



Seo í tríú nuachtlitir thogra AranLIFE - Fáilte isteach. Ba mhaith linn leis an nuachtlitir seo tú a choinneáil ar an eolas faoin obair atá idir lámha faoi láthair ag an togra agus d'aird a dhíriú ar nithe a bhéas ag tarlú. Cuireann foireann AranLIFE fáilte roimh thuairimí faoin nuachtlitir agus faoi ghné ar bith de thogra AranLIFE.

WELCOME TO THE THIRD NEWSLETTER OF THE ARANLIFE PROJECT. This newsletter is to keep you informed of the work going on within the project and to highlight the events that will be occurring. The AranLIFE project team welcomes any feedback about the newsletter or regarding any aspect of the AranLIFE project.



Aran
LIFE



San eagrán seo

NUASHONRÚ GINEARÁLTA - DUL CHUN CINN GO DTÍ SEO	3
FEACHTAS MEÁN	4
BITHÉAGSÚLACHT THAILTE FEIRME OILEÁN	6
AN CUMAS INNILTE I dTAILTE FÉARAIGH ÁRANN - NUASHONRÚ Ó IT SHLIGIGH/ LOUISE DUIGNAN, TAIGHDEOIR PHD THEAGASC	13
AN NUACHT IS DEIREANAÍ	
■ Caomhnú Árann	16
■ Ag feabhsú bealaí isteach ag buailte	17
■ Cuairt Eastóinise nasctha le 25 bliain LIFE	18
■ Cóisir sa nGairdín ag Áras an Uachtaráin	19
■ Trialacha a choinneoidh amuigh na coiníní in Iarairne	20

In this Issue

GENERAL UPDATE - PROGRESS SO FAR	3
MEDIA CAMPAIGN	4
THE BIODIVERSITY OF THE FARMED LANDSCAPE OF ARAN ISLANDS	6
THE GRAZING POTENTIAL OF ARAN PASTURELANDS - UPDATE FROM IT SLIGO/TEAGASC PHD RESEARCHER LOUISE DUIGNAN	13
NEWS UPDATE	
■ Caomhnú Árann	16
■ Improving field access	17
■ Estonian Visit linked with 25 years of LIFE	18
■ Garden Party at Áras an Uachtarán	19
■ Rabbit exclusion trials at Iararna	20

Dul chun cinn go dtí seo | Progress so Far

Gníomh C.1. Feabhas a chur ar bhealaí isteach ag gabháltais talún le cuidiú le bainistíocht is innilt.

24 km de Róidíní glanta



Action C.1. Improve access to land parcels to facilitate management including grazing.

24 km of Boreen cleared



Gníomh C.2. Bainistiú ar shrianadh raithní is scrobarnaí.

71 ha. Scrobarnaí smachtaithe

Action C.2. Scrub and bracken control management.

71 ha. of Scrub controlled



BEFORE | ROIMHE SIN



AFTER | INA DHIAIDH SIN

Gníomh C.3. Áiseanna bainistíochta beostoc feabhsaithe de bharr infreastruchtúr uisce.

65 gné nua uisce déanta, 56 umar uisce a bhí ann deisithe

Action C.3. Enhancement of livestock management facilities through the provision of a water infrastructure.

65 new water features installed, 56 existing raincatchers repaired



Gníomh C.4. Úsáid á bhaint as na seifteanna is fiúntaí innilte.

Úsáid as na seifteanna is fiúntaí innilte bainte amach ar 929 ha. laistigh den togra

Action C.4. Implementation of optimal grazing plans.

Implementation of optimal grazing on 929 ha. of land



Feachtas Meán Media Campaign

Coinníonn foireann AranLIFE an pobal ar an eolas faoin obair a bhíonn ar bun acu agus faoi thorthaí a gcuid oibre trí uasdátú rialta ar a suíomh gréasáin agus trí mheáin sóisialta eile, leithéidí Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/AranLIFE>) agus Twitter (<https://twitter.com/AranLIFE>). Tá sraith leabhrán curtha amach ag AranLIFE: ‘Plandaí na Feirme’, ‘Féileacáin agus Leamhain Eitilte Lae’, ‘Éanacha na Feirme agus na Sráidbhailte’ agus ‘Éanacha Cósta na Feirme’ agus d’éirigh thar cionn leo seo, bíonn tóir i gcónaí orthu agus tá siad le fáil ar an suíomh gréasáin chomh maith. Táthar ag obair freisin ar shraith DVDanna gearra agus beidh siad críochnaithe amach i mbliana.

I Meitheamh 2016, i bpáirt leis an Ionad Náisiúnta le Sonraí Bithéagsúlachta, d’óstaigh AranLIFE an chéad BioBlitz oileáin dá raibh ann riamh. Clár seachtaine a bhí i gceist leis agus imeachtaí ann do chuile dhuine, le heolas níos fearr a chur ar fhiadhúlra an oileáin seo againne agus bhí meascán cainteanna agus siúlóidí ann faoi oidhreacht chultúrtha agus nádúrtha an oileáin. Tháinig foireann an togra agus chuile bhunscoil in Oileáin Árann le chéile le comóradh a dhéanamh ar an tairbhe iontach a dhéanann feilméaracht do chothabháil an tsaibhris fiadhúlra a bhaineann leis na hoileáin, a áiríonn plandaí, éanacha, féileacáin is feithidí. Ghlac chuile scoil páirt sa gcomórtas ealaíne ‘Feilméaracht agus Dúlra Oileáin Árann’, sna seachtainí roimh an BioBlitz agus crochadh an obair ealaíne i Halla Rónáin an tseachtain a raibh an Bio Blitz ann. Chuir AranLIFE féilire oideachasúil 2017 le chéile de bharr an chomórtais ealaíne sin agus bhí na pictiúir a bhuaigh an comórtas ann.

Bhí siúlóid freisin mar chuid den fhéile le glac d’fheilmearaí AranLIFE le go bhfeicfí an chaoi gur mhúnlaigh córas feilméarachta na n-oileán na gnáthóga agus an bhithéagsúlacht shaibhir a bhfuil tábhacht caomhnaithe leo sna hoileáin. Ba bhreá an deis í ag dream na háite agus ag fámairí le fáil amach faoi oidhreacht nádúrtha an oileáin agus lena gcúnamh a thabhairt le taifead an réimse leathan speiceas a facthas. Tá buíochas mór ag dul do na saineolaithe áitiúla oidhreachta Michael O’Connell, Claire Cotter, Máirín Uí Fhatharta agus Rónán Fitzpatrick a threoraigh na siúlóidí le linn na féile.



Sraith faisnéiseach leabhrán, póstaer agus féilire atá foilsithe ag an togra go dtí seo. Informative series of booklets, posters and calendar that have been produced by the project to date.

Ag déanamh ar dheireadh an togra beidh comhdháil mhór ag togra AranLIFE agus tá an-suim againn go mbeadh páirt mhór ag na feilmearaí agus ag an bpobal áitiúil ann. Beidh muid á gcoinneáil ar an eolas faoin rud ar fad sula mbeidh an chomhdháil ann.

Bíonn foireann thogra AranLIFE go síoraí ag plé le comhlachtaí rialtais ag cur comhairle orthu agus ag déanamh moltaí leo faoin ngá atá le scéim speisialta comhshaoil talmhaíochta do na hoileáin. Féach sonraí breise sa bpíosa An Nuacht is Deireanaí: Caomhnú Árann.

The AranLIFE team keeps the public up to date with findings and on-going works through continually updating our website, www.aranlife.ie, and also through various social media outlets such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/AranLIFE>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/AranLIFE>). AranLIFE have produced a series of booklets: 'Plants of the Farm, Butterflies' and Day-Flying Moths 'Birds of the Farm and Villages' and 'Coastal Birds of the Farm' which have been a huge success and are in constant demand and are also available on the website. The team are also in the process of producing a series of short DVDs which will be finalised this year.

In June 2016 AranLIFE in partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre hosted the first ever Island BioBlitz. This weeklong programme had events for everyone to learn more about the wildlife of our islands, and included a range of talks and walks on the cultural and natural heritage of the island. The project team joined with all of the Aran Islands primary schools to celebrate the magnificent contribution farming makes in maintaining the rich wildlife associated with the islands which include plants, birds, butterflies and insects. In the weeks leading up to the BioBlitz all the schools participated in a 'Farming and Nature on the Aran Islands' art competition and the resulting artwork was displayed in Halla Rónáin during the Bio Blitz week. As a result of the art competition AranLIFE produced an educational calendar in 2017 which included the winning pictures from the art competition.

The festival included a walk with some of the farmers and the AranLIFE Project team to discover how the farming system of the islands is responsible for creating the rich biodiversity and habitats of conservation importance on the islands. This was a great opportunity for locals and visitors to experience the natural heritage of the island and help in recording the great range of species present. Many thanks to the local heritage experts Michael O'Connell, Claire Cotter, Máirín Uí Fhatharta and Rónán Fitzpatrick who led guided walks during the festival.



Patrick McGurn ag insint ainmneacha na leamhan a bhí sa ngaiste leamhan do pháistí scoile as na trí oileán.

Patrick McGurn identifying moths from a moth trap with school children from the three islands.



Obair ealaíne an chomórtais 'Feilméarach agus Dúlra Oileán Árann' ar taispeáint i Halla Rónáin le linn an Bioblitz.

Art work from 'Farming and Nature on the Aran Islands' competition displayed in Halla Rónáin during Bioblitz.

The AranLIFE project will be holding a major conference towards the end of the project and we will be very keen to have high farmer and local community involvement. We will keep you informed with all details of this in advance of the conference.

Since the commencement of the project the AranLIFE project team has continuously liaised with government bodies in providing advice and recommendations in relation to the need for a specific agri-environment scheme for the islands. See further details in News Update section: Caomhnú Árann.

Bithéagsúlacht Thailte Feirme Oileán Árann

The Biodiversity of the Farmed Landscape of Aran Islands



Fig. 1. Sa samhradh bíonn na buailte Féir Geimhridh brataithe le dathanna ag crobh dearg, crobh éin agus boladh cnis.
Fig. 1. Bloody cranesbill, Birds-foot-trefoil and Lady's bedstraw fill the Winterage fields with colour during the summer.

Tá timpeall 500 speiceas planda in Oileán Árann, cé nach bhfuil sna hoileáin ach achar 40km². Is mór an t-údar iontais é an staitistic seo ó tharla é cothrom beagnach le leath an mhéid iomlán speiceas atá le fáil in oileán na hÉireann fré chéile, agus tá níos mó ná sin d'iontas le déanamh den éagsúlacht speiceas nuair a chuimhnítear nach bhfuil portach, sliabh, abhainn ná coill in Oileán Árann, rudaí a d'fhéadfadh cur leis an réimse dochreidte speiceas seo. Thairfead foireann AranLIFE 46 planda difríocht i bpaiste timpeall chomh mór le carr beag (4m²), rud a thugann sórt tuairim faoina bhfuil de speicis le fáil in áit fíorbheag.

Is sna tailte féaraigh is mó atá an bhithéagsúlacht dochreidte seo, tailte nár itheadh go dlúth ach inár cleachtadh, ó ghlúin go glúin, bealaí feilméarachta ísealdéine. Le go mairfidh agus go bhfeabhsóidh an saibhreas speiceas sna tailte féaraigh seo tá sé ríthábhachtach leanacht den mhodh feilméarachta ina n-itear glasfhéar is féar geimhridh. Is scaith fhéar gearr a bhíonn sa bhféar geimhridh i ndiaidh innilt geimhridh agus san earrach cuireann luibheanna ar nós ceadharlach bealtaine, crobh dearg, crobh éin agus boladh cnis faoi bhláth ann (Fig. 1) agus líonann na buailte le dathanna, ansin déanann síol, agus bíonn fágtha saor ó innilt ar feadh míonna an tsamhraidh (Fig. 2). Sa gcaoi seo sábháiltear agus méadaítear saibhreas na speiceas agus na síolta sna buailte. Oibríonn pábháil aolchloiche an fhéir geimhridh ar nós taiscthéitheoir, ag tógáil teas isteach le linn mhíonna an tsamhraidh agus á ligean amach ar feadh an gheimhridh, bíonn na buailte tirim agus draenáil mhaith iontu agus ní minic a shiocann sé, mar sin feileann an córas feilméarachta seo na hoileáin (Fig. 2).

The Aran Islands are 40km² in area and despite their small size they are home to approximately 500 plant species. This is an amazing statistic considering that this equates to nearly half the total number of species within the whole island of Ireland and even more amazing when you consider that there are no bogs, mountains, rivers and woodlands on the Aran Islands that could contribute to this incredible species diversity. To give an idea of the amount of species that can be found in a small area, the AranLIFE team have recorded 46 different plant species in a area about the size of a small car (4m²).

The main habitat with this incredible biodiversity is grassland that has been managed from generation to generation through low-intensity farming methods. The farming system of winter and summer grazing is vital in conserving and enhancing the species richness of this grassland. The winter grazing produces a short turf grassland in the Winterages which in the springtime, herbs such as spring gentian, bloody cranes bill, birds foot trefoil and lady's bedstraw flower (Fig. 1) and fill the fields full of colour, and then set seed, free from grazing in the summer months (Fig. 2). In this way the seed bank and species-richness of the fields is conserved and enhanced. The limestone pavement in the Winterages act like storage heaters, warming up in the summer months and releasing their warmth throughout the winter, and the lack of frost and dry, well-drained fields make the islands ideally suited to this farming system (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Itear na buailte sa ngeimhreadh agus ansin san earrach agus sa samhradh déanann na luibheanna síol agus tagann faoi bhláth.

Fig 2. The fields are grazed in winter allowing herbs to flower and set seed in the spring and summer.

Tá tábhacht idirnáisiúnta leis na gnáthóga feirmithe seo ó thaobh caomhnú an dúlra agus tá ainmnithe mar Ghnáthóga Tosaíochta i dTreoir an AE maidir le Gnáthóga, sé sin féarach cailcreach le meall magairlí (*6210), pábháil aolchloiche (*8240) agus machair (*21A0). Is Limistéir Speisialta Caomhantais é timpeall 75% de na hoileáin mar gheall ar an saibheas speiceas atá sna gnáthóga tosaíochta feirmithe seo. (Fig. 3).

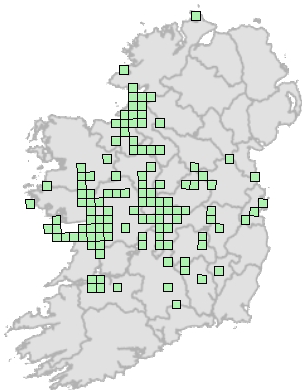
These farmed habitats are internationally important for nature conservation and are designated as Priority Habitats in the EU Habitats Directive, namely orchid-rich calcareous grassland (*6210), limestone pavement (*8240) and machair (*21A0). Approximately 75% of the islands are designated as Special Areas of Conservation because of these species-rich farmed priority habitats (Fig. 3).

Tá an féarach cailcreach a mbíonn cuimse Magairlí ann (Fig 3) i mbaol ar fud na tíre de bharr ilroinnt agus cailteanas gnáthóg agus mar gheall ar dhianshaothrú talmhaíochta nó cead a chinn a bheith tugtha don scrobarnach. Is sa mBoireann, in Oileáin Árann agus ar Shléibhte Dhartraí i gCo. Liatroma agus Shligigh (NPWS 2013) is fairsinge atá féarach cailcreach le saibheas magairlí.

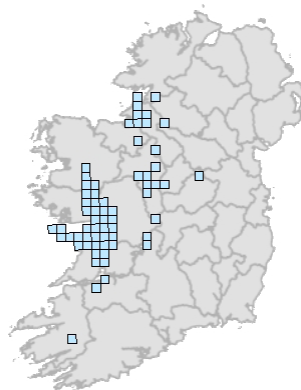
Nationally, Orchid-rich calcareous grassland (Fig 3) is under threat due to habitat loss and fragmentation along with agricultural intensification and succession to scrub following abandonment. The main strongholds for orchid-rich calcareous grassland are the Burren and Aran Islands and Dartry Mountains in Counties Leitrim and Sligo (NPWS 2013).



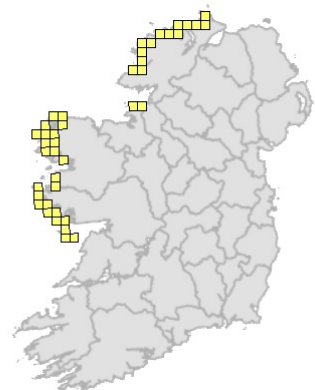
Fig 3. Dáileadh Náisiúnta Féarach cailcreach saibhir le magairlí (*6210), pábháil aolchloiche (*8240) agus Machair (*21A0)
 Fig 3. The National Distribution of Orchid-rich calcareous grassland (*6210), Limestone pavement (*8240) and Machair (*21A0)



Féarach saibhir le Magairlí
 Orchid-rich grassland



Pábháil Aolchloiche
 Limestone pavement



Machair



Fig. 4. Plandaí a fhásann thart leis an Meánmhuir – Atlantach, Magairlín glas, Magairlín na mbeach agus Garbhluas na Boirne.
 Fig. 4. Plants with a Mediterranean-Atlantic distribution, Dense flowered orchid, Bee orchid and Wild madder.

Is talamh cothrom, féarach, le cósta é Machair agus níl sé ach ar chóstaí thiar-thuaidh na hAlban agus na hÉireann agus níl níos faide ó dheas ná Oileáin Árann in aon áit beo. Déanann réabadh agus córais innilte neamhoiriúnacha dochar do chaighdeán machair (NPWS 2013). Tá na machair is tábhachtaí atá in Inis Mór i gCill Mhuirbhígh agus in Iarárne agus ar Cheann Gainimh in Inis Meáin.

Machairs are a flat coastal grassland that only occur on the northwest coasts of Ireland and Scotland, the Aran Islands marking the most southerly end of their distribution globally. Threats to machair include disturbance and unsuitable grazing regimes which have compromised the quality of the habitat (NPWS 2013). The main machair sites on the islands are at Kilmurvey and Iararna on Inis Mór and Ceann Gainimh, Inis Meáin.

Níltear cinnte céard a tharlóidh amach anseo do na gnáthóga seo ar an morthír ach sna hoileáin tá feabhas tagtha ar a stádas caomhnaithe le ceithre bliana anuas mar gheall ar iarrachtaí na 67 feilméara de chuid AranLIFE atá ag glanadh scrobarnaí, ag tógáil tancanna uisce agus ag tabhairt faoin innilt is fiúntaí, rud atá riachtanach leis na féara speiceas-shaibhir seo a choinneáil.

While the future of these habitats is uncertain on the mainland, the conservation status of these habitats on the islands has improved over the past four years owing to the efforts of our 67 AranLIFE farmers removing scrub, building rain catchers and achieving optimal grazing which is vital to maintain these species-rich grasslands.

Chomh maith leis an réimse an-leathan speiceas plandaí atá anseo sna hoileáin tá speicis shuimiúla freisin anseo, atá coitianta sna hoileáin, ach atá gann nó nach bhfuil ar chorr ar bith in áiteacha eile. Tá plandaí anseo nach bhfeicfeá níos faide ó thuaidh ná seo in Éirinn, m.sh. Magairlín glas, Magairlín na mbeach, Garbhluas na Boirne. Plandaí iad a bhíonn thart leis an Meánmhuir – Atlantach, bíonn paistí acu ar chósta thiar na hÉireann ach ní móide a mbeidís le fáil in aon áit eile ansin ach in áiteacha meánmhuirí sa bhFrainc agus sa Spáinn (Fig. 4).

As well as having a huge diversity of plant species here on the islands we also have interesting species here that are frequent on the islands but that are rare or absent elsewhere. We have plants that are at their most northerly limit of their distribution in Ireland, e.g. Dense flowered orchid, Bee orchid, Wild madder. These plants have a Mediterranean-Atlantic distribution as they have stations on the west coast of Ireland and then are only recorded in Mediterranean regions of France and Spain (Fig. 4).



Fig. 5. Plandaí atá in Oileáin Árann ach a fhásann go hiondúil thuas ard sna móinéir alpacha ar mhór-roinn na hEorpa: Lus na laoch, Ceadharlach Bealtaine, Glanrosc Salzburg, Mórán Gaelach.

Fig. 5. Aran Island plants that are usually found in alpine meadows at high altitudes in mainland Europe: Roseroot, Spring gentian, Salzburg eyebright and Irish saxifrage.



Fig. 6. Speicis atá in Oileáin Árann ach annamh in áiteacha eile: Glasair bheannach, Grianrós liath, Bleachtphiseána agus Cainneann

Fig. 6. Species that occur on the Aran Islands but are rare elsewhere: Pyramidal bugle, Hoary rock rose, Purple milk vetch and Babbington's leek.

Tá plandaí Artach-Alpach againn agus plandaí nach bhfuil ach in áiteacha áirithe i Sasana agus in Éirinn, m.sh. Lus na laoch, Ceadharlach Bealtaine, Glanrosc Salzburg, Mórán Gaelach (Fig. 5). I Mór-roinn na hEorpa fásann na speicis seo sna móinéir thuas an-ard ach fásann siad anseo ag leibhéal na farraige. Difríocht eile faoi Fhlóra Oileáin Árann ná go bhféadfadh na 'gnáthphlandaí' artacha alpacha seo a bheith ag fás taobh le taobh le plandaí a d'fheicfeá in áiteacha gar don Mheánmhuir.

Tá speicis againn a fhasann i gcorr áit in Éirinn agus Sasana, m.sh. Glasair bheannach, Grianrós liath, Bleachtphiseán, Cainneann (Fig. 6). Tá na speicis seo in Oileáin Árann agus i gcorr áit fánach eile sa tír, níl an Bleachtphiseán mar shampla in aon áit in Éirinn ach amháin ar Oileáin Árann.

Tá speicis againn in Oileáin Árann atá imithe uilig in áiteacha eile mar gheall ar chleachtais dianshaothraithe talmhaíochta, m.sh. Roille (Fig. 7). Fásann an cineál seo féir in Inis Meáin i measc an tseagail. Ní rabhthas in ann síolta a fháil do Bhanc Síolta na Mílaoise (Millenium Seed Bank) Ghairdíní Kew Londain in áit ar bith eile ach ann. Is éard é Bailiúchán Síolta Bhanc Síolta na Mílaoise ná bailiúchán de bhithéagsúlacht plandaí síl atá beo ar an domhan agus is acmhainn dhomhanda é do chaomhnú agus d'úsáid inmharthana plandaí.

We have Arctic-Alpine plants and plants with restricted distribution within Britain and Ireland, e.g. Roseroot, Spring gentian, Salzburg eyebright, Irish saxifrage (Fig. 5). These species are found in the meadows at high altitudes in mainland Europe but occur close to sea level here. Another anomaly of the Aran Island Flora is that these 'typical' arctic alpine plants may occur alongside plants typical of Mediterranean regions.

We have species with a limited distribution in Ireland and Britain, e.g. Pyramidal bugle, Hoary rock rose, Purple milk vetch, Babington's leek (Fig. 6). These species occur on the Aran Islands and few other places within the country, for example Purple milk vetch only occurs on the Aran Islands within Ireland.

On the Aran Islands we have species that have died out elsewhere due to intensification of agricultural practises, e.g., Darnel (Fig.7). This grass species occurs within rye crops on Inis Meáin. This was the only source of seed for Millenium Seed Bank at Kew Gardens, London. The Millennium Seed Bank Seed Collection, is a collection of living seed-plant biodiversity on earth and is a global resource for conservation and sustainable use of plants.

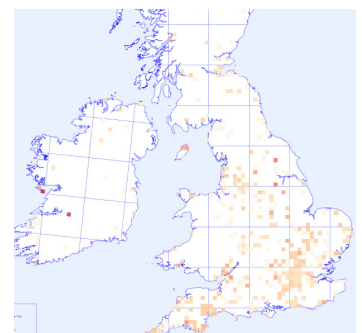


Fig. 7. Roille (ar chlé) seo speiceas neamhchoitianta féir a fhasann tríd an seagal (sa lár). Taispeánann taifid a déanadh ar roille le deireanas (cearnóga dúdhearga) go bhfuil sé neamhchoitianta i Sasana agus in Éirinn (<http://bsbi.org/maps>).

Fig. 7. Darnel (left) which is a rare grass species that occurs within rye crops (mid). Recent records (dark red squares) of Darnel are rare within Britain and Ireland (<http://bsbi.org/maps>).



Fig. 8. De bharr an réimse mór plandaí atá sna hoileáin, tá réimse féileacán freisin ann a bhíonn ag brath ar na plandaí seo: Donnóg an bhalla, An Donnán (Griangraf © Brian Nelson) agus an Gormán beag.

Fig. 8. The fantastic array of plants on the islands produces a corresponding selection of butterflies which depend on the plants: Wall brown, Dingy skipper (Photo © B.Nelson) and Small blue.

In éineacht leis an éagsúlacht shaibhir bláthanna tá réimse féileacán freisin in Oileáin Árann, agus bíonn siad seo ag ithe agus ag brath ar an réimse iontach plandaí féir atá againn. Tá fiche a haon cineál féileacán in Oileáin Árann, seo céatadán ard den líon iomlán go náisiúnta, sin 31 speiceas. I measc na bhféileacán is mó le rá sna hoileáin seo tá an Gormán beag, ceann atá i mbaol sa tír. Itheann péist chóilís an fhéileacáin seo na bláthanna Méara Muire a fhásann go minic i bhféara Oileáin Árann. Itheann péist chóilís an Donnáin, féileacán atá beagnach i mbaol, Crobh éin, seo planda eile atá coitianta freisin i bhféara speiceas-shaibhir Oileáin Árann. Tá Donnóg an bhalla, atá faoi bhaol freisin ar fud na tíre, coitianta ar na hoileáin agus itheann péist chóilís an fhéileacáin seo na féara atá inár bhféarthailte speiceas-shaibhir (Fig. 8).

Tá neart éanacha freisin ar ár ngnáthóga feirmithe. Tá neadú pilibíní sna féara machair coitianta ar na hoileáin, rud atá ag éirí níos neamhchoitianta de réir a chéile in áiteacha eile, tá an speiceas seo ar liosta dearg na n-éan, sin le rá gur údar mór caomhantais iad. Taifeadadh líon tábhachtach geabhróg (Geabhróg artach, Geabhróg scothdhubh agus an Geabhróg bheag) ar gor ar na hoileáin, caitheann na speicis seo an geimhreadh i bpacoighear an Antartaigh (Geabhróg artach) agus ar chósta thiar na hAfraice (Geabhróg scothdhubh agus an Geabhróg bheag) agus sa Samhradh filleann ar Oileáin Árann le neadacha a dhéanamh. Neadaíonn an Riabhóg mhóna agus an Fhuisseog freisin sa Machair agus beathaíonn iad féin ann (Fig. 9). Déanann na speicis seo uilig a gcuid neadacha ar an talamh agus mar sin d'fhéadfaí creach a dhéanamh orthu nó cur as dóibh (Fig 10).

Along with the rich floral diversity, the Aran Islands also support a great variety of butterflies that feed and depend on the fantastic array of grassland plants. Twenty-one species of butterfly occur on the Aran Islands which is a significant proportion of the national total of 31 species. Some of the butterfly highlights of these islands include the Small blue butterfly which is endangered nationally. The caterpillar of this butterfly feeds on the flowers of Kidney vetch which occurs frequently within the grasslands of the Aran Islands. The caterpillar of the Dingy skipper butterfly, which is a near threatened species, feeds on Birds-foot-trefoil another common component of the species-rich grasslands of the Aran Islands. Wall brown, also an endangered species nationally, is common on the islands and its caterpillars feed on grasses throughout our species-rich grasslands (Fig 8).

The bird life of our farmed habitats is also vibrant. Lapwing nesting on machair grassland is a common occurrence on the islands that is becoming increasingly rare elsewhere, this species is listed as a red list bird species indicating that it is of high conservation concern. Important numbers of terns (Arctic tern, Sandwich tern and Little tern) have been recorded breeding on the islands, these species over winter on Antarctic pack ice (arctic tern) and west coast of Africa (Sandwich tern and Little tern) and return to the Aran Islands to breed in Summer. Meadow pipit and Skylark also feed and nest on Machair (Fig. 9). All these species nest on the ground and so are prone to predation and disturbance (Fig 10).



Fig. 9. Éanacha a neadaíonn agus a bheathaíonn iad féin ar mhachair a bhíonn ite: An Riabhóg mhóna, Fuisseog, Pilibín agus An Gebhróg bheag (Pictiúir © A. Kelly).

Fig. 9. Birds that nest and feed on the grazed machair habitat: Meadow pipit, Skylark, Lapwing and Little tern (Photos © A. Kelly).



Fig. 10. Nead Pilibín, i bhfolach go maith i bpaiste feamainne i bhféar machair AranLIFE. Tá baint mhór ag an gcaoi a gcuirtear as do neadacha an speicis seo ar an laghdú atá ag teacht orthu go náisiúnta.

Fig 10. Effective camouflage of a Lapwings nest within a AranLIFE seaweed plot on machair grassland. Nest disturbance is a major factor in the decline of this species nationally.



Fig. 11. Cág Cosdearg, itheann sé feithidí agus a larbhaí, péistí agus inveirteabraigh eile a bhíonn faoi thalamh agus is sa bhféar gairid innilte a fhaigheann sé a chuid bia (Pictiúr © A. Kelly).

Fig. 11. Chough, feeds on insects and their larvae, worms and other underground invertebrates and needs short grazed grassland to forage (Photo © A. Kelly).

Bíonn an Cág Cosdearg, préachán le gob fíordhearg, ag brath ar sraith-fhéar gairid innilte le feithidí agus cruimh a fháil dóibh féin (Fig. 11). Bíonn an gnáthóg seo acu sna hoileáin sna tailte a bhíonn ite sa ngeimhreadh agus a bhíonn fágtha gan ithe ansin sa samhradh.

Tá éagsúlacht iontach inveirteabrach freisin sna hoileáin. Tá beach (bumbóg) dá gcuid féin acu in Oileáin Árann, *Bombus muscorum*, var *allenellus*, mar nach fachtas an cineál seo ach ar na hoileáin (Fig. 12).

An seilmid rinseach béalchaol, *Vertigo angustior*, seo seilmid beag neamhchoitianta atá sa machair in Inis Mór (Fig. 13). D'fhéadfadh an speiceas seo a bheith i gcuid mhaith áiteacha ach teastaíonn miocraeráid ar leith uaidh agus cuireann draenáil, athruithe ar innilt agus ar bhainistiú as dó. Tá sé liostaithe in Iarscríbhinn II Threoir na nGnáthóg agus meastar é a bheith faoi bhaol san Eoraip.

Tá Oileáin Árann ina dtearmann iontach fiadhúlra, le luach ard caomhnú dúlra agus táthar á bhainistiú agus á chaomhnú seo le cleachtais fheilméarachta ísealdéine ó ghlúin go glúin. Baineann chuile dhuine, feilméaraí, cuairteoirí agus pobal uilig na n-oileán tairbhe as caomhnú na ngnáthóg seo. Chuile bhliain tagann breis is 250,000 cuairteoir chomh fada le hOileáin Árann le gnéithe cultúrtha agus stairiúla na n-oileán a bhlaiseadh agus le breathnú ar an tírdhreach spésiúil, idir garrantaí beaga, claíocha cloch agus róidíní. An bhfuil áit eile sa domhan ag a bhfuil tionscail turasóireachta atá ag brath an oiread ar an gcóras feilméarachta, córas a bhreathnaíonn amach do thailte le saibhreas speiceas, an rud a mheallann na mílte cuairteoir chuile bhliain.

Chough, a member of the crow family with distinctive red beak, requires short turf grazed grasslands to forage for insects and grubs (Fig. 11). This ideal habitat is created on the islands within the winter grazed lands that are then left ungrazed during the summer.

The invertebrate diversity of the islands is also extraordinary. The Aran Islands has its own variety of bumble bee, *Bombus muscorum*, var *allenellus*, that has only been recorded on these islands (Fig. 12).

The narrow-mouthed whorled snail, *Vertigo angustior*, is a small, rare snail that occurs on machair habitat on Inis Mór (Fig. 13). This species can occur on a wide variety of sites however the exact micro-climate that it requires is very strict and it is sensitive to drainage, changes in grazing and management. This species is on Annex II of the EU habitats Directive and is considered threatened within Europe.

The Aran Islands is an amazing reserve of wildlife of high nature conservation value that is managed and conserved by the low-intensity farming practises that have been ongoing on the islands for generations. The conservation of these habitats benefits all, farmers, visitors and the entire Island community. Over 250,000 tourists visit the Aran Islands each year to experience the cultural and historical highlights of the islands as well as the iconic landscape of small fields and networks of stonewalls and boreens. Where else in the world is a tourist industry so dependent on a farming system which maintains the species-rich pastures that attracts the thousands of tourists each year.

Tagairtí

Stádas Ghnáthóga agus Speiceas in Éirinn atá faoi Chosaint AE (An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra 2013). An Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta.

References

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Fig. 12. Beach (Bumbóg) Árann.
Fig. 12. The Aran Bumble bee.



Fig. 13 An seilmidhe beag *Vertigo angustior* atá in Inis Mór (Pictiúr © Maria Long). Bíonn a fhios againn, má bhíonn an speiceas seo i ngnáthóg, nach bhfuil tada ag cur as do na gnáthóga sin mar go bhfuil riachtanais hidrigeolaíocha an-bheacht ón speiceas seo agus chuirfí as dóibh dá n-athródh an bainistiú.

Fig. 13. The small snail *Vertigo angustior* which occurs on Inis Mór (Photo © Maria Long). The presence of this species indicates undisturbed habitats as the hydrogeological requirements of this species are very precise and prone to disturbance through changes in management.



An Cumas Innilte i dTailte Féaraigh Árann Nuashonrú Ó IT Shligigh/ Louise Duignan, Taighdeoir PHD Theagasc The Grazing Potential Of Aran Pasturelands. Update From IT Sligo/Teagasc PHD Researcher Louise Duignan



Níor mhór don fheilméara go mbeadh lao ag chuile bhó chuile bhliain agus go mbeadh laonna agus gamhna láidre freisin acu a bheidh in ann meáchan a chur suas. Má chuireann na feilméaraí luach beathaithe fhásra Árann i gcomórtas le riachtanais cothaithe na n-ainmhithe éagsúla cuidíonn sé leo lena n-intinn a dhéanamh suas an mbeidh nó nach mbeidh breis cothaithe óna hainmhithe le go mbeidh siad mar a theastaíonn uathu.

Céard é luach cothaithe an fhásra in Árann?

Cé mhéad cothú breise a theastaíonn?

Ní raibh fáil ar an gcineál seo eolais faoi fhásra speiceas-shaibhir Árann agus mar sin táimse, le dhá bhliain anuas, ag meas luach cothaithe fhásra na dtrí oileán. Is féidir luach cothaithe an fhásra a oibriú amach ach an caighdeán sna tailte agus an leibhéal cothaithe a thomhas. Déantar amach caighdeán an fhásra de réir an chéatadáin snáithíní agus garbhphróitéin atá sa bhfásra. De réir mar a aibíonn an fásra (cuireann amach bileoga, bláthanna agus síolta) méadaíonn líon na snáithíní agus laghdaíonn an méid próitéin atá iontu. De ghnáth má bhíonn líon na snáithíní méadaithe bíonn fuinneamh agus díleáiteacht laghdaithe. Tuigeann feilméaraí Árann go maith go bhfuil luach cothaithe níos ísle don bheostoc sa seanfhear geimhridh a fhásann i gcaitheamh na bliana seachas mar atá sa bhfear úr Earraigh nó glasfhear (Fig. 1). Déantar amach stádas cothaitheach an fhásra trí líon na mianraí riachtanacha cothaithe sa bhfásra a thomhas.

A major goal for farmers is to maintain healthy cows that produce calves every year as well as vigorous weanlings and yearlings capable of packing on weight. Balancing the 'feed value' of Aran forages with nutritional requirements of animal classes helps farmers to decide whether or not additional animal feed supplements are required to achieve desired levels of animal performance.

What is the feed value of Aran forages?
How much supplementation is required?

This type of information for species-rich Aran forages was not available, so over the last two years I have been evaluating the feeding value of Aran forages across the three islands.

The feed value of forages can be determined by measuring forage quality and nutritional status. Forage quality is measured on the percentage of the forage that is made up of fibre and crude protein. As the forage matures (produces leaves, flowers and seed heads), its fibre content increases, whilst the protein content becomes diluted. In general, higher fibre content signifies lower digestibility and energy content. It is well known amongst Aran farmers that winter grazed forage, or 'seanfhear', growing all year has a lower feeding value for livestock than fresh spring grass, or 'glasfhear' (Fig. 1). Forage nutritional status is evaluated by measuring the concentrations of essential dietary minerals in forages.

Príomhthorthaí

- *Athraíonn luach cothaithe an fhásra le himeacht ama agus de réir an chineáil buaile.*

Bíonn baint ag an gcineál agus ag an méid speiceas plandaí a fhásann i bhféara éagsúla leis seo, agus ag aibíocht na bplandaí agus an t-am den bhliain a bhíonn ann (Fig. 2). Bíonn baint freisin ag gnéithe tábhachtacha eile leis, ar nós an méid plandaí a bhíonn fágtha tar éis dó a bheith ite go deireanach, an méid cothaitheach san ithir, teocht agus an méid báistí a dhéanann sé.

- *Taispeánann na leibhéil garbhphrótéin agus na nGlantach Aigéid Snáithíní nach bhfuil a ndóthain cothaithe ag an mbeostoc sa bhfásra geimhridh as féin.*

Sa ngeimhreadh úsáideann beithígh bhainne an fuinneamh a bhíonn stóráilte (sail choirp) acu. Go hiondúil má choinnítear súil ar an mbail a bhíonn ar bheithígh ar feadh na bliana is féidir oibriú amach an dteastaíonn breis próitéin agus forlíonta fuinnimh uathu.

Main Findings

- **Forage feeding value varies over time and between pasture types.**

Causes of this variation include the type and amount of plant species growing in different pastures, plant stage of maturity and time of year (Fig. 2). Other important factors include how much plant material was left over when the pasture was last grazed, soil nutrient content, temperature, and rainfall levels.

- **Crude protein and Acid Detergent Fibre levels indicate that winter forages alone do not meet the nutritional requirements of livestock.**

Cows are capable of using up stored energy (body fat) during the winter months. In general, keeping an eye on body condition throughout the year will help you decide if additional energy and protein supplements are required.



Fig 1. (Ar barr) Sampla d'fhéara innilte Geimhridh agus (ar bun) féara innilte Earraigh/Samhraidh.

Fig 1. (Top) An example of Winter grazed pasture and (Bottom) Spring / Summer pasture.

- Tá easpa Fosfair, Copair, Sinc, Seilíniam agus Cóballt i bhfásra Árainn.

Bíonn tionchar ag easpa agus ag míchothromaíocht mianraí ar fhéarthailte Árainn. Sa gcaoi nach dtarlóidh sé go mbeidh easpa mianraí sa tréad, go háirithe ag amanna tábhachtacha den bhliain, d'fhéadfaí breathnú amach dá mbeathú le breis mianraí.

An samhradh seo beidh mé ag bailiú breis eolais uaibhse, na feilmearaí, chomh maith le heolas as na buailte. Leis an eolas seo táim ag súil teacht ar chleachtais bainistithe feirme a fheileann saibhreas na speiceas plandaí atá sna féara. Más mian leat gné ar bith den obair atá idir lámha agam a phlé seol r-phost chugam ag an seoladh thíos nó buail bleid orm má fheiceann tú ar an oileán mé. louise.duignan@mail.itsligo.ie.

- Aran forages are deficient in Phosphorus, Copper, Zinc, Selenium and Cobalt.

Mineral imbalances and deficiencies affect Aran grasslands. To reduce the likelihood of mineral deficiencies arising in the herd, especially at critical times in the year, mineral supplementation is a sound feed management policy.

This summer I will be collecting more information in the fields and from you the farmers. With this knowledge I hope to relate the richness of plant species within pastures to farm management practices. If you would like to discuss any aspects of the work I am involved in, I can be contacted directly by email below or when you see me on the island have a chat with me. louise.duignan@mail.itsligo.ie.

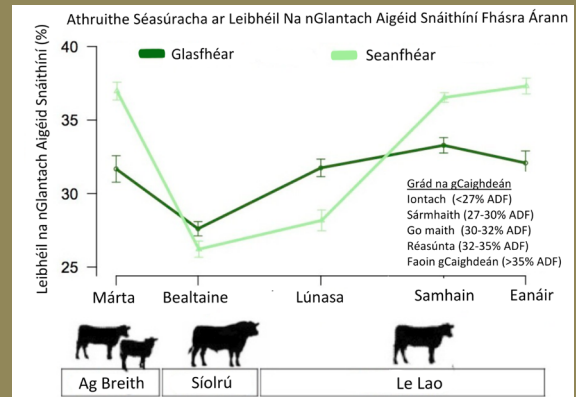
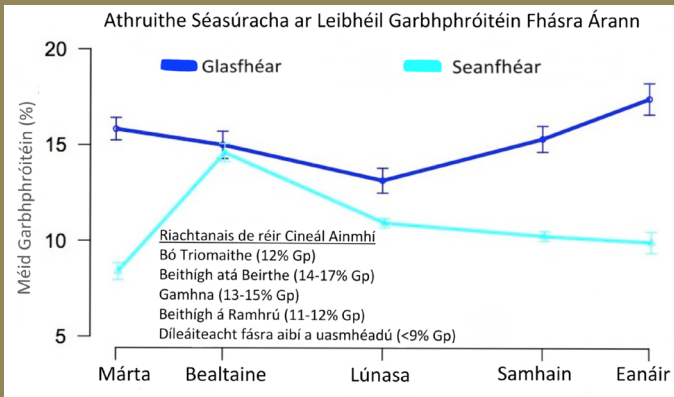


Fig 2. Athruithe séasúra a thagann ar leibhéal Garbhphrótéin (ar chlé) agus ar Ghiantach Aigéid Snáithíní (ar dheis) an Fhársa in Árainn

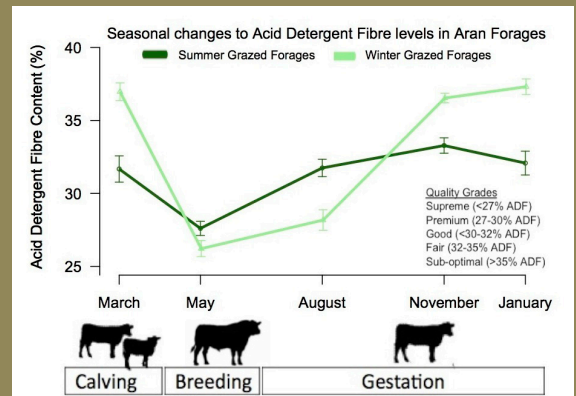
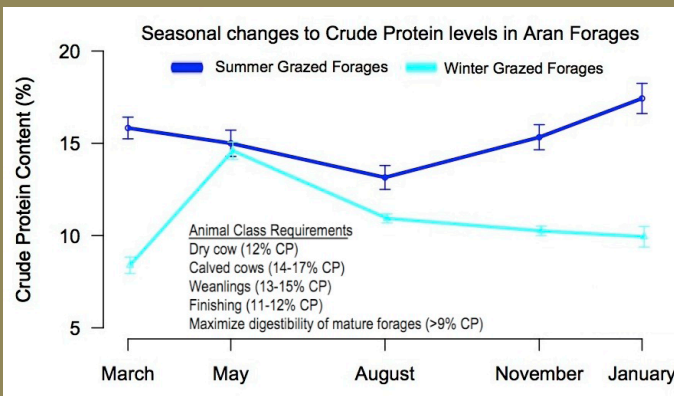


Fig 2. Seasonal changes to Crude Protein (left) and Acid Detergent Fibre levels (right) in Aran Forages

Caomhnú Árann

Tá foireann AranLIFE ag breathnú ar bhealaí faoina bhféadfaí clár eile a fhorbairt a thiocfadh i ndiaidh LIFE lena chinntiú go gcoinneofar suas torthaí an togra. Faoin Tionscnamh um Chomhpháirtíochtaí Eorpacha rinne an Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara glaoch tograí in Eanáir seo caite. Bhí cúnamh airgid á thairiscint acu d'éascú cur chuigí nua comhphárteacha i leith tionscadal agus cleachtais a dhíríonn ar roinnt gnéithe, ina measc, caomhnú tírdhreacha agus bithéagsúlacht talmhaíochta. Phléigh foireann AranLIFE an glaoch seo le roinnt páirtithe leasmhara agus shocraigh ar iarratas a sheoladh isteach faoin ainm 'Caomhnú Árann – Ag Bainistiú Gnáthóga Oileán Árann lena n-aschur talmhaíochta agus éiceolaíochta a uasmhéadú'. Is é an sprioc a bheadh leis an togra ná go mbunófaí, trí réimse teicnící nuálacha, tionscadal simplí bunaithe ar thorthaí a thiocfadh le rogha an fheilméara maidir le táirge traidisiúnta a chur ar fáil, m.sh. beithígh, ach go n-íocfaí an feilméara as feilméarachta a dhéanamh a chuireann níos mó leis an mbithéagsúlacht ná mar a theastaíonn faoina clár reatha comhshaoil talmhaíochta.

Tá AranLIFE an-sásta gur roghnaíodh an togra don chéad chéim eile faoina gcaithfidh muid plean ar leith tionscadail a chur le chéile. Dhéan muid go maith a dhul go dtí an pointe seo mar bhí 130 grúpa istigh air agus 22 grúpa a roghnaíodh don chéad chéim eile. Ceapann an Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara gur dócha gur 10 dtionscadal uilig a phiocfar as na 22 seo.

Beidh foireann AranLIFE ag obair ar an togra seo le linn an tsamhraidh le cúnamh ó chonraitheoirí ón taobh amuigh. Tá sé i gceist againn sraith cruinnithe a bheith againn le feilméaraí na n-oileán le tuilleadh plé a dhéanamh ar shonraí an togra, agus é a bhogadh chun cinn go dtí an chéad chéim eile. Táthar ag súil go mbeidh an togra ag cur le hobair AranLIFE ach ní bheidh an togra díreach ar nós AranLIFE.

The AranLIFE Project Team are looking at possible routes for the development of an after LIFE programme to ensure the sustainability of the project results. Last January the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM) put out a call for proposals under the European Partnerships Initiative. This call offered financial assistance to facilitate joint innovative approaches to projects and practices that focus on a number of issues including the preservation of agricultural landscapes and biodiversity. AranLIFE Project Team discussed the call with a range of stakeholders and decided to submit an application entitled 'Caomhnú Árann – Managing the habitats of the Aran Islands to maximise their agricultural and ecological output'. The object of the proposal is through a range of innovative techniques trial a simple outcome/ results based project which recognises the farmer's preference to produce a traditional product, e.g. cattle, but rewards the farmer for farming in a way that maximises biodiversity above that required under existing agri-environment programmes.

AranLIFE are delighted to say that the proposal has been selected for the next phase which allows for the development of a specific project plan. Getting to this stage is an achievement as over 130 groups applied and only 22 were chosen for the next stage. DAFM indicate that it is likely 10 projects in total will be selected out of the final 22.

The AranLIFE team will be working on this proposal over the summer, with the help of outside contractors. We plan to hold a series of meetings to discuss the details of the project further with the island farmers to develop the project to the next stage. It is envisaged that the proposal will build on the work of AranLIFE but the future project will not be a direct copy of AranLIFE.

Ag Feabhsú Bealaí Isteach ag Buailte

Improving Field Access



Sampla de gheata ar bhuaile agus taobhanna an chlaí á n-úsáid mar phostáí.
An example of a field gate using incorporating the pillars into the existing stone walls.

Is cuid thábhachtach de thogra AranLIFE é feabhas a chur ar bhealaí isteach ag tailte. Nuair nach mbíonn sé furasta dul chomh fada leis na buailte tá níos mó seans ann go mbeidh siad fágtha agus go gcaillfear na féara speiceas-shaibhir mar gheall ar scrobarnach. Tá 24km de róidíní glanta go dtí seo agus an bealach isteach déanta níos fusa anois i gcás timpeall 400ha gnáthóg tosaíochta. Nuair a bhíothas ag pleanáil na hoibre seo bhí sé soiléir go bhféadfaí bealaí isteach eile a fheabhsú rud a chinnteodh spriocinnilt níos fearr. Tógann sé am bearna a ardú scaití agus mar sin cuidíonn geataí i gcásanna ar leith nuair a theastaíonn beithigh a choinneáil in áit amháin le go n-íosfar an bhuaile tuilleadh, le go mbeidh bealaí isteach níos fearr ag beithigh agus le go mbeidh deis ann na róidíní atá ann a ithe le smacht a choinneáil ar scrobarnach.

Bheadh na bearnaí atá ann fágtha mar atá siad sa gcaoi nach gcuirfí as don tírdhreach agus chuirfí geataí in áiteacha feiliúnacha le postáí cloch orthu le go luífidís isteach leis an tírdhreach. Má cheapann tusa go bhféadfaí bealach isteach ag buaile a fheabhsú agus gur cúnamh a bheadh ann duit agus go dteastaíonn sé ó thaobh innilt cheart ar an mbuaile déan teagmháil le foireann AranLIFE. D'fháilteodh muid freisin roimh thuairimí faoin mbealach is fearr le bealaí isteach ag buailte a fheabhsú gan cur as do thírdhreach aitheanta Árann.

Improving access to the fields is an important part of the AranLIFE project. Poor access increases the chance of abandonment and loss of species rich grasslands through scrub encroachment. To date 24km of boreens have been cleared improving the access to approximately 400ha of priority habitat. During planning this work it was evident that there are other areas of access that could be improved which would ensure better targeted grazing. The traditional bearna can be time consuming to rebuild and the provision of gates in some situations would help restrict cattle where additional grazing was required, allow better entry points for livestock and allow existing boreens to be grazed ensuring any encroaching scrub is controlled.

To reduce any negative landscape implications any existing bearna's would be retained and gates erected in suitable areas using the stone walls as the gate posts so they blend in well to the landscape. If you feel that access to a field could be improved and would help and is necessary in the overall grazing management of the field please contact the AranLIFE Project Team. We would also welcome your views on the best way of improving access without imposing on the iconic Aran landscape.

Cuairt Eastóinise nasctha le 25 bliain LIFE

Estonian Visit linked with 25 years of LIFE



Féarthailte ar fud na hEorpa ag comóradh 25 bliain tionscadail LIFE an AE, baill d'fhoireann LIFE to ALVARs-tionscadal LIFE de chuid na hEastóine, agus AranLIFE ar Inis Mór

Grasslands across Europe, celebrating 25 years of LIFE EU projects, members of the AranLIFE team and LIFE to Alvars, an Estonian LIFE project, on Inis Mór

Chuir togra AranLIFE fáilte, le deireanas, roimh chuairt ghrúpa LIFE na hEastóine, LIFE to Alvars. Is féarthailte cailcreacha leathnádúrtha iad féarthailte Alvar, bíonn an bhuncharraig aolchloiche faoi chlúdach tanaí ithreach ina mbíonn neart aoil agus mar sin tá siad cosúil go maith le tailte féaraigh Oileán Árann. Tá cuid thábhachtach de bhithéagsúlacht na hEorpa sna cineálacha féarthailte seo agus iad feiliúnach do réimse leathan gnáthóg agus speiceas, tá siad an-tábhachtach d'éanacha agus inveirteabraigh mar gur iontu a shíolraíonn siad. Dá bhrí sin tá go leor acu ainmnithe i líonra Natura 2000 mar Limistéir Speisialta Caomhantais. Is é 'LIFE' ionstraim airgeadais an AE agus tacaíonn le tionscadail chomhshaoil, caomhnú dúlra agus cinn a ghníomhaíonn ar son na haeráide. Tá 4,306 tionscadal páirtmhaoinithe ag LIFE ó 1992 agus bhí comóradh 25 bliain acu sa mBealtaine. Bhí cuairt thionscadal na hEastóine ar Oileán Árann ina chuid den chomóradh seo ag nascadh na dtionscadal éagsúil LIFE ar fud na hEorpa agus bhí sé mar aidhm acu uilig stádas caomhnaithe na bhféarthailte tábhachtacha seo san Eoraip a fheabhsú.

The AranLIFE project recently welcomed a visit from the Estonian LIFE group, LIFE to Alvars. Alvar grasslands are semi-natural calcareous grasslands with thin lime-rich soil on limestone bedrock and therefore share many characteristics to the grasslands of the Aran Islands. These types of grasslands hold an important part of Europe's biodiversity, offering suitable conditions for a vast diversity of habitats and species, and are especially important for birds and invertebrates, providing vital breeding grounds. As a result many have been designated under the Natura 2000 network as Special Areas of Conservation. LIFE is the EU's financial instrument supporting environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects. Since 1992 LIFE has co-financed some 4306 projects and celebrates its 25 year birthday last May. The visit from the Estonian project to the Aran Islands was part of this celebration linking the different LIFE projects across Europe each with the aim of improving the conservation status of these European important grasslands.

Cóisir sa nGairdín ag Áras an Uachtaráin

Chuaigh foireann AranLIFE ag an gCóisir Gairdín 'Ag Comóradh Saol Oileán' in Áras an Uachtaráin le deireanas. Ba é An tUachtarán Mícheál D. Ó hUiginn agus a bhean Sabina a bhí á óstáil agus bhí sé dírithe ar na pobail inmharthana atá ar chuid mhaith d'oileáin áirithe na hÉireann. Ina aitheasc ag an gcóisir gairdín thaispeáin ár nUachtarán Mícheál D. Ó hUiginn a bhá agus a thuiscint mhaith ar na dúshláin a bhíonn le sárú ag pobail na n-oileán. Fuair Gráinne Ní Chonghaile agus Amanda Browne deis cúpla focal a bheith acu leis an Uachtarán agus léirigh sé go raibh eolas maith agus an-suim aige san obair a bhí á dhéanamh ag an togra AranLIFE agus seo píosa beag as an aitheasc a thug sé ag an ócáid:

'Molaim a chairde, le fonn fíis tréan agus flaithiúil a chur le chéile do thodhchaí ár n-oileán, gur cheart dúinn cur leis an líon mór tionscnamh, idir poiblí agus príobháideach, atá cheana féin ag tabhairt cúnamh maidir lenár bpobail ar na hoileáin a choinneáil agus a láidriú.

Táim ag cuimhneamh ar thionscadail a mhaoiníonn an AE ar nós "Aran Life" atá ar thrí Oileán Árainn, áit gur eol dúinn gur mhair pobail fheilméarachta le os cionn 4,000 bliain. Is iad na tionscadail seo, atá ina bhfrontair níos mó ná frontair chaomhnaithe, a sheasfaidh do na pobail sa todhchaí. Todhchaí a bhainfidh leas as trasfhorbairtí nua agus freagracha idir ár gcomhshaol nádúrtha, eolaíocht agus eolas áitiúil.'

Garden Party at Áras an Uachtaráin

The AranLIFE project team recently attended a Garden Party 'Celebrating Island Life' at Áras an Uachtaráin hosted by Michael D. Higgins and Sabina Higgins focusing on the sustainable communities on Ireland's many inhabited islands. Our president Michael D. Higgins showed great understanding and empathy with the challenges facing island communities in his address at the garden party. Gráinne Ní Chonghaile and Amanda Browne got a chance to have a quick chat with the President during which he showed great knowledge and interest in the work of the AranLIFE project and the following is an excerpt from his address at the event:

'I suggest, a chairde, that we should build on the profusion of initiatives, public and private, which already contribute to sustaining and strengthening our island communities, so as to craft, together, a generous and daring vision for the future of our islands.

I am thinking of projects such as the EU funded "Aran Life" on the three Aran islands, where farming communities are known to have lived for over 4,000 years. Such projects, more than mere conservation enterprises, are the future of sustainable communities. A future which will draw on new and responsible cross-fertilisations between our natural environment, science and local knowledge.'





Coiníní coinnithe amach as 10 n-áit bheag le cáis orthu ar an Machair in Iaráirne
Rabbits excluded from 10 small caged areas on the Machair at Iararna

Trialacha a choinneoidh amuigh na coiníní in Iaráirne

Idir an tochailt agus an innilt a dhéanann siad tá na coiníní ag déanamh an-dochar don mhachair in Iaráirne. Tá laghdú an-mhór ar an bhfásra do na beithigh mar gheall ar dhlúthinnilt na gcoiníní agus bíonn paistí gainimh fágtha ag a gcuid tochailte agus d'fhéadfadh an ghaoth iad a chreimeadh tuilleadh. Ceaptar go bhfuil laghdú freisin ar an éagsúlacht plandaí sa ngnáthóg féaraigh speisialta seo le cósta de bharr innilt na gcoiníní agus tá clúdach tiubh caonaigh ar an gcuid is mó den mhachair agus gan mórán eile fásra ann. Le tionchar na gcoiníní a mheas leag AranLIFE síos 10 gcás beag ar fud an mhachair, leis na coiníní a choinneáil amach as na píosaí seo, agus taispeánann na torthaí go mbeadh níos mó féir agus speiceas eile bláthanna sa bhféar murach na coiníní. Déanfar tuilleadh anailíse sna seachtainí romhainn agus bheadh na torthaí de seo ar fáil do chlár bainistiú coiníní a d'fhéadfadh a bheith ann don mhachair amach anseo.

Rabbit exclusion trials at Iararna'

Rabbits are having a serious impact on the machair at Iararna through both their grazing and burrowing activities. The heavy grazing by rabbits is drastically reducing the amount of forage available to cattle and their burrowing activity exposes bare sand patches which can be further eroded by the wind. The rabbit grazing is also thought to be reducing the plant diversity of this special coastal grassland habitat and in most of the machair a thick covering of moss dominates with little other vegetation present. To investigate the impact of the rabbits, AranLIFE erected a series of 10 small exclusion cages throughout the machair, and the initial results show that without rabbits the grassland would have more grass and other flower species. Further analysis will be carried out in the coming weeks and the results of which will inform a potential future rabbit management programme for the machair.

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Fáilte Ireland
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Department of
**Agriculture,
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An Roinn
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Bia agus Mara**



An Chomhairle Oidhreacht
The Heritage Council



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council