



PRO SILVA

Annual Meeting
Ireland

14-16 June 2023

Transforming forests and forest
cultures in a changing world

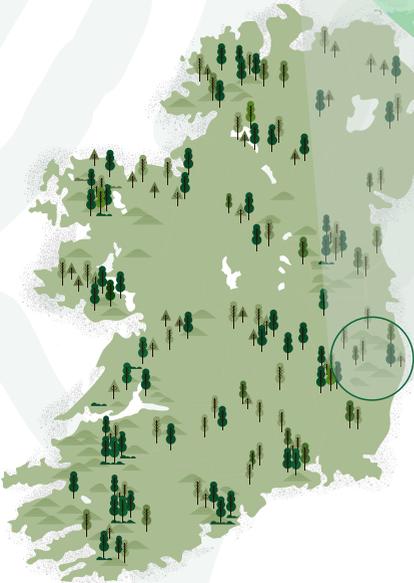
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An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
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Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



FÁILTE



- Day 1. Glenview Hotel ★
1. Glendalough Visitors Centre
1. Glenmalure Lodge 📍
- Day 2. Ballycullen Forest
2. Cloragh Forest
- Day 3. Knockrath Forest
3. Tipi Adventures 📍
3. Ticknock Forest
3. The Bridge Tavern 📍

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

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A FUTURE THAT DELIVERS CLOSER-TO-NATURE FORESTRY FOR PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Forests have been at the core of society for centuries, have played an important role in making and shaping our cultures, and are tightly woven into the fabric of many communities.

Throughout our countries, forests have provided raw materials and essential services to people for generations and are home to rich and diverse flora and fauna.

Today, forests are under increasing pressure: on one side, increased demand for productivity, including timber and a wide range of ecosystem services, and on the other side, increasing pressure from climatic extremes and intensification of disturbance.

There is now a clear need for an integrated approach to forest management and for closer-to-nature practices to enable the multipurpose value of our forests and enhance their resilience in the face of climatic disruption.

During the three days in Ireland, we come together to share our collective experiences. We will showcase Ireland's experience in transforming woodlands by presenting practices, research, education and policy developments in Continuous Cover Forestry.

The conference will also serve as an opportunity to celebrate Pro Silva Ireland's unique 23-year story and its valued relationship with the wider Pro Silva community. The overall aims of our gathering are to consolidate connections and a shared sense of direction and to further promote closer-to-nature forest management solutions.

Liam Byrne
Chairperson, Pro Silva Ireland



Every year, members of the international Pro Silva organisation assemble to share ideas and collaborate with one another to further closer-to-nature forest management. Each member of this forum identifies as dedicated carers of multipurpose forests. They share an intrinsic and common piece of DNA and have their finger on the pulse when it comes to forestry matters.

This meeting of minds has led to the creation of a logo that melds a fingerprint motif with a tree. Each line or strand of the fingerprint visual flows around one another like the different ideas of the Pro Silva members unifying in a shared goal.

This logo celebrates the coming together of everyone to share and discuss their own ideas and discuss the collective goal.

Wednesday 14th June AM

PRO SILVA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WELCOME ADDRESS

Liam Byrne, Chairperson
Pro Silva Ireland

Eckart Senitza, Chairperson
Pro Silva International

GUEST SPEAKER Pippa Hackett
Minister of State with responsibility for forestry

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

President's annual report, *Eckart Senitza*

Vice Presidents' reports, *Tomáš Vrška, Dušan Roženbergar*

Secretary report, *Padraig O'Tuama*

Financial report, *Serge Reinardt*

Administrator's report, *Anne Crespin*

Pro Silva Membership

Pro Silva Projects

FORESTRY IN IRELAND

Seán Ó Conláin, *Woodland Owner*

OUTLINE AND INSIGHTS INTO THE PROGRAMME OF VISITS

Liam Byrne, Chairperson, *Pro Silva Ireland*

9.00am Registration, Hotel Foyer

9.30am Welcome address,
Malton Lounge

10.00am AGM

12.00pm Introduction to forests
in Ireland

12.30pm Lunch, The Woodlands
Restaurant



Glenview
Hotel

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details



Wednesday 14th June PM

HISTORY AND CULTURE OF FORESTRY IN IRELAND

Location Wicklow Mountains National Park

People Anne Fitzpatrick, NPWS

Paddy Purser, CCF Forester

Faith Wilson, Ecologist

Manus Crowley, CCF Forester
and Ecologist

Robbie Windle, DAFM

The Glendalough Valley, Wicklow Mountains National Park and surrounds illustrate the landscape setting, historical and cultural context for the development of Irish forests. Since the founding of the monastic site at Glendalough by St Kevin in the 6th century, the wider landscape has altered significantly, reflecting human demands and cultural changes.

From prehistoric woodlands to monastic farms and mining, by the 1800s only small patches of remnant woodland remained, part of the bigger picture that Ireland had the lowest forest cover of any European state at the start of the 20th century. The semi-wooded landscape of today is the result of modern state forestry programmes, conservation efforts and private forestry, often subsidised by the state.

The session will start at Glendalough monastic site, followed by visits to native woodlands and native woodland afforestation sites. En-route to the Glenmalure Valley for dinner, clear cut and reforest management, as is conventionally practiced in Ireland, will be visible within the landscape.

1.45pm Depart hotel

2.30pm Arrive at Glendalough
Visitor Centre

5.45pm Depart for restaurant

7.00pm Dinner at Glenmalure Lodge

DISCUSSION POINTS

- The challenges of re-establishing native woodland in the Irish context, including deer, vegetation, site suitability, native plant provenance availability, labour and an interrupted woodland culture
- What does a natural native woodland look like in Ireland?
- The state native woodland afforestation scheme
- The challenges of working remnant native woodland: CCF as a tool in conservation management and woodland renewal
- Conventional Irish forestry at the landscape level



Glenmalure
Lodge



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Glendalough
Visitor Centre

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Thursday 15th June AM

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Location Ballycullen Forest
People Áine Ní Dhubháin,
University College Dublin
Edward Wilson, *Silviculturist*
Ian Short, *Teagasc*
Jonathan Spazzi, *Teagasc*

Presentation of 12 years of research on transformation of young Sitka spruce plantations.

Ballycullen Forest is part of the most advanced research programme in early stage transformation of Sitka spruce plantations to CCF. The study was initiated in 2010 and has continued through three separate research projects, LISS (2010-2014), TranSSFor (2017-2022) and ContinuFor (2023-2027).

The primary objective is to compare conventional (low) thinning with two alternative pathways to transformation, crown thinning and graduated density thinning. The study was set up with three experimental blocks containing one 0.25 ha plot for each thinning regime. The arrangement of plots was randomised within each block. Thinning interventions took place in 2011, 2014, 2019 and 2023.

Data has been collected for stand growth and development, production by product class, stand stability, timber quality attributes and understorey conditions for natural regeneration. Results are informing best practice management of Sitka spruce stands undergoing transformation.

Innovative CCF training programmes are being delivered to woodland owners and forestry professionals. Outreach and education are critical for the further development of CCF across the forestry sector in Ireland.

- 8.45am Depart hotel
- 9.15am Arrive in Ballycullen Forest
- 12.00pm Depart for lunch
- 12.30pm Lunch in Cloragh Forest

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Overview of early-stage transformation research in Sitka spruce
- Methodology and design of comparative research in stand density management
- Preliminary results from low, crown and graduated density treatments
- Ongoing and future research programme in stand transformation
- Knowledge sharing, training and education in CCF



Ballycullen
Forest

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location



Thursday 15th June PM

PRACTICE AND TRAINING

Location Cloragh Forest

People Liam Byrne, *Contractor and forest manager*
Phil Morgan, *CCF specialist*
Jonathan Spazzi, *Teagasc*

- 1.30pm Forest walking tour
- 5.15pm Depart for hotel
- 5.45pm Free time
- 7.00pm Celebration dinner in the Glenview Hotel

Sharing the experience of 18 years of transforming mixed age stands, highlighting multifunctional aspects of forestry, including timber production and training.

Cloragh Farm is a mixed organic sheep and forest enterprise, owned by Lucy Tottenham and her family. Forest management can be traced back many generations and the owners, along with their team of forestry professionals, are among the earliest adopters of CCF in Ireland.

The forest area is 197 ha and has been managed under CCF principles since 2005. The elevation range is 50 to 300m asl, from sheltered valley bottoms to exposed ridges and hilltops.

Forest types include oak dominated native woodland, mature conifer and mixed species woodland, and afforestation dating from 2000.

The major management objectives are to enhance landscape and biodiversity features, while sustaining production of quality timber. An added benefit of the management policy is that the woods are utilised as a location for film and TV productions. The advanced development and accessibility of most stands makes this a highly desirable location for skills development and training.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Adaptive forest management and embedding the practice of CCF in the Irish context
- Species and structural diversity to promote ecological resilience
- Timber production and harvesting systems
- Monitoring forest development and responses to stand interventions
- Regeneration dynamics, vegetation and deer management
- Innovation in training, knowledge-sharing and engagement



CELEBRATION DINNER
*followed by
music & entertainment*

**Sharing the story of
Pro Silva Ireland**

Robert Scott, *Estate Manager (1977-2015),
Baronscourt Estate, Co. Tyrone*



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Cloragh
Forest

Scan for map
location

Friday 16th June AM

PRACTICE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Location Knockrath Forest
People Paddy Purser, *CCF Forester*
Phil Morgan, *CCF specialist*
Faith Wilson, *Ecologist*

Knockrath Forest is a 229 ha private forest divided into a series of smaller properties. It is owned by David Brabazon and has been in transformation to CCF management since 2005.

Knockrath Forest is located in the Avonmore River Valley (or Clara Vale) and the soils are generally acid brown earths suitable for native Sessile Oak woodland, as well as Douglas fir and a range of commercial conifer species.

We will take a walk through a mixed stand of Douglas fir, Japanese larch, Sitka spruce, Norway spruce, Western Hemlock, Beech and other conifers and broadleaves in transformation to CCF.

- 8.45am Depart hotel
- 9.30am Arrive in Knockrath Forest
- 11.30am Transfer to Tipi Adventures
- 11.45am In forest panel discussion
- 1.00pm Forest lunch

DISCUSSION POINTS

- The external influences on Knockrath, such as invasive deer, conservation forests, water and tourism, and how the forest management practice addresses these influences
- Results of three AFI measurements from the stand and what the future holds for the forest
- How CCF management could be adopted at the catchment level in terms of water quality management and recreational experience, while maintaining the production of high-quality timber



PANEL DISCUSSION
Can CCF Serve Industry, Environment & People Equally?
Moderator **Padraig O'Tuama, CCF forester**

PANEL
Brian Murphy, *Balcas Sawmills*
Marina Conway, *Western Forestry Co-op*
Ray Ó Foglú, *Hometree Charity*
Eckart Senitza, *Pro Silva International*



Tipi Adventures



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Knockrath Forest

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Friday 16th June PM

FORESTS AND PEOPLE

Location Ticknock Forest

People Mark Carlin, *Managing Director, Coillte Forest*

Karen Woods, *Operations Manager, Coillte Nature*

Clodagh Duffy, *Recreation Manager, Dublin Mountains Partnership*

When the Irish State acquired land in the Dublin Mountains for afforestation between the early 1940s and late 1960s, Dublin was a much smaller city and outdoor recreation in forests was not part of the forester's vision.

Today, these forests are an important recreational resource for a growing urban population (Dublin's population in 2021 was 1.43 million). In addition, they are an important part of the area's ecological network. Until 2020, Coillte (the Irish semi-state forestry company) managed these areas for commercial timber production first, with management for recreational purposes and biodiversity second.

From 2007, active stakeholder engagement from both recreational users and local authorities calling for a change in how the forests were managed resulted in the establishment of the Dublin Mountains Partnership and in 2020 the initiation of a new forest management model called the Dublin Mountains Makeover project managed by Coillte Nature.

2.00pm Depart for Dublin Mountains

3.00pm Arrive in Ticknock Forest

5.15pm Depart for hotel

7.15pm Depart for closing dinner in Wicklow town

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Transitioning nine Coillte forests toward being multi-generational forests managed under CCF principles
- Enhancing habitats for wildlife by removing non-native Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine and replanting with native species such as Scots pine, birch, rowan, oak and holly
- Enriching the forests' recreational appeal for people and improving the wider landscape's aesthetic value
- The challenge of actively managing the forests while minimising disruption to local residents, visitors and wildlife



*The Bridge
Tavern*



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location



*Ticknock
Forest*

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location



A BRIEF HISTORY OF IRISH FORESTS

Around 12,500 years ago, when the great ice sheets and glaciers thawed, tough pioneer plant species colonised the island of Ireland. As conditions softened, true forests emerged. The eastern lowlands were dominated by elm, hazel and ash. In the west, oak and hazel woodlands were more common. At higher altitudes in the west, Scots pine and birch forests had established. Birch, alder and hazel occupied poorer soils, while alder and willow were found in the wetlands and marshy ground.

When the first human settlers arrived 9,000 years ago, around 80% of the island was covered by forest. The Mesolithic hunter-gatherers lived largely on the bounty of these woodlands and little clearance occurred. This changed with the arrival of Neolithic farmers some 5,500 years ago, when the first serious clearances for agriculture took place.

The culture around forests waxed and waned over the following centuries, and while clearance continued, there was often a reverence for trees and forests. The Gaelic Irish society that emerged from the late pre-historic era codified the protection of trees in the complex legal system of the Brehon laws, where damaging a tree was a serious and punishable offence. Some characters within the Irish Ogham alphabet, in use from the 4th to 10th centuries, are based on the names for various trees.

However, by 1600 only around 12% of Ireland's forest cover remained. The 300 years that followed saw increased deforestation, associated with the extinction of wolves in Ireland, as well as the loss of different eagle species, other birds and the Irish wildcat. By the early 20th century, just 1% of the island's original forests remained.

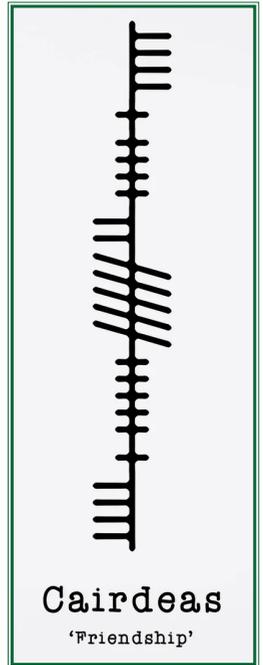
Ireland did not significantly develop its modern forest sector until the 1950s, when the now-independent Republic of Ireland saw mass afforestation as a means to alleviate unemployment in rural areas and to increase timber supply self-sufficiency. A state-driven, clearfell plantation model utilizing exotic conifers, principally Sitka

spruce, but also lodgepole pine, Norway spruce, Douglas fir and larch, was adopted to achieve this.

From the late 1980s state grant-aid for private afforestation was offered and drove further forest expansion, more lately with increased focus on broadleaf and native woodland establishment. Despite many challenges, forest cover is now at 11.6%, representing the highest forest cover in 350 years.

While increase in forests and their associated economic benefits represent a considerable achievement, the industrial monoculture model has been increasingly questioned. Pro Silva Ireland was formed 23 years ago to offer an alternate forest management solution that seeks to balance the environmental, ecological and social potential of forests with the obvious economic benefits.

A snapshot of Irish forests today is provided by DAFM's National Forest Inventory 2022. The total area of forest now covers 808,848ha, and for the first time since the formation of the Irish State, more forest is privately owned (50.9%) with the remainder mostly managed by the semi-state forestry company Coillte. Sitka spruce still dominates the national landscape and represents 44.6% of the total forest area, making up the bulk of the 61.3% covered by conifers. However, broadleaf cover has increased from 21.8% in 2007 to 27% today.



This medieval Irish poem is taken from a text known as *Aidedh Ferghusa meic Léide* (the Death of Fergus). In the poem, Lubhdán, the king of the fairies, advises the ruler of Ulster, Fergus mac Léide, on the special qualities of trees and which ones can be burned in the household fire.

*The pliant woodbine/honeysuckle if thou burn, wailings for misfortune will abound,
Dire extremity at weapons' points or drowning in great waves will follow.*

*Burn not the precious apple tree of spreading and low-sweeping bough;
Tree ever decked in bloom of white, against whose fair head all men put forth the hand.*

*The surly blackthorn is a wanderer, a wood that the artificer burns not;
Throughout his body, though it be scanty, birds in their flocks warble.*

*The noble willow burn not, a tree sacred to poems;
Within his blooms bees are a-sucking, all love the little cage.*

*The graceful tree with the berries, the wizard's tree, the rowan burn;
But spare the limber tree; burn not the slender hazel.*

*Dark is the colour of ash; timber that makes the wheels to go;
Rods he furnishes for horsemen's hands, his form turns battle into flight.*

*Tenterhook among woods the spiteful briar is, burn him that is so keen and green;
He cuts, he flays the foot, him that would advance he forcibly drags backward.*

*Fiercest heat-giver of all timber is green oak, from him non may escape unhurt;
By partiality for him the head is set on aching, and by his acrid embers the eye is made sore.*

*Alder, very battle-witch of all woods, tree that is hottest in the fight -
Undoubtedly burn at thy discretion both the alder and whitethorn.*

*Holly, burn it green; holly, burn it dry;
Of all trees whatsoever the critically best is holly.*

*Elder that hath tough bark, tree that in truth hurts sore;
Him that furnishes horses to the armies from the sidh (fairies) burn so that he be charred.*

*The birch as well, if he be laid low, promises abiding fortune;
Burn up most sure and certainly the stakes that bear the constant pods.*

*Put on the hearth if it so please thee, the russet aspen to come headlong down;
Burn, be it late or early, the tree with the palsied branch.*

*Patriarch of long-lasting woods is the yew sacred to feasts as it is well known;
Of him now build ye dark-red vats of goodly size.*

(Translated from Irish by Standish O'Grady)

SLÁN AGUS BEANNACHT

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