



Wildlife of Stradbally

Co. Waterford

Stradbally Tidy Towns 2009

1. Coastal heath and cliffs

Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*)

While its black plumage identifies it as a crow, the Chough has distinctive red feet and a red curved bill. They can be seen in small flocks at both Ballyvooney and Stradbally coves, swooping above the cliffs where they nest. They may also be seen rumaging in rotting seaweed or cow dung for insect larvae to eat. They are a rare bird in Europe and usually live in high mountains but in Ireland they also live on sea cliffs. The cliffs of the Waterford coast are designated as a Special Protection Area for their conservation.



Thrift (*Armeria maritima*)

Despite its pretty appearance this is a tough plant able to survive in rock crevices buffeted by sea breezes and doused in salt sea spray. Thrift adds a gorgeous splash of colour to the Waterford coastline when it flowers between May and September. The narrow waxy leaves form cushions on walls and cliffs along the coast and help the plant survive in an environment where most plants cannot.

3. Rivers and streams

Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentoni*)

This bat lives and hunts close to water. It can be seen on the River Tay and at Ballyvooney Bridge patrolling up and down just above the river surface particularly where the water is smooth. This flight pattern is very characteristic as they are specialist hunters of midges, mayflies and other insects at or just above the water. This species has enlarged feet with which it plucks its prey from the surface film.



Freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)

This fascinating animal lives for up to 120 years in the bed of clean stony rivers and grows up to 15cm long. They have an extremely unusual lifestyle and are very sensitive to pollution and other environmental impacts. Millions of tiny larvae are released into the river current. To survive, the larvae must attach to the gill of a trout or salmon migrating upstream. Only a tiny fraction survives to adulthood. This species is protected under EU law and is almost extinct worldwide. A small population occurs in the River Tay.

5. Hedgerows and roadsides

Hawthorn Sceaich gear (*Crataegus monogyna*)

The hawthorn blossoms in May with clusters of beautiful white flowers adorning hedgerows and laneways around Stradbally. The flowers provide nectar and pollen for many species of flying insects which in turn are food for birds and bats. In Autumn haws are produced and provide sustenance for birds.



Orange tip Barr buí (*Anthocharis cardamines*)

These dainty butterflies appear between late April and late June in damp places and along hedgerows all around Stradbally. Only the male has the conspicuous orange wing tips whereas the female has grey wingtips and at a glance looks similar to other white butterflies familiar to gardeners. The mottled pattern on the underside of the hind wings is distinctive of this species. Females might be noticed placing their eggs on Lady's Smock, or Watercress which are both plants of damp places.

2. Woodlands

Silver-washed fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*)

This large and distinctive butterfly is visible near Stradbally Cove between mid-June and early September where it feeds on flowers in sunny spots. The caterpillars may be seen in April and May feeding on violets growing in dappled shade. Eggs are laid during the summer on a tree trunk. The caterpillar hatches after two weeks and immediately finds a safe place to hibernate. In spring it becomes active again and descends the tree to feed. By May it is fully grown so it spins a cocoon and within three weeks it hatches out as a butterfly.



Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Photo: Jamie Mac Arthur

This small bird of prey may be seen or heard about woodlands at Stradbally Cove or Ballyvooney or flying along hedgerows. It nests in trees and often flies low along hedgerows trying to surprise small birds on which it preys. Males are slate-grey on top with red stripes on the breast and belly. The female has more grey with brown-grey stripes on the underside. It is fairly common and widespread across Ireland.

4. Stone walls and gardens

Southern polypody (*Polypodium cambricum*)

This fern is not common over much of Ireland and is mainly found in the south. It likes limestone and as the soils in Co. Waterford are generally acidic it is only found growing on mortared stone walls. Around Stradbally it can be seen in Church Lane. In summer it looks dead as it turns brown and dies back but new leaves are produced in the Autumn and look fresh and green through the winter.



Moss carder bumblebee (*Bombus muscorum*)

The moss carder bumblebee is a severely declining species in Europe due to loss of hay meadows. It can be seen visiting flowers from March to September in Stradbally's gardens. This bumblebee is entirely pale ginger-brown. It can be confused with the common carder bumblebee but this has grey and black hairs on its body which the moss carder bee does not.

6. Marine

Bottlenose dolphins, porpoise and fin whales

These mammals are surprisingly common offshore from Stradbally. Fin whales pass early in the year and their blows can be clearly seen in good weather conditions. They are huge torpedo-shaped animals almost as big as the Blue whale. Porpoise and bottlenose dolphins can be seen at most times of the year but you have to be lucky and keep looking out to sea.



Green shore crab (*Carcinus maenas*)

Turn some stones in rockpools on the shore at Ballyvooney and its likely you'll find several of these. It is a very common and variable species with some pure green and others mottled in appearance. Adults can be 9cm across but there are usually lots of smaller ones.

Please

Help conserve the wildlife and habitats of Stradbally for you and others to enjoy

Take litter away with you

Leave wildflowers for others to enjoy

Encourage wildlife in your garden by planting native trees and shrubs, providing shelter for birds and insects

Avoid using herbicides and pesticides

Leave a pile of logs, twigs or leaf litter for insects to hide in

