

WILDLIFE REHABILITATION IRELAND
Annual Report



For the period ended 31st
December 2023



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Company Information

DIRECTORS

Michael Gunn
Sharon Murphy (Resigned 22nd June 2023)
David Duffy
Aoife Corcoran
Aidan Lynch
Emma Higgs
Sean Conlon
Ciaran Brennan (Resigned 23rd July 2023)
Ciaran Fitzgibbon (Resigned 23rd May 2023)
Karen Mahon (Appointed 21st July 2023)
Mark Muir (Appointed 24th November 2023)

COMPANY NUMBER

555237

CHARITY NUMBER


20991

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER

20142551

REGISTERED OFFICE

10 High Meadows,
Duleek,
Co Meath, Ireland
Tel: +353 (0)41 9880663

A red squirrel is perched on a tree branch covered in moss. The squirrel is looking towards the left of the frame. The background is a soft-focus forest scene.

Director's Report

Dear Staff, Volunteers and Supporters,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the Annual Report for the year 2023. As we reflect on the past year's achievements, challenges, and milestones, we recognise the resilience and dedication of our entire organisation in navigating through a complex and ever-changing landscape.

WRI had another exciting and productive year in 2023. Referring again to our aims, mission and strategy, and the changing world and wildlife welfare/biodiversity situation we're in, we set to work on the activities described in this year's report.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our volunteers for their unwavering support, dedication, and trust. Our achievements would not have been possible without their commitment and contributions. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the rest of our board and to our supporters for their loyalty and partnership.

Looking ahead, we remain optimistic about the future. While we anticipate ongoing challenges and uncertainties, we are confident in our ability to adapt and thrive. Together, we have built a strong organisation, and I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.



Mission

Our mission is to promote and advance wildlife rehabilitation, welfare and protection

Vision

We envision a world where people recognise both the intrinsic value of wildlife and that protecting biodiversity is fundamental to life on earth

Aims & Objectives

- Provide educational and training opportunities
- Rehabilitate injured and orphaned wildlife
- Establish a Wildlife Rehabilitation & Teaching Hospital
- Facilitate wildlife monitoring and research
- Offer assistance to wildlife rehabilitators
- Identify and reduce threats to wildlife



WRI Activities 2023

Wildlife Hospital

Education, Awareness Raising & Outreach
Schools & Universities
Conferences & Courses

Awareness Raising - Biodiversity

Community Outreach

Strategic partners, alliances, bodies, stakeholders etc

Wildlife Crime Prevention

WRI Communications -
Websites
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WRI Governance
WRI Personnel – Directors, Staff & Volunteers

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WRI Grants to Rehabilitators

Acknowledgements to funders and supporters

Wildlife Hospital

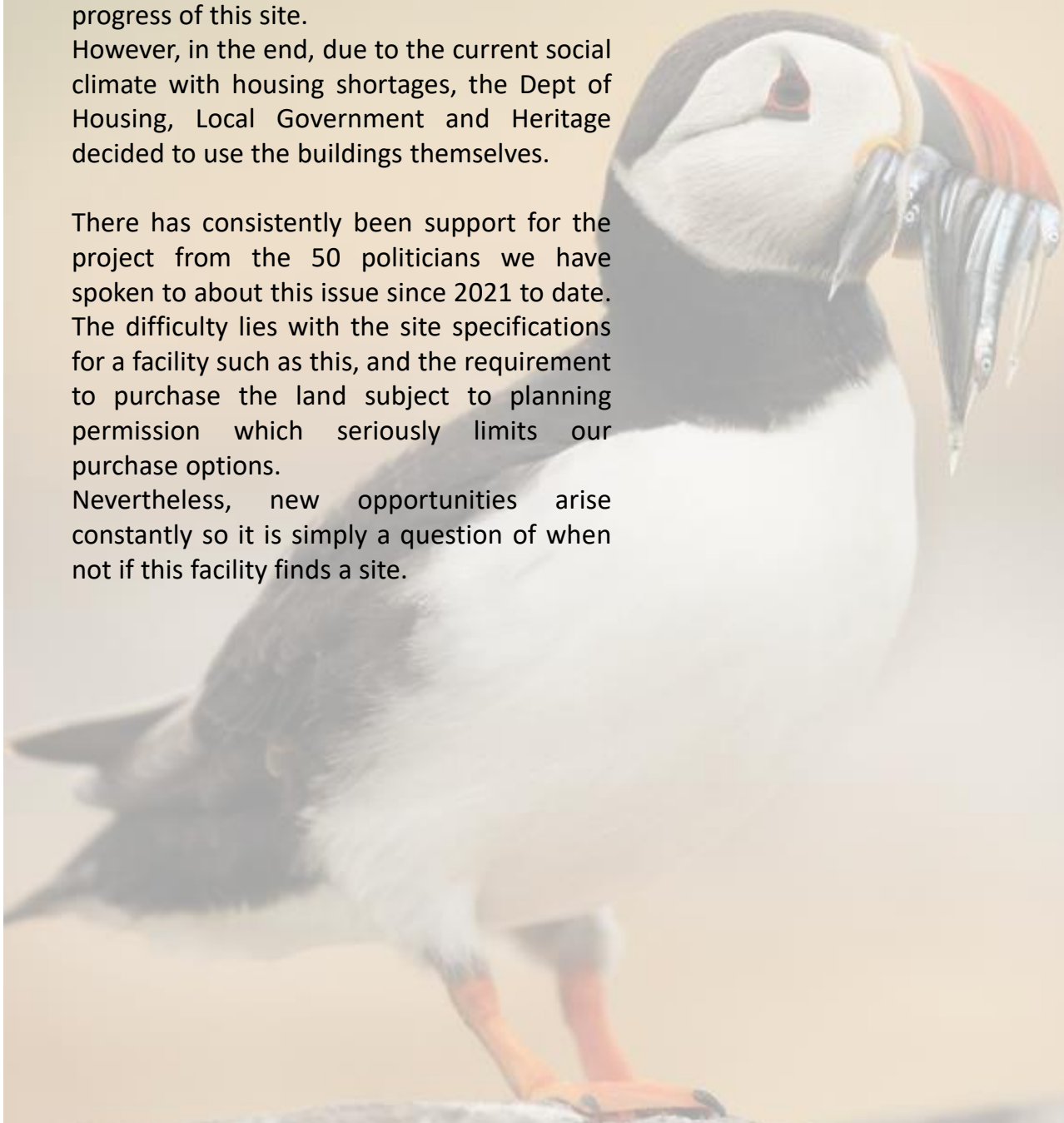
Jan – Dec 2023 Wildlife Hospital: Throughout 2023 much work and c.15 meetings/ site visits were held to try and secure a permanent site for our Wildlife Rehabilitation and teaching Hospital.

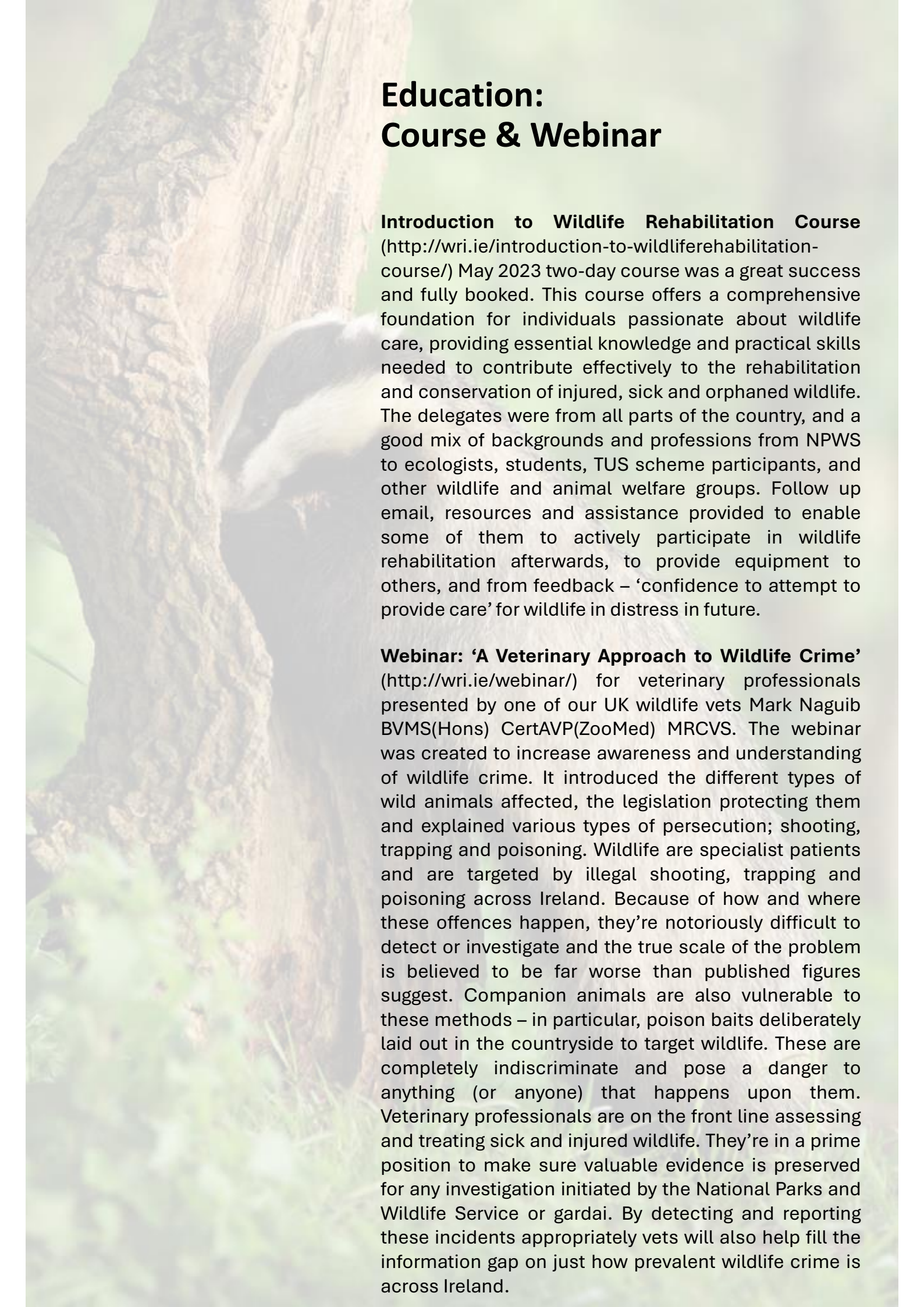
Much of the year was spent in negotiations with the Department of Health about a vacant human Hospital in Co. Dublin. Surveys of the buildings were done and meetings held with all relevant parties to further the progress of this site.

However, in the end, due to the current social climate with housing shortages, the Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage decided to use the buildings themselves.

There has consistently been support for the project from the 50 politicians we have spoken to about this issue since 2021 to date. The difficulty lies with the site specifications for a facility such as this, and the requirement to purchase the land subject to planning permission which seriously limits our purchase options.

Nevertheless, new opportunities arise constantly so it is simply a question of when not if this facility finds a site.





Education: Course & Webinar

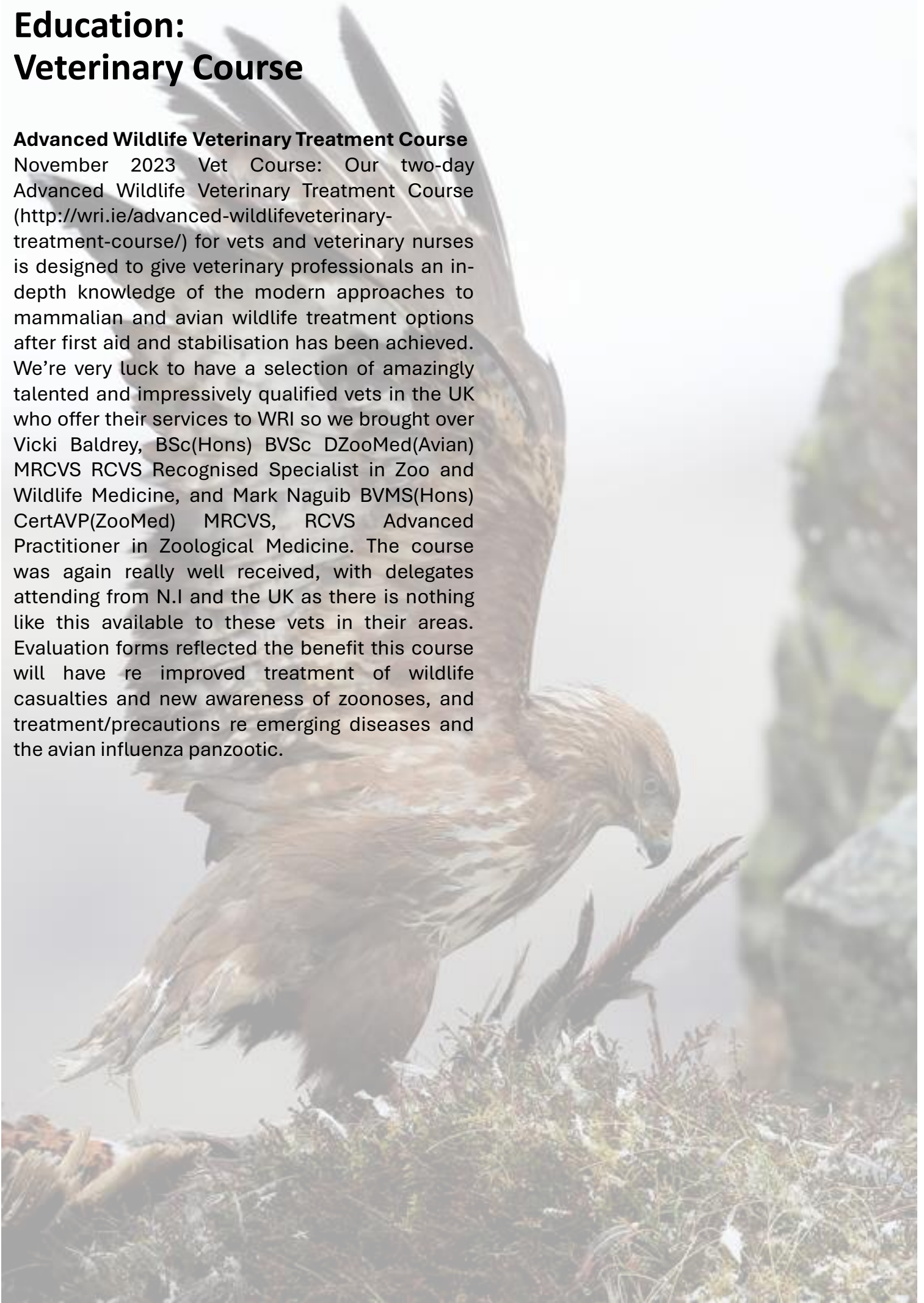
Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation Course (<http://wri.ie/introduction-to-wildliferehabilitation-course/>) May 2023 two-day course was a great success and fully booked. This course offers a comprehensive foundation for individuals passionate about wildlife care, providing essential knowledge and practical skills needed to contribute effectively to the rehabilitation and conservation of injured, sick and orphaned wildlife. The delegates were from all parts of the country, and a good mix of backgrounds and professions from NPWS to ecologists, students, TUS scheme participants, and other wildlife and animal welfare groups. Follow up email, resources and assistance provided to enable some of them to actively participate in wildlife rehabilitation afterwards, to provide equipment to others, and from feedback – ‘confidence to attempt to provide care’ for wildlife in distress in future.

Webinar: ‘A Veterinary Approach to Wildlife Crime’ (<http://wri.ie/webinar/>) for veterinary professionals presented by one of our UK wildlife vets Mark Naguib BVMS(Hons) CertAVP(ZooMed) MRCVS. The webinar was created to increase awareness and understanding of wildlife crime. It introduced the different types of wild animals affected, the legislation protecting them and explained various types of persecution; shooting, trapping and poisoning. Wildlife are specialist patients and are targeted by illegal shooting, trapping and poisoning across Ireland. Because of how and where these offences happen, they’re notoriously difficult to detect or investigate and the true scale of the problem is believed to be far worse than published figures suggest. Companion animals are also vulnerable to these methods – in particular, poison baits deliberately laid out in the countryside to target wildlife. These are completely indiscriminate and pose a danger to anything (or anyone) that happens upon them. Veterinary professionals are on the front line assessing and treating sick and injured wildlife. They’re in a prime position to make sure valuable evidence is preserved for any investigation initiated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service or gardai. By detecting and reporting these incidents appropriately vets will also help fill the information gap on just how prevalent wildlife crime is across Ireland.

Education: Veterinary Course

Advanced Wildlife Veterinary Treatment Course

November 2023 Vet Course: Our two-day Advanced Wildlife Veterinary Treatment Course (<http://wri.ie/advanced-wildlifeveterinary-treatment-course/>) for vets and veterinary nurses is designed to give veterinary professionals an in-depth knowledge of the modern approaches to mammalian and avian wildlife treatment options after first aid and stabilisation has been achieved. We're very lucky to have a selection of amazingly talented and impressively qualified vets in the UK who offer their services to WRI so we brought over Vicki Baldrey, BSc(Hons) BVSc DZooMed(Avian) MRCVS RCVS Recognised Specialist in Zoo and Wildlife Medicine, and Mark Naguib BVMS(Hons) CertAVP(ZooMed) MRCVS, RCVS Advanced Practitioner in Zoological Medicine. The course was again really well received, with delegates attending from N.I and the UK as there is nothing like this available to these vets in their areas. Evaluation forms reflected the benefit this course will have re improved treatment of wildlife casualties and new awareness of zoonoses, and treatment/precautions re emerging diseases and the avian influenza panzootic.



Education: Webinar

Webinar: 'PAWS for Wildlife'

Damien Hannigan of the Irish Deer Commission joined us to host a webinar (<http://wri.ie/webinar/>) for the general public called 'PAWS for Wildlife', created to increase awareness and understanding of wildlife crime. This webinar was created to increase awareness and understanding of wildlife crime. It introduced the different types of wild animals affected, the legislation protecting them and examples of wildlife crimes. It also offered guidance on the agencies to approach if you're suspicious of wildlife crime and a free download to keep and use in the event that you come across a suspicious incident. Because of how and where these offences happen, they're notoriously difficult to detect or investigate and the true scale of the problem is believed to be far worse than published figures suggest. Companion animals are also vulnerable to these methods – in particular, poison baits deliberately laid out in the countryside to target wildlife. These are completely indiscriminate and pose a danger to anything (or anyone) that happens upon them.



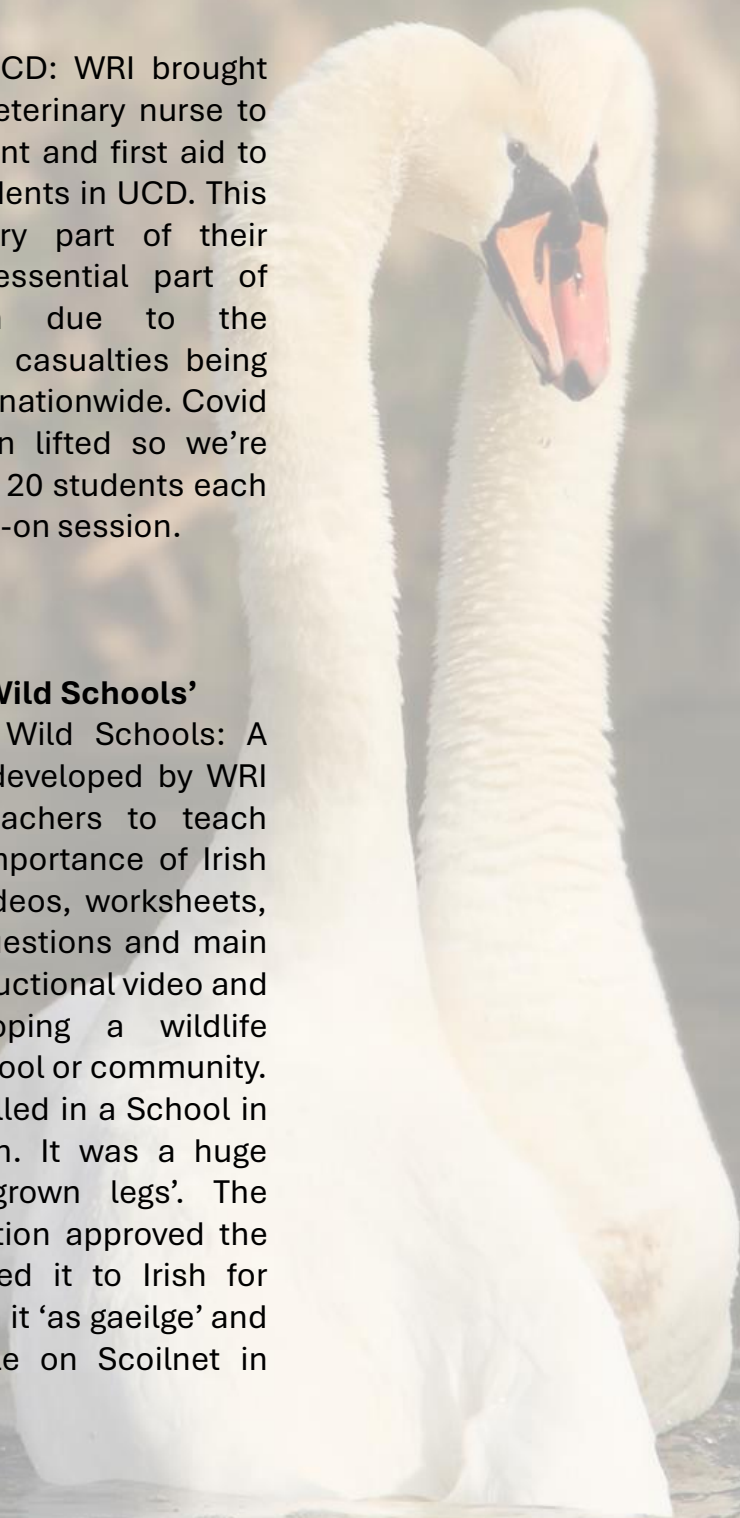
Education: University & Schools

University College Dublin – Wildlife Teaching

Veterinary Teaching UCD: WRI brought over our UK wildlife veterinary nurse to teach Wildlife treatment and first aid to veterinary nursing students in UCD. This is now a compulsory part of their curriculum and an essential part of veterinary education due to the inevitability of wildlife casualties being brought into practices nationwide. Covid restrictions have been lifted so we're back to two classes of 20 students each day as it's a very hands-on session.

Teaching Materials: 'Wild Schools'

Education Resource: Wild Schools: A nationwide resource developed by WRI in 2023 to allow teachers to teach students about the importance of Irish wildlife. It includes videos, worksheets, debate topics, quiz questions and main project aims with instructional video and workbook of developing a wildlife friendly area in the school or community. This resource was trialled in a School in Bettystown, Co Meath. It was a huge success and has 'grown legs'. The Department of Education approved the material and translated it to Irish for those wanting to teach it 'as gaeilge' and it was made available on Scoilnet in early 2024.



Education: Conference

Wildlife Crime & Conservation Conference

September 2023 Conference: By far our biggest event of 2023 was our Wildlife Crime & Conservation Conference

(<http://wri.ie/conferences/wildlife-crime-conservation-conference-2023/>) we hosted in partnership with PAW Ireland and the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (USPCA). It was held in the Glenview Hotel, Glen of the Downs, Wicklow. Saturday's theme was Wildlife Crime: Justice for Nature, Sunday's theme was Conservation: How to Nurture Nature. We also worked with Oxfam Ireland during the preparation of the programme as we had overlapping themes of government accountability both for protecting nature and reaching climate targets. This event was very well received and brought together experts, agencies and the public to discuss and learn about the threats to wildlife in Ireland. It presented a valuable networking opportunity for all sectors with an interest in tackling wildlife crime or working towards the conservation of Ireland's heritage. It offered an action-packed weekend with presentations and discussions on how we can collaborate to protect Ireland's wildlife. In advance of the Conference, WRI met with both AGS and the NPWS to discuss topics that would be raised and give them the opportunity to prepare in advance for potential questions. Following the Conference, in 2024, PAW Ireland has reached out to both AGS and NPWS and have been given an update on substantial progress re efforts to prioritise wildlife crime prevention that have been made by these two agencies cooperatively since the event.



A close-up photograph of a brown bat with large, prominent ears and wings, resting on a white, textured surface. The bat's body is covered in fine, brown fur, and its wings are dark and folded. The background is a plain, light gray.

Awareness Raising: Biodiversity

Bat Walk

Excellent numbers arrived for our evening Bat walk with Bat Conservation Ireland along the Boyne in Rossnaree, Co Meath. It provided the opportunity to walk at dusk with an experienced guide from Bat Conservation Ireland searching for elusive bats. Attendees young and old got to learn about the life cycle of these fascinating creatures and to see and hear some local bats



Awareness Raising: Community Outreach

Public Talk: 'Go Wild'

A good crowd of adults and teenagers joined us for a fun and interactive presentation about native Irish wildlife in Bellewstown community centre in Duleek in April titled '**Go Wild**'. With the aid of video footage and "wild" educational props, attendees were given an insiders view of the workings of a wildlife hospital, as well as information on how you can help your local wildlife.

Red Kite Spectacle & Talk

As part of our Wildlife Crime & Conservation weekend, and in collaboration with the Golden Eagle Trust, we were delighted to invite people to a 'Red Kite Spectacle' - offering the opportunity to view the magnificent spectacle of c. 70 Red Kites returning to roost in the forest in Avoca. Belonging to the Hawk family, these birds with their angled wings, forked tail and reddish brown plumage are impressive birds with a wingspan of up to 2m. They were reintroduced to Ireland in 2007 after a 200 year absence. Marc Ruddock of the Golden Eagle Trust was there to talk about these amazing birds, the persecution they endure, and their reintroduction and current status in Ireland.



Partners & Stakeholders

Dunsany Nature Reserve & Irish Trees

April 2023 Tree Planting: Baron Randal Plunkett is the founder of Dunsany Nature Reserve which is Ireland's largest privately owned protected nature reserve of 1,700 acres, and at present Ireland's only recognized large scale rewilding project. WRI developed a very positive partnership with Randal in 2021 resulting in some fantastic enclosures being constructed on his land to help with the rehabilitation of wildlife that came through WRI's hands; otters, foxes, hedgehogs and raptors. In 2023 WRI in partnership with Irish Trees Limited took part in a tree planting event in Dunsany and together we planted whitethorn and blackthorn trees bolstering an ancient "thorn wood" at Dunsany Castle nature reserve. Prickly business but a very successful and enjoyable day making a difference together. (<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7052610302177075200/>) These trees will be maintained until they develop beyond saplings so they can compete against grasses and survive the foraging efforts of deer. Irish Trees partnered with Dunsany Nature Reserve to help rewild the grounds of Dunsany Castle. The 1,700 acre estate is dedicated for planting Irish native trees. This is where the tree is planted and this is where it will stay.

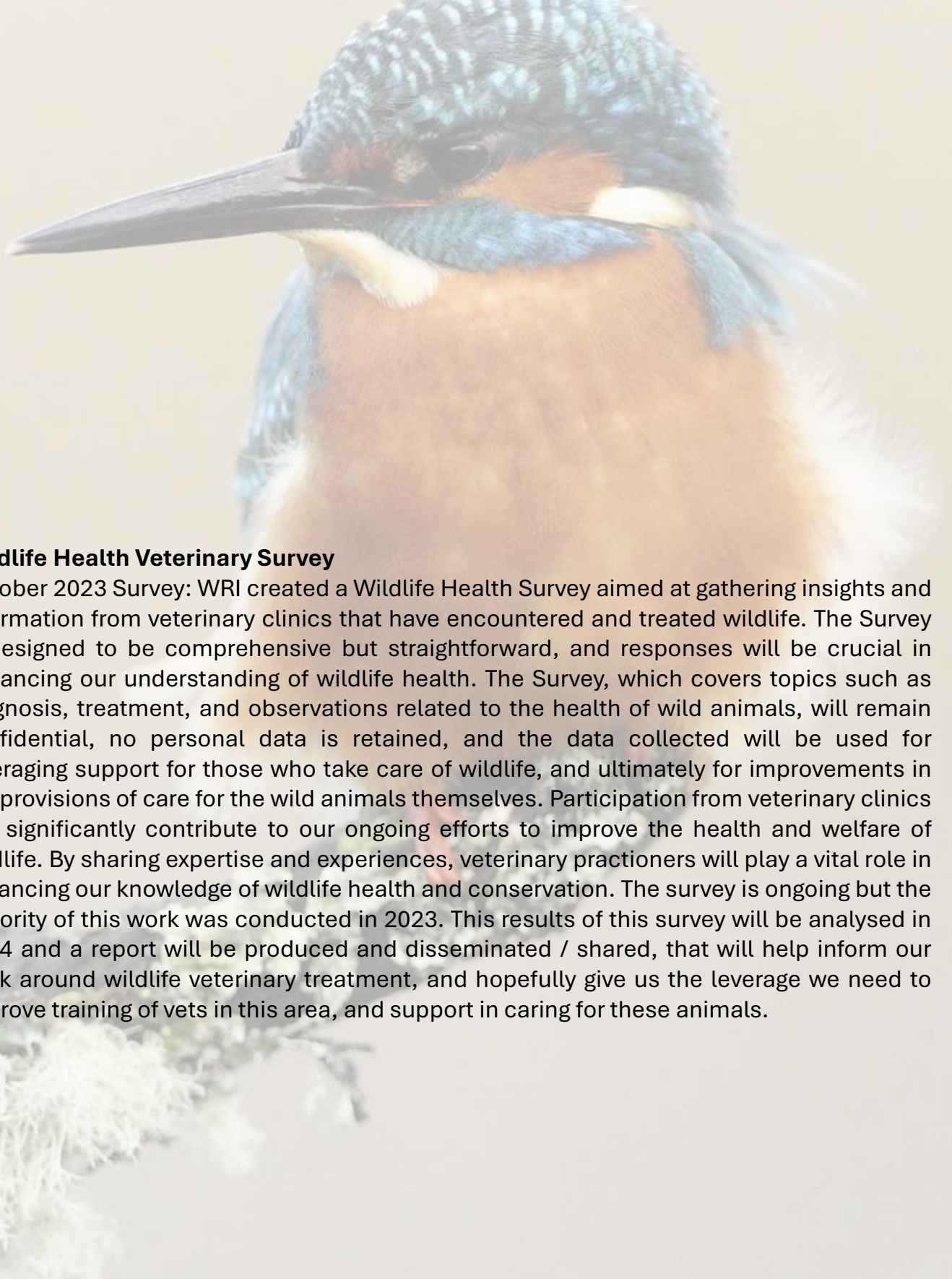
Partners & Stakeholders

Rewilding Estate

WRI were approached by a large estate in Co Meath offering a possible rewilding/release site for wildlife. This started a relationship with the occupiers who are now participating in biodiversity monitoring on their land, attending and participating in our wildlife outreach events & courses, and volunteering with our educational team!

Wildlife Health Veterinary Survey

October 2023 Survey: WRI created a Wildlife Health Survey aimed at gathering insights and information from veterinary clinics that have encountered and treated wildlife. The Survey is designed to be comprehensive but straightforward, and responses will be crucial in enhancing our understanding of wildlife health. The Survey, which covers topics such as diagnosis, treatment, and observations related to the health of wild animals, will remain confidential, no personal data is retained, and the data collected will be used for leveraging support for those who take care of wildlife, and ultimately for improvements in the provisions of care for the wild animals themselves. Participation from veterinary clinics will significantly contribute to our ongoing efforts to improve the health and welfare of wildlife. By sharing expertise and experiences, veterinary practitioners will play a vital role in advancing our knowledge of wildlife health and conservation. The survey is ongoing but the majority of this work was conducted in 2023. This results of this survey will be analysed in 2024 and a report will be produced and disseminated / shared, that will help inform our work around wildlife veterinary treatment, and hopefully give us the leverage we need to improve training of vets in this area, and support in caring for these animals.



Wildlife Crime Prevention



PAW Ireland

(<https://wildlifecrime.ie/paw/>)

meetings focus on wildlife crime and its prevention and reporting. We are one of the founding members of this group and actively progressing initiatives within the Education & Publicity Subgroup.

Our October PAW Ireland meeting focused on how to progress promises and issues raised at the Wildlife Crime & Conservation Conference in Sept.

Launch of USPCA's Badger Baiting Report

WRI was invited to attend the launch of the USPCA's shocking report on the scale of the barbaric activity of badger baiting

(<https://www.uspca.co.uk/uspca-launches-badger-baiting-report>). Held in Stormont, Belfast, hosted by the USPCA, with attendees from a wide range of stakeholders inc. wildlife groups, PSNI, UK Wildlife Crime Unit, and politicians. Consequence: networking with USPCA Investigations lead and inviting him to present on this subject at our Conference in September.

WRI Communications: Websites

Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland

(www.wri.ie)

WRI's main website offers rehabilitation resources. It covers standardised wildlife casualty processes, volunteer forms for rehabilitation establishments, wildlife career options, publications and further education - all of which aim to facilitate individuals actively involved in rehabilitation and/or conservation.

Irish Wildlife Matters

(www.irishwildlifematters.ie)

WRI produced the wildlife first aid website 'Irish Wildlife Matters' (IWM) which was launched in May 2010. Its purpose is to address the lack of easily accessible information on Irish wildlife rescue and first aid. IWM provides an easily accessible, online overview of the rescue methods, medical treatment, rehabilitation and release procedures for the most commonly seen species of Irish wildlife casualties.

Wildlife Crime Ireland

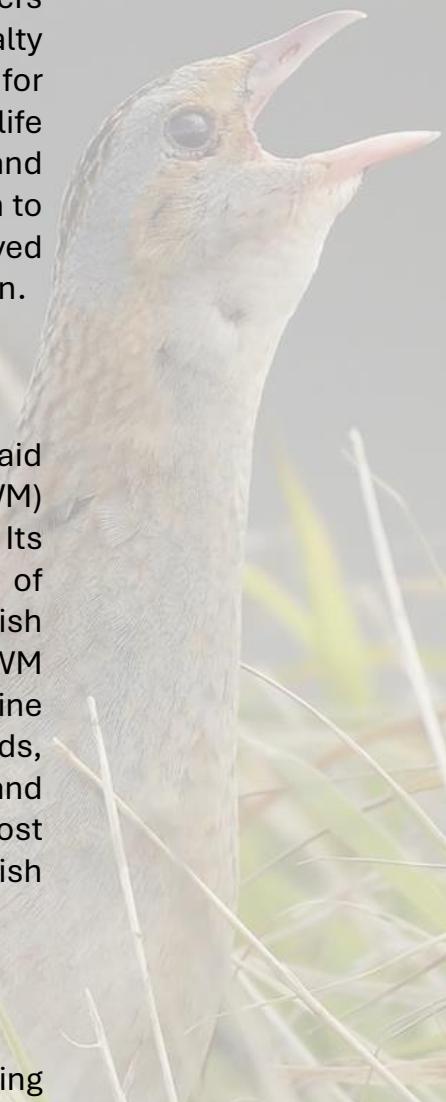
(www.wildlifecrime.ie)

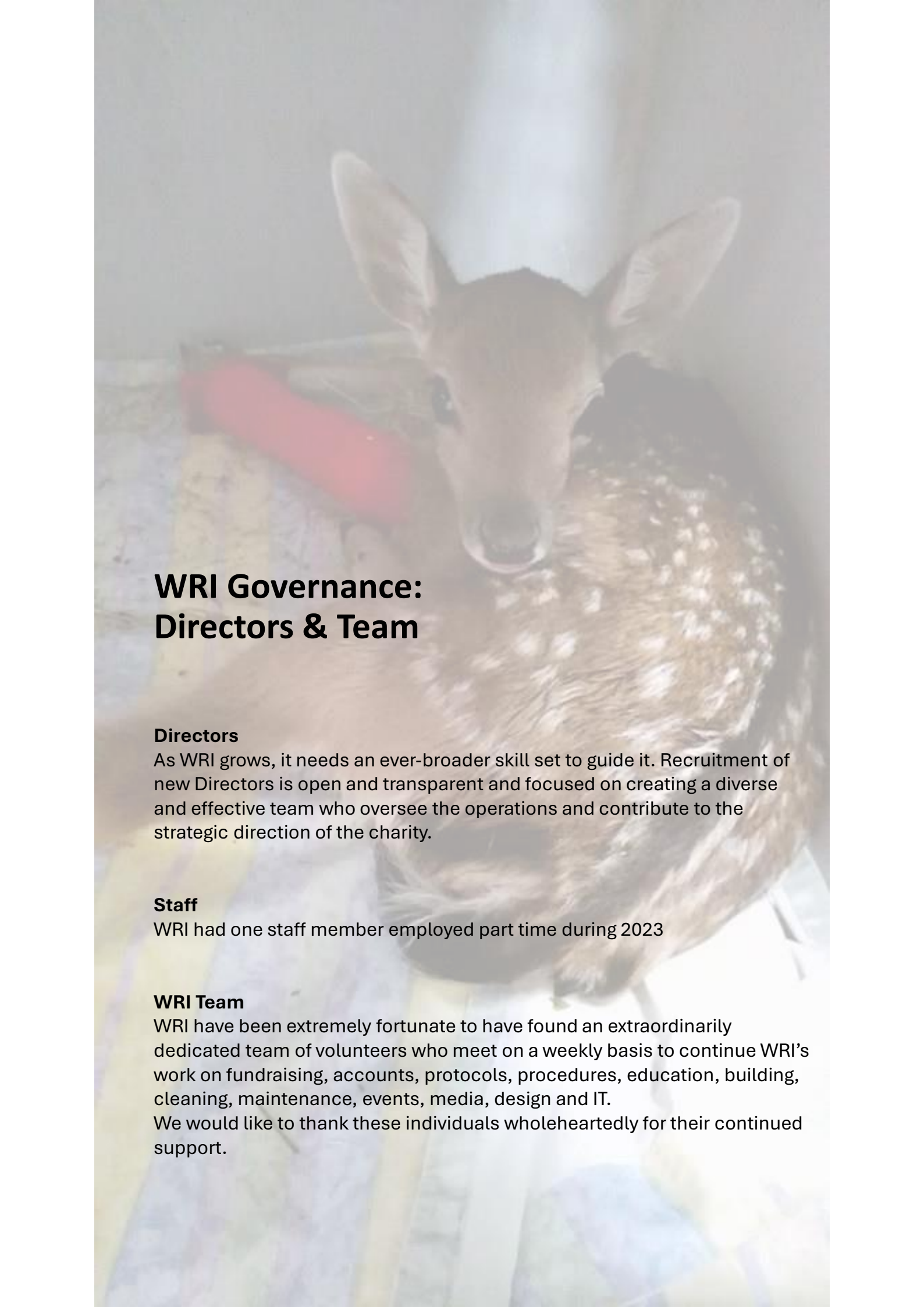
A comprehensive site offering guidance on identifying and reporting wildlife crimes in Ireland.

Wildlife Hospital

(www.wriwildlifehospital.ie)

This website illustrates the activities of the interim Wildlife Hospital WRI operated in Garlow Cross, Navan during 2021.





WRI Governance: Directors & Team

Directors

As WRI grows, it needs an ever-broader skill set to guide it. Recruitment of new Directors is open and transparent and focused on creating a diverse and effective team who oversee the operations and contribute to the strategic direction of the charity.

Staff

WRI had one staff member employed part time during 2023

WRI Team

WRI have been extremely fortunate to have found an extraordinarily dedicated team of volunteers who meet on a weekly basis to continue WRI's work on fundraising, accounts, protocols, procedures, education, building, cleaning, maintenance, events, media, design and IT.

We would like to thank these individuals wholeheartedly for their continued support.

WRI Financial Statements

Coming Soon..





WRI Grants Given

Given by WRI

WRI offers grants of up to €1000 to rehabilitators to further their wildlife rescue & rehabilitation efforts.

In 2023 WRI provided:

- A substantial number of grants to Wildlife Conference delegates
- Consumables to rehabilitators in Kildare and Mayo
- Donation of a pine marten box to encourage breeding in a rewilding site



Acknowledgements

Grants Received

WRI would like to thank all the generous individuals who donated their time and or money during the year. WRI relies on donations and grants to carry out the work we do, so your support is very gratefully received.

We would especially like to thank the following:

Irish Environmental Network (IEN), dispersed from the Department of the Environment, Community and Communications Core Funding, Amount €42,800 | IEN Digitalisation Fund, Amount €1,719 | IEN Biodiversity Week Funding, Amount €200 | IEN Funding, Amount €450 | IEN Policy submission, Amount €323

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Discretionary Funding towards the Wildlife Crime & Conservation Conference, Amount €2,000

Heritage Council, Amount €1,018

Meath County Council, Amount €1,000