

FORESTRY

April 2022

Forest recreation walks

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Forests provide many amenity opportunities. Teagasc and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) will run a series of nationwide walks between May 9 and May 20 focusing on forest recreation (**Table 1**). Forests are established for many different purposes. One of the objectives is forest recreation. The use of forests for regular exercising or walking was never as obvious or as necessary as during Covid lockdowns. Forests provide great outdoor spaces for recreation locally. The health benefits – both physical and mental – are well documented. Going for a walk improves physical health, stimulates the brain, boosts wellbeing and helps us to sleep better. With forest cover in Ireland amongst the lowest in Europe at 11%, and with an increasing population, forests are becoming more and more important to provide healthy and safe



Forests provide valuable space for recreation.

places for recreation and relaxation. The DAFM's recent nationwide survey bears this out. The survey found that 58% of people surveyed have visited a forest in the past year, with exercise and recreation cited as the key

visit drivers. A total of 57% said they visited woodlands more since the Covid-19 pandemic began compared to in 2019.

Both Coillte and the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) provide access to the forests, national parks, nature reserves and arboreta under their control. Some local authorities, as well as several local communities, provide access to wonderful locally managed urban woodlands. It was estimated that there were nearly nine million visits per year to Irish forests in 1999, but that figure has now risen to about 30 million, demonstrating the importance of our forests as valuable places of healthy recreation. Private forests now make up nearly 50% of the total forest area, with over 23,000 owners. The decision to allow access to a privately owned forest rests with the owner. No private forest should be entered unless there is express permission to do so. As these forests mature, opportunities arise to develop the forest as an amenity or as a setting for additional recreation activities, such as mountain biking, tree top walks, glamping, etc.

The upcoming forest recreation walks will celebrate private forests where the owner has developed a recreational element to his or her forest. Teagasc and the DAFM will highlight some of these special places at this upcoming series of nationwide walks between May 9 and May 20.

All of these walks will take place at 7.00pm in the evening. All are welcome to attend, but registration will be required at: www.teagasc.ie/forests4recreation.



The forest recreation walks run from May 9-20.

Table 1: Details of walks and locations.

County	Nearest Town	Date	Contact
Carlow	Rathvilly	May 12	Frances McHugh, 087-622 2111
Cavan	Belturbet	May 9	Kevin O'Connell, 087-121 6159
Cork	Mallow	May 9	John Casey, 087-224 2283
Donegal	Manorcunningham	May 11	Steven Meyen, 087-677 5158
Kerry	Killarney	May 11	Jonathan Spazzi, 087-710 2739
Laois	Ballyroan	May 17	Liam Kelly, 087-909 0495
Mayo	Balla	May 12	Noel Kennedy, 087-909 0504
Meath	Kilmessan	May 17	Kevin O'Connell, 087-121 6159
Roscommon	Elphin	May 18	Noel Kennedy, 087-909 0504
Sligo	Tubbercurry	May 19	Kevin O'Connell, 087-121 6159
Tipperary	Killinaule	May 20	Michael Somers, 087-121 6163
Westmeath	Cloughan, Mullingar	May 10	Liam Kelly, 087-909 0495

Pine weevil in Ireland

Upcoming conference

Teagasc, in association with Maynooth University and the DAFM, are organising a free one-day conference on May 4 focusing on integrated pest management for pine weevil in Ireland. At this conference, experts from Teagasc, Maynooth University, Coillte, the DAFM, private forestry and the UK will cover topics including the lifecycle and management options of the large pine weevil, pesticide registration and regulations, reforestation and continuous cover forestry. This conference is held as part of the DAFM-funded Pine Weevil – Integrated Pest Management (PW-IPM) project: <https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/research/pw-ipm-project/>.

The large pine weevil (*Hylobius abietis*) can cause very substantial tree plant mortality in reforestation sites. Felling a coniferous crop produces a large increase in breeding material for the pine weevil, while plant material suitable for adult feeding is reduced. Young trees used for restocking are liable to be heavily attacked by adult pine weevils feeding on the stem from the root collar upwards. Heavy damage can completely girdle stems and cause plant death. It is estimated that on average 50% of the seedlings on untreated sites in Ireland and the UK are killed by pine weevil during the first few years. European estimates indicate that the pine weevil is the most important pest of reforestation sites in Europe. This will increase the re-establishment costs substantially through the cost of insecticide application, replacing plants and additional weeding. Reforestation sites are at risk of pine weevil damage, whereas afforestation sites usually are



The pine weevil conference takes place on May 4.

not. This is due to the life cycle of the pine weevil. The pine weevil has its major migration period in spring (May to July). Adult pine weevils are attracted to clearfell sites by the smell of recently felled conifer stumps. If transplants are present, they feed on their bark (spring feeding). Adult weevils lay eggs close to roots and stumps and the larvae develop in the stump. New adults emerge from the stumps the following year and feed again on the young trees (late summer/autumn feeding). Damage can occur year round whenever temperatures are sufficiently warm for weevil activity. Stumps may be suitable for breeding for up to five years. Therefore, there is a risk for pine weevil damage up to five years post clearfell.

The PW-IPM project aimed to review current and potential management options to mitigate against damage from the pine weevil in Irish reforestation. These findings will be covered at the conference. Anyone interested in attending the conference can register here: www.teagasc.ie/pineweevilconf.

Seasonal management tips



Check out the *Teagasc Forestry* YouTube channel for useful videos.

Tree planting

As trees come out of their winter dormancy, planting should change from using bare root to containerised plants. Trees planted from now on can be vulnerable to drought, especially larger trees where watering may be necessary.

Fire

Forest fires are a major concern for forest owners. February to May is a high-risk period for forest fires, as dead moorland vegetation can dry out very fast and become highly flammable. Where fire breaks are in place, ensure that they are inspected regularly and kept vegetation free. Firebreaks should be at least six metres wide. Fire plans are essential management tools and co-operating with neighbours is vital for successful fire prevention. See www.teagasc.ie/forestry for details of the DAFM Forest Fire Risk Warning System.

Ongoing management

Walk young woodlands and check for nutrient issues, competition from vegetation, and inspect fences and drains for maintenance. Plan for shaping broadleaves during the summer months. For older forests, assess tree growth and plan accordingly for inspection paths (conifer), tree measurement and planning for harvesting operations, e.g., organising required roading, applying for felling licence.

Management advice

Don't forget that you can contact your local forestry advisor on any aspect of forest management through your local Teagasc office or see staff contact details on: www.teagasc.ie/forestry. There are also many useful videos on different aspects of managing your forest on the Teagasc Forestry YouTube channel.