red-listed bird species;



- Promote community involvement in planning and decision-making;
- Maintain an atmosphere of cooperation, participation and commitment among conservation rangers, landowners, land managers and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of Red Grouse management strategies;
- Encourage the long-term funding necessary to ensure the survival of Ballydangan's Red Grouse population and to facilitate the collection and analysis of data during the course of the project.

## Activity updates – 2022

### Monitoring:

#### Red Grouse:

- Spring survey - 1 male bird (April 2021).
- Autumn survey - 1 adult (September 2022 – although survey to be continued).

#### Curlew:

- Breeding curlew survey produced 6 pairs based on several site visits as outlined in the breeding Curlew survey report 2022 (enclosed).
- Data on monitoring submitted to *national biodiversity data centre*.
- Lapwing breeding pairs (10) increased.



### Overview of Curlew and Red Grouse situation on Ballydangan Bog (2009-2021):

Year	Grouse - Spring	Grouse - Autumn	Curlew pairs	Curlew productivity
2009	No survey	3	0	Not assessed
2010	No survey	1	0	Not assessed
2011	2	3	0	Not assessed
2012	1 (tape-lure survey)	2	2 pairs	Not assessed
2013	0	0	2 pairs	Not assessed
2014	0	1	1 pair	Not assessed
2015	2	1	3 pairs	Not assessed
2016	1-2	2	7 pairs	Not assessed
2017	2 (i.e. 1 pair)	3	3-4 pairs	0
2018	3 hens, 1 cock	1 pair + juv. & 2 cocks*	1/2 – 7 pairs	Juveniles heard/observed
2019	2 calling cocks	2/3	Min. 4 pairs	Likely 1 pair hatched chicks
2020**	1 pair	2/3	No survey	No survey
2021	1 cock (March)	1 cock + 2 juveniles	4-5 pairs	Juveniles heard/observed
2022	1 calling male	1 bird (survey to be continued: 24-25 Sept)	6 pairs	Juveniles observed, but uncertain of their origin

\* Two surveys were conducted in autumn 2018 and 2019 covering different parts of the project site.

\*\* Covid-19 prevented Curlew survey work on the site.

In 2022, a number of pairs of Lapwing (estimated 10) produced juvenile birds (estimated 25) that successfully fledged.

**Nest Protection:**

- Focused efforts were put in place by the project team following best practice guidelines.
- Some traps (for Hooded Crow/Magpie) were purchased this year to support nest protection efforts (see image below).

**Education/awareness:**

There were several meetings and site visits linked to the project. The main meetings include:

- March: NARGC open day on the site using the Ballydangan model as best practice.
- March: Clontuskert national school visit to project site.
- April: UN Dianna Kopansky (Policy & Programme Expert: Peatlands, Forests & Ecosystems - Global Peatlands Initiative Coordinator at the UN Environment Programme visits the projects site with Catherine Farrell and David Fallon
- May: NUI Galway visit.
- June: Grouse project is present at the Shanes Castle Game Fair, Northern Ireland.
- June: Scouts visit the project site.
- June: International students linked to NUI Galway visit project site.
- August: Heritage Council open day.
- Sept: Athlone radio interview about the project.
- Sept: Bord na Mona visit the project site.



International students visit Ballydangan Bog



NARGC open day on Ballydangan Bog



Heritage Council open day



Primary School visit





Example of Heritage Council open day promotion

#### Habitat management:

- Heather was strimmed in September 2022.



Heather strimming machine



Sept 2022 – heather cutting

#### Note – New species for Roscommon recorded:

A new species, Blue moor-grass (*Sesleria caerulea*), was recorded in Sept 2022 by a Bord na Mona ecologist. This species is of particular note as there are currently no other published records of it in Roscommon. The species was recorded along the walking track to the south of the bog, see link to Google maps: <https://goo.gl/maps/wg61rwSfo3Qo99To6>

#### Grit provision:

- Grit stations on the site were maintained.

#### Site conservation plan implementation:

- The projects 5-year conservation plan, which was revised by Dr. David Scallan in 2021 was implemented accordingly in 2022.

#### Site access improvement works:

- Access and bridges were improved on the site in August/September. This involved purchasing timber and other equipment and maintaining and erecting new access routes.





*Equipment used for access, bridge and other repairs on the site to facilitate conservation efforts and awareness raising actions.*