



A celebration of Ireland's mountain environment

MacGillycuddy's Reeks, 26-28 May 2017



To coincide with National Biodiversity Week, Mountaineering Ireland is hosting a weekend celebration of Ireland's mountain environment, based at Cappanalea Outdoor Education & Training Centre, Killorglin, Co. Kerry from 26th to 28th May 2017.

ABOUT THIS EVENT

The overall aim of the Mountain Environment weekend is to celebrate what makes Ireland's mountains special, by sharing knowledge of the mountain environment through illustrated talks, and by spending time exploring the mountains and discussing what we see and hear.

Rather than focusing on a single aspect of the mountain environment such as geology or plants, this weekend will promote understanding of nature's interconnectedness by involving people from different disciplines such as botany, biology, ornithology, geography and geology. Consideration will also be given to how best to protect the special qualities of Ireland's mountains and upland areas.

The event is delivered in conjunction with Cappanalea OETC, Killarney National Park Education Centre, and the MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum, with input from a number of individuals with expertise on different aspects of the mountain environment.

This event is intended for: environmental officers within Mountaineering Ireland clubs; mountain training providers; hillwalking club leaders; walking guides and other Mountaineering Ireland members with an interest in learning about the mountain environment and sharing that knowledge with others.

THE MACGILLYCUDDY'S REEKS

The MacGillycuddy's Reeks, Ireland's highest mountains, cover an area of over 100km² with the land almost entirely in private ownership. The MacGillycuddy's Reeks Mountain Access Forum was established in mid-2014 to protect, manage and sustainably develop this unique mountain range. The Forum's Vision is to facilitate the growing number of visitors to this wonderful place, while at the same time minimising the environmental impact on the ground (<http://www.macgillycuddyreekskerry.com>).

The MacGillycuddy's Reeks are part of an extensive Special Area of Conservation designated under EU legislation for the diversity and quality of its habitats and the rare flora and fauna species found in the area. During the weekend we're almost certain to see the impressive large-flowered butterwort in flower, and might also come across other south western species such as the Kerry slug. The MacGillycuddy's Reeks are internationally important for bryophytes (mosses and liverworts), and other rarities like the ring ouzel (a mountain thrush) and the Arctic char that live in the lakes in the Hag's Glen.

PHOTO COMPETITION

Photographs provide an excellent medium to celebrate what is special about Ireland's natural heritage and to bring the mountains to the wider community.

To encourage participants to record and share photographs during this weekend we're having a photographic competition with prizes in the following categories:

- People engaging with the mountains
- Colour in nature
- Flora and fauna
- Geology and landscape

Photographs taken on Saturday should be submitted on a memory stick on the Saturday evening or emailed to helen@mountaineering.ie. **Maximum of 10 photographs per person.** We will have an extra laptop available so that people can view and select their photos.

Some of the photographs will be shown on Saturday night and following the weekend a selection of the photographs will be used to make a short video which celebrates the natural environment of the MacGillycuddy's Reeks.

Participants should also consider entering the National Biodiversity week photo competition, where you could be in with a chance to win €500 (<http://biodiversityweek.ie>).

PROGRAMME

Friday 26th May

Registration 7.00-8.00pm at Cappanalea OETC, Killorglin, Co. Kerry (www.cappanalea.ie); tea & coffee available, no meal provided on the Friday evening.

8.00pm *Welcome address* - Mike Maunsell, Mountaineering Ireland

8.15pm *Landscapes environment and people of the MacGillycuddy's Reeks* – Valerie O'Sullivan

Photographer and author Valerie O'Sullivan will celebrate the culture and diversity of the MacGillycuddy's Reeks by sharing the stories behind a selection of her photographs.

This presentation is free of charge and open to all.

Afterwards participants can relax over a glass of wine (bring your own). In keeping with the theme for the weekend, people are encouraged to bring musical instruments and have a song or a poem to share in celebration of Ireland's mountains.

Saturday 27th May

9.30am – 11.00am – Setting the scene - indoor session at Cappanalea OETC

Introduction to the weekend, short presentation and discussion on Mountaineering Ireland's current work on access and conservation (Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland)

An introduction to the geology of Ireland, Kerry's and the MacGillycuddy's Reeks (Gosia Horajska, geologist)

11.30am – 5.30pm – Exploring the MacGillycuddy's Reeks

We will spend most of the day outside exploring the MacGillycuddy's Reeks. On the lower part of the mountains we hope to meet with a local hillfarmer. During the hike we will make stops to talk about the different landforms, habitats and species we come across, many of which can be found on other mountain areas, particularly in the south west of Ireland. Conservation issues and threats to the natural habitats will also be discussed. Participants will gain an understanding of the areas where we do our activities as well as countless nuggets of information to share with others.

Participants will be actively encouraged to share their own knowledge and experiences from within their club or work. It is likely that there will be two separate groups, with the precise routes decided closer to the time depending on weather conditions. Both groups will at times be off paths and on steep and rocky terrain where a little scrambling may be required.

6.30pm – dinner at Cappanalea

7.30pm – learning more about the mountain environment

Two short presentations followed by questions and answers:

Dr. Allan Mee on the white-tailed sea eagle reintroduction project, ring ouzels and the birds to be seen on the mountains of Ireland's south west.

Dr. Rory Hodd on the habitats through which hillwalkers and climbers pass, and some plants to watch out for on Ireland's mountains.

Afterwards participants can again relax over a glass of wine (bring your own), share a poem a story, or a song, all in the spirit of celebrating Ireland's mountains. We will also display some of the photographs taken during the day.

Sunday 28th May

9.30am – 4.00pm – Further explorations in the MacGillycuddy Reeks

A second learning journey in the mountains, provided the weather is co-operative we will get up a bit higher than on the first day. Leaders will switch groups so that participants will get an insight into different aspects of the mountain environment.

As the theme for National Biodiversity Week is sustainable tourism, we'll consider what actions we can take to ensure that our engagement with the mountain environment is more sustainable and how we can help to protect these special places. Participants will also be encouraged to consider how they will incorporate their new-found knowledge into their mountain days and any courses they deliver.

4.30pm Wrap-up and photographic competition prize-giving at Cappanalea

5.15pm – Event closes (showers available, also accommodation if anybody wishes to stay over)

BOOKING

The fee for the Mountain Environment weekend is €70 (this covers talks, field trips and dinner in Cappanalea on Saturday evening). **Places are limited; tickets can be booked through Eventbrite - <http://www.mountaineering.ie/events/2013/default.aspx?iid=1062>.**

Board and accommodation is available at Cappanalea, with a special package price of €55 for two nights' accommodation, two breakfasts, and two packed lunches. Board and accommodation can be reserved with Mountaineering Ireland by emailing helen@mountaineering.ie and paid to Cappanalea on the weekend.

To ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to benefit from this event it would be preferable not to have more than two people from any one club. Subject to availability it may be possible for people to book onto a single day, however first preference will be given to people booking for the full weekend.

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- As we will be outdoors for much of the day, and traversing steep and rocky terrain, participants should bring hillwalking gear, including suitable footwear, raingear a packed lunch and something to drink.
- Camera, binoculars, a notebook and field guides (if you have them) will all be useful.

- To minimise impact and enable all participants to hear what is said while we're outdoors, group size will be limited.
- Dogs are not permitted on the field trips due to the presence of sheep grazing on the mountains.
- Plans for the field trips may be adjusted on the day depending on weather conditions or the needs and interests of the group.

BIOGRAPHIES

CHRIS BARRON

Chris Barron is the manager of Killarney National Park Education Centre, based at Knockreer House in Killarney. Chris is a mine of information on birds, mammals and some invertebrates (creatures without a backbone). Through his work in the Education Centre, Chris engages with groups of people of all ages and abilities to help them further their appreciation of the outdoors and especially the species and habitats that they encounter. He also lectures part-time at IT Tralee on the Wildlife Biology BSc in Habitat Conservation Management, Land Use and Irish Wildlife Studies.

RORY HODD

Dr. Rory Hodd is an ecologist and botanist, with a passion for liverworts, mosses and mountains. Over the past decade, Rory has carried out ecological survey work in a wide range of habitats throughout Ireland, but particularly in mountain areas. As a result he has an excellent understanding of upland habitats and conservation issues across the Irish uplands. Rory grew up in Kerry and has gained an in-depth knowledge of the MacGillycuddy's Reeks over the course of a number of studies of their vegetation and flora. He also coordinates the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's Irish 'Rough Crew', an informal group of botanists who collect plant records from remote and inaccessible parts of the country. Perhaps the best bit is that Rory enjoys sharing his knowledge with others, especially walkers and climbers who don't have an environmental background.

HELEN LAWLESS

Helen Lawless is in the lucky position of being able to combine her passion for the mountains with her role as Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer. Helen works across the island of Ireland, aiming to protect Ireland's mountains, coastline and crags, to secure access and to encourage responsible enjoyment of these

places. Helen lives in the Wicklow Mountains; her spare time is divided between enjoying the mountains and volunteering in her local community.

MICHAEL MAUNSELL

Michael Maunsell is a Lecturer in Conservation & Biodiversity Management, with a research interest specifically in mountain environments and has established Mountain Research Ireland in order to promote cooperation and research on mountain environments in Ireland. Michael has over 30 years' experience of working as a climber and researcher in mountain environments throughout the world. Michael is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, Chairperson of Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee and represents Mountaineering Ireland on the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission.

ALLAN MEE

Allan has worked as a professional ornithologist for over 30 years. During 12 years in Scotland much of his work for RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage was in the Highlands including two years at Creag Meagaidh NNR studying montane species such as Dotterel and Ptarmigan. Following PhD studies he spent five years in California on a fellowship with San Diego Zoo working on the endangered California Condor in the mountains of Southern California and Mexico. Over the last 10 years he has managed the Reintroduction Programme for White-tailed Sea Eagles in Ireland but has also carried out studies on hen harriers and ring ouzel, a mountain thrush in serious decline in Ireland and the UK.

VALERIE O'SULLIVAN

Valerie O'Sullivan is a full-time photographer based in Killarney, Co Kerry. Her specialities are covering outdoor and adventure events. Valerie regularly contributes photographs to the Irish Farmers' Journal and national newspapers. She has published several books and won many national awards in photography. Her book *The MacGillycuddy's Reeks – People and Places of Ireland's Highest Mountain Range* was published in 2016. For more about Valerie and her work see www.valerieosullivan.com.

GOSIA HORAJSKA

Gosia is a project geologist who came to Ireland 11 years ago to visit a friend and fell in love with the Emerald Isle. She gained her qualification from AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow and specialises in mineralogy and geochemistry, with an interest in

gemmology. Gosia has worked as a project geologist for a number of years in Ireland and became fascinated by Geographical Information Systems, in which she later obtained a degree at UCC. In 2014 while working for GoKerry Gosia took an interest on geotourism and decided to focus on Kerry geology. As a result of Kerry excursions, mainly in North Kerry, she is developing a blog page “KerryGeoAdventures”.



A well camouflaged Kerry Slug or Irish Spotted Slug (*Geomalacus maculosus*) only found in the south-western corner of Ireland and on the Iberian Peninsula.