

# Cong Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014–2017



*An Action of the County Mayo Heritage Plan  
2011-2016*

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to everyone in Cong who helped with the development of this plan. Special thanks to David Ryan for helping to promote the biodiversity training, and the Danagher's Hotel for the use of their venue. Thanks also to Deirdre Cunningham, Heritage Officer, Mayo County Council, for all her support and assistance with the project.

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Draft

## Introduction

Cong is a beautiful village in south Mayo. Completely surrounded by water, the village is an island set in a limestone landscape between the great lakes of Lough Mask to the north and Lough Corrib to the south. The Cong area is one of outstanding beauty with its mix of forest, limestone and water, history and heritage. Many land and water-based natural amenities can be enjoyed in and around Cong- fishing, boating, walking and exploring. Cong is an angler's paradise with Lough Mask and Lough Corrib, both renowned for Salmon and Trout fishing, and the Cong River. The village and surrounding area also has a particularly rich built heritage with the Abbey, Mill, Dry Canal, Ashford Castle and Estate. Cong has attracted international fame for its association with 'The Quiet Man' film starring John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara.



*View of Cong Abbey*

The 'Cong Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017' is a community-based biodiversity plan that outlines projects, activities and events that will run in the Cong area over a three year period for the benefit of nature and wildlife, the environment, and the local community. This plan aims to raise awareness of, protect and enhance the rich natural heritage in the area.

Biodiversity training was provided for the community in Cong in order to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and the many benefits of biodiversity for people, communities and the environment. Three biodiversity training sessions were held in Cong in early 2014 with a view to producing a local biodiversity plan for the area. The training and production of the plan was facilitated by a consultant ecologist but the

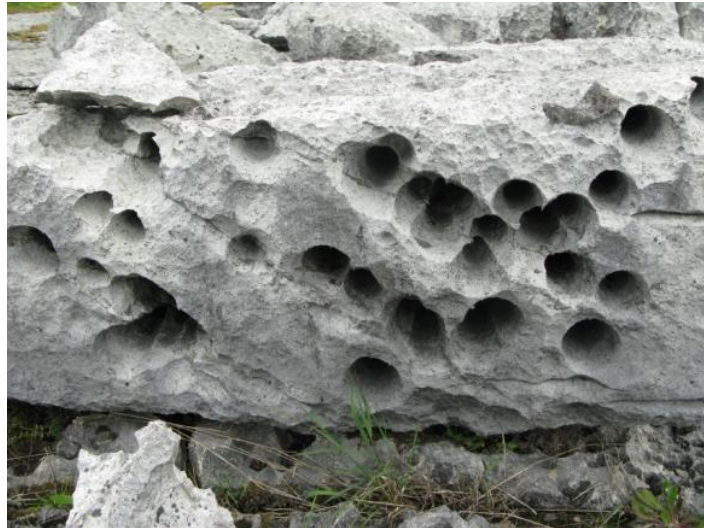
projects in the plan were decided by the local community. This project is an action of the County Mayo Heritage Plan 2011-2016.

***Biodiversity** simply refers to all living things (including plants, animals, microbes, fungi and people), the places where plants and animals etc. live (habitats), the interactions among living things (the web of life) and their environment (ecology). Biodiversity is the nature all around us, everywhere and in our everyday life. Biodiversity is life and sustains life on Earth. Biodiversity provides us with clean air and water, food, fuel, building products and medicines. It also provides us with many free 'services' such as nutrient recycling, pollination and water filtration etc. Making space for nature in our towns and villages enhances and protects the local environment, and improves our quality of life by providing natural amenities for recreation (e.g. swimming, fishing, walking and relaxing).*

There is an active community in Cong as evidenced by the large number of community groups active in the area e.g. Cong Tidy Towns, Cong Foróige Club, Cong Moytura Heritage Society, Parish Council etc. Many are working to improve local amenities and the local environment. The 'Cong Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017' is an opportunity to learn more about the rich natural heritage in the area, to protect and enhance this wonderful resource for the benefit of nature and wildlife, visitors to the area and the local community.

## Nature and wildlife in Cong

Cong is situated on an isthmus between Lough Mask and Lough Corrib. This remarkable landscape is characterised by features of limestone landscapes such as caves and underground waterways (known as ‘The Risings’). The numerous caves in the Cong area have wonderful names such as Poll na Colum or the “Pigeon Hole”, The Priest’s Cave, the Horse’s Discovery, The Ladies’ Buttery, Captain Webb’s Hole, Kelly’s Cave, Marc Anthony’s Pool, Poll Mór and Ballymaglancy Cave.



*Weathered limestone*

Located between Lough Mask and Lough Corrib, the Cong area is a haven for nature and wildlife. Both Lough Mask and Lough Corrib are designated for nature conservation as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA). Lough Corrib is one of the country’s top ornithological sites and supports large numbers of wintering waterfowl such as Greenland White-fronted Geese and Golden Plover. It also has extensive wetland habitats, which are important feeding and nesting grounds for birds. Lough Corrib also supports other important species such as Salmon, Otter, White-clawed Crayfish and Lamprey. Lough Mask is also important for wintering waterfowl and in summer for breeding gulls such as Black-headed Gull, Common Gull and Black Back Gull. Lough Mask has an extensive shoreline with limestone pavement, scrub and fens. Lough Mask feeds into Lough Corrib, mostly through underground waterways and the Cong River.



*Entrance to Cong Woods from village*

There are extensive areas of forest and woodland in and around Cong. Much of this area is managed by Coillte as recreation woodland and some lies within the Ashford estate. The areas of woodland are a haven for woodland plants and animals, and also a wonderful natural amenity. Ard na Gaoithe Woods and Cong Woods have extensive woodland trails for walking and enjoying nature ([www.coillteoutdoors.ie/uploads/tx\\_r3coilltere creationsites/ard\\_na\\_gaoithe\\_cong\\_woods\\_nature\\_trail\\_02.pdf](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie/uploads/tx_r3coilltere creationsites/ard_na_gaoithe_cong_woods_nature_trail_02.pdf)). A nature trail starts in the centre of the village and runs through Cong Woods. The Ashford Estate contains many notable and spectacular trees including a magnificent Japanese Red Cedar and Silver Fir (both listed as ‘Heritage Trees’ on the Tree Council’s ‘Heritage Tree Database’).

Water is everywhere in the village in Cong with the river, canal and duck pond. Ferox Trout have been recorded in the river and are being studied by the local angling club. Mallard Duck, Swans, Heron and other waterfowl are regularly seen on the duck pond.



*Mallard Duck*

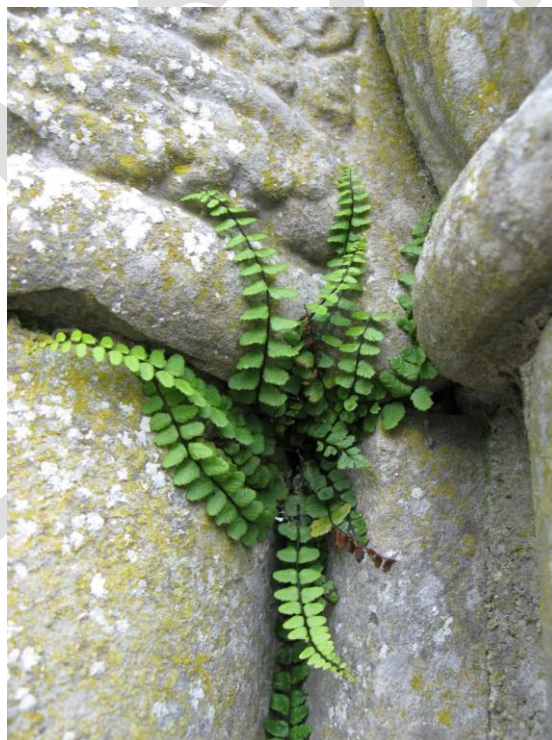


*Black-headed Gull with flower meadow in background*



*Bog-bean in flower on the Cong River.*

Cong also has a rich built heritage and it is closely associated with the natural heritage in the area, the river, woodland and limestone.



*Spleenwort Fern on Cong Abbey*

## Cong Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017

	<b>Project/ activity</b>	<b>Project leader (group or individual)</b>	<b>Project partners</b>	<b>Time frame</b>
1	Enhance nature trail in Cong Wood	Tidy Towns	Coillte	2015-2016
2	Run nature walks and talks e.g. mushroom walk, bat walk, plants of karst limestone, birds etc. <i>During Mayo in Motion, Heritage Week, Biodiversity Week and/or Tree Week</i>	Tidy Towns, Cong Moytura Heritage Society	Heritage Officer, Slow Food Mayo, NPWS, Coillte, Petersburg OEC	Annually
3	Conduct survey of Ferox Trout and highlight results ( <i>information signs about Ferox Trout and Salmon to be erected at entrance to Salmon Hatchery</i> )	Cong Angling Club, Tidy Towns	GMIT, BirdWatch Mayo, Inland Fisheries Ireland	2014
4	Help control local mink populations <i>Mink pose a serious threat to our native fauna</i>	Tidy Towns	NPWS, Inland Fisheries Ireland	Annually
5	Support development of Joyce County Aspirant Geopark to attain full Geopark status	Cong Moytura Heritage Society	Mayo Co Co, Petersburg OEC, GSI, CDS	2015-2017
6	Develop products (e.g. booklet/ leaflet/ website) to promote nature and wildlife in Cong; <i>collate information gathered on natural heritage over the lifetime of the plan for use in heritage interpretation</i>	Youth Club, Tidy Towns	Heritage Officer, Cong Parish Historical Society	2015-2017
7	Protect and enhance fish /Lamprey spawning grounds	Cong Angling Club	Inland Fisheries Ireland	Ongoing
8	Promote school biodiversity projects; develop sensory garden in school	Cong NS	Mayo Co Co, Tidy Towns,	May 2015



			Heritage Officer	
11	Wildlife-friendly gardening- maintain and enhance herb garden in village and school vegetable patch	Tidy Towns	Cong NS	Ongoing
12	Run Annual Spring Clean	Tidy Towns	School	Annually

### **Ensuring success**

The successful implementation of a local biodiversity plan requires commitment from the community to support the projects, activities and/or events outlined in the plan. Ideally a local group should be established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the ‘Cong Nature and Wildlife Plan 2014-2017’. They should meet at least twice a year in order to set annual goals and to review progress to date. The Mayo County Heritage Officer will be available to support the local community implement their plan.

## Resources for implementing the plan

	Project/ activity/ event	Resources
1	Developing nature trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/Trail_Development/Guide_to_Planning_and_Developing_Recreational_Trails_in_Ireland.pdf">http://www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/Trail_Development/Guide_to_Planning_and_Developing_Recreational_Trails_in_Ireland.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.pdds.ie/pcsparchive/intouch/Maths/Trailblazing.pdf">http://www.pdds.ie/pcsparchive/intouch/Maths/Trailblazing.pdf</a></li> </ul>
2	Nature walks and talks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact County Heritage Officer</li> <li>• Mayo Naturalists' Field Club; <a href="http://www.mayococo.ie/en/Services/Heritage/MayoNaturalistsFieldClub/">www.mayococo.ie/en/Services/Heritage/MayoNaturalistsFieldClub/</a></li> <li>• BirdWatch Mayo Branch; <a href="http://www.birdwatchmayo.org/">www.birdwatchmayo.org/</a></li> <li>• Irish Wildlife Trust Mayo Branch</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.petersburg.ie/">http://www.petersburg.ie/</a></li> </ul>
3	Survey of Ferox Trout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/Projects/ferox-trout-project.html">http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/Projects/ferox-trout-project.html</a></li> </ul>
4	Control of mink populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.npws.ie/publications/irishwildlifemanuals/IWM40.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/publications/irishwildlifemanuals/IWM40.pdf</a></li> </ul>
5	Link with Joyce Country Aspirant Geopark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.gsi.ie/NR/rdonlyres/075B80E6-264B-498E-9A8A-2BB7BD0C7719/0/COMP3JoyceCountry1GeoparksIrelandForum201009Burren.pdf">www.gsi.ie/NR/rdonlyres/075B80E6-264B-498E-9A8A-2BB7BD0C7719/0/COMP3JoyceCountry1GeoparksIrelandForum201009Burren.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.petersburg.ie/">www.petersburg.ie/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.gsi.ie">www.gsi.ie</a> (Geological Survey of Ireland)</li> </ul>
6	Produce nature and wildlife booklet/leaflet etc. for Cong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Heritage Officer</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/3_Marketing_Toolkit/5_Cultural_Tourism/Heritage_Interpretation_Manual.pdf?ext=.pdf">www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/3_Marketing_Toolkit/5_Cultural_Tourism/Heritage_Interpretation_Manual.pdf?ext=.pdf</a></li> </ul>
7	Protect and enhance fish/ Lamprey spawning grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.fisheriesireland.ie">www.fisheriesireland.ie</a></li> </ul>
8	Build bug hotels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/uploads/docume">http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/uploads/docume</a></li> </ul>

		nts/making_a_bug_hotel_770.pdf
9	Protect duck and wetland habitat in and around village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.birdwatchireland.ie">www.birdwatchireland.ie</a></li> </ul>
10	Promote school biodiversity projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.greenschoolsireland.org/themes/biodiversity.198.html">www.greenschoolsireland.org/themes/biodiversity.198.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/factsheets/naturegarden/">www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/factsheets/naturegarden/</a></li> </ul>
11	Wildlife-friendly gardening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.butterflyconservation.ie/wordpress/?page_id=33">www.butterflyconservation.ie/wordpress/?page_id=33</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Sustainable-gardening/Plants-for-pollinators">www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Sustainable-gardening/Plants-for-pollinators</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/wildlifegarden/">www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/wildlifegarden/</a></li> </ul>
12	Houses for Red Squirrels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.red-squirrels.co.uk/id6.html">http://www.red-squirrels.co.uk/id6.html</a></li> </ul>

## Potential funding sources

Fund/ Funding Body	Description
Leader	Leader full and part funding for a variety of community-led projects. Discuss potential projects with the Community Development Workers prior to submitting applications to determine if they meet the Leader Programmes criteria for projects.
The Heritage Council	The Heritage Council offer grants to community groups and individuals for heritage projects. See their website for details of the grant application criteria and application process ( <a href="http://www.heritagecouncil.ie">www.heritagecouncil.ie</a> )
Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund, Mayo County Council	This fund is administered by the Environment Section of Mayo County Council; it promotes sustainable development by assisting small scale, non-profit environmental projects at a local level. Application forms and further information are available online at <a href="http://www.mayococo.ie">www.mayococo.ie</a> (Environment Forms Page) or telephone Sharon Cameron, Environment Awareness Officer, Mayo County Council, Aras an Chontae, Castlebar, Co. Mayo, on 094 9047360 or email – <a href="mailto:environment@mayococo.ie">environment@mayococo.ie</a>
Environment Fund for Biodiversity Awareness Grant Scheme	This grant was offered in 2013 and may be offered again. The main aim of the grant is to raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity and ecosystem services. It is administered through the Biodiversity Policy Unit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. For more information contact: <a href="mailto:biodiversitypolicy@ahg.gov.ie">biodiversitypolicy@ahg.gov.ie</a>
Foras na Gaeilge	Foras na Gaeilge provides grants for signage and booklets etc. that include use of the Irish language
Mayo County Council	Funding for Heritage Week events; contact Deirdre Cunningham, Heritage Officer <a href="mailto:dcunningham@mayococo.ie">dcunningham@mayococo.ie</a> , 094 9047684

## Useful contacts and websites

Name (Group/ Individual)	Activities/ Expertise	Contact details
Deirdre Cunningham, <b>Heritage Officer,</b> Mayo County Council	All matters relating to heritage	dcunningham@mayococo.ie Tel: 094 9047684 www.mayococo.ie/heritage
National Parks and Wildlife Service	Responsible for the protection of Ireland's natural heritage, particularly sites designated as Special Conservation Areas, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, and Nature Reserves etc., and species of conservation concern e.g. hen harriers.	District Conservation Officer (098)49996
Vincent Wildlife Trust	Promote conservation of bats and other mammals; provide information and advice; organise walks and talks on bats	katemcaney@vwt.org.uk www.mammals-in-ireland.ie/
BirdWatch Ireland, Mayo Branch	Promote conservation of birds and their habitats; conduct surveys and organise birdwatching events in Mayo	www.birdwatchmayo.org/ birdwatchmayo@yahoo.com
Irish Wildlife Trust (IWT), Mayo Branch	IWT is a conservation charity committed to raising awareness of Ireland's natural heritage and protecting it for future generations.	Contact Seán Murphy at IWTmayo@gmail.com
Mayo Naturalists' Field Club	The aim of the Field Club is to promote an interest in all aspects of natural heritage.	www.mayococo.ie/en/Services/Heritage/MayoNaturalistsFieldClub/
Petersburg Outdoor Education Centre	An outdoor pursuit centre providing a range of outdoor activities including facilities for special interest groups in botany, zoology and geology	www.petersburg.ie

## Appendix 1: List of participants

	<b>Name</b>
1	Michael Ryan
2	Ann Wall
3	Robert Devereux
4	Edel Nolan
5	Elaine Naughton
6	Liam Flanagan
7	Gerry Hynes
8	Michael Maye
9	Margaret Collins
10	Marian McHugh
11	Miriam Lenihan
12	Daniel Ryan
13	Andrew Deacy
14	Gerry O'Grady