

# WILDLIFE REHABILITATION IRELAND

## Annual Report

For the period ended  
31st December 2024



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Mission Statement



WRI activities



Acknowledgements  
to funders

# Company Information



## **DIRECTORS 2024**

Aidan Lynch (Chairperson)  
Mark Muir (Treasurer)  
Cormac O'Connor (Company Secretary)  
Michael Gunn  
David Duffy  
Aoife Corcoran  
Emma Higgs  
Sean Conlon  
Karen Mahon

## **COMPANY NUMBER**

555237

## **CHARITY NUMBER**

20991

## **REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER**

20142551

## **REGISTERED OFFICE**

10 High Meadows,  
Duleek,  
Co Meath, Ireland  
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# Director's Report



Dear Staff, Volunteers, and Supporters,

It is a privilege to present Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland's Annual Report for 2024. As we review the past year's activities, achievements, and challenges, we are reminded of the determination, adaptability, and commitment shown across our entire organisation in a constantly evolving environment.

Throughout 2024, WRI remained firmly guided by our aims, mission, and strategic vision, responding to the growing challenges facing wildlife welfare and biodiversity.

As you will read in this report, we continued to expand our activities across education, advocacy, community engagement, and wildlife protection.

I would like to sincerely thank our incredible volunteers, whose energy and dedication remain the cornerstone of everything we accomplish. I am also deeply grateful to our board members and supporters, whose trust, loyalty, and encouragement sustain our efforts year after year.

Looking to the future, we acknowledge that uncertainties and new challenges will persist, but we remain ambitious and positive. Together, we have built a resilient and passionate organisation, and we look forward to the opportunities that 2025 and beyond will bring.

Emma





## WRI's 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



Wildlife  
Rehabilitation  
Ireland



Wild Schools  
Wildlife Education for All



Wild Watch  
Wildlife Conservation & Education

Hello,

We are W.R.I

Wildlife  
Rehabilitation  
Ireland



## About Us

WRI believes that welfare and conservation are of limited long term benefit without education. For that reason WRI has created and delivers courses and conferences in wildlife rehabilitation, conservation, and crime for veterinary professionals, students and the general public.

## What Else?

Ireland is one of the few places in Europe that doesn't have a wildlife hospital. WRI is striving to change that by collaborating with others to build a dedicated Wildlife Rehabilitation & Teaching Hospital, thus developing individuals' respect for wildlife as well as providing future employment opportunities.

For more information  
[www.wri.ie](http://www.wri.ie)



**Why not go**



**for Wildlife with WRI!**



Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland

## **WRI Activities 2024**

- Key Pillars of Our Work
- Making a Measurable Difference
- Education: Courses & Conference
- University & Wild Schools
- Community Outreach
- Awareness Raising: Events & Activities
- Wildlife Hospital
- Strategic Collaborations & Community Stakeholders
- Wildlife Crime
- Communications
- Who We Are

# Key Pillars of Our Work

## Raising Awareness & Inspiring Action

WRI plays a central role in increasing public understanding of Ireland's wildlife, habitats, and the threats they face - from habitat loss to illegal persecution.

Throughout, not only 2024, but beyond, our educational programmes and outreach efforts empower communities to recognise and report wildlife crime and sick or injured wildlife.

With these efforts we promote an ethic of respect, responsibility, and guardianship as well as challenge outdated or harmful narratives around certain species (e.g. badgers, corvids, foxes, or raptors).

Throughout the year we worked with communities and stakeholders to foster a sense of shared ownership of Ireland's biodiversity, encouraging both rural and urban communities to protect it.

We have raised visibility with campaigns and media engagement for underrepresented species and issues (e.g. badger baiting, poisoning, habitat destruction).



## Cross-Sector Collaboration

In 2024 we brought together veterinary practitioners, ecologists, law enforcement, NGOs, academics, and the public sector, by co-hosting the Wildlife Crime Conference to strengthen collaboration and encourage strategic thinking.

We were proud to be able to facilitate conversations that will hopefully lead to improved enforcement of wildlife legislation, and greater cooperation between enforcement agencies.

## Building Capacity through Training and Resources

Through webinars, workshops, and resources, in 2024 WRI equipped professionals and the public with the tools to treat wildlife safely and professionally.

We delivered CPD-accredited training for veterinary and ecological professionals, shared guides and toolkits to support best practices in wildlife handling, reporting, and advocacy and developed educational modules that contribute to long-term capacity building in animal welfare and conservation.

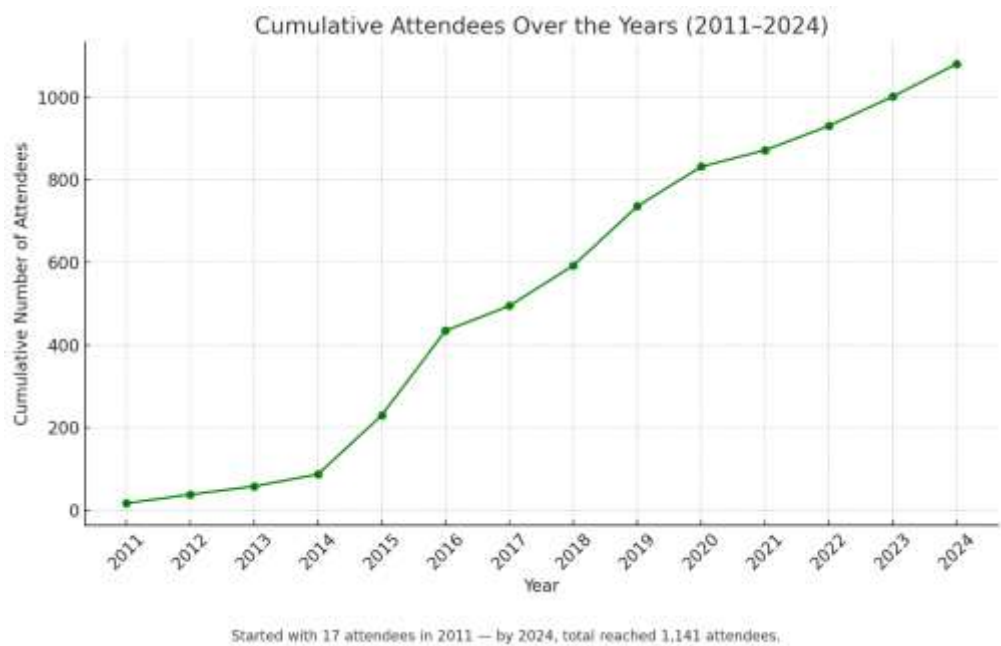




# Making a Measurable Difference

## A Track Record of Growing Engagement

Our events have grown from a modest gathering of 17 delegates in 2011 to a nationally recognised platform welcoming over 1,100 participants by 2024, including attendees from the UK and mainland Europe. This growth reflects not only increased demand for cross-sector collaboration in wildlife and environmental protection, but also the trust placed in us as a coordinating body. Our reach has expanded from local to international, helping shape professional practices and awareness across borders.



## Attendees of courses and Conference - Reach of WRI in 2024





## Education: Courses - Public

### Introduction to Wildlife Rehabilitation Course

In September 2024 Kieran Corry, WRI's Instructor for the two-day course, and vet from Corry & O'Hare Veterinary Clinic in Omagh, came to teach an extremely enthusiastic group of delegates in Bettystown, Co Meath.

The course was oversubscribed, a few of the delegates having been waiting since the pandemic for a place.

The 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 and other wildlife and animal welfare groups.

A follow up email, with resources and offers of assistance is provided to enable some of the delegates 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. (<http://wri.ie/introduction-to-wildliferehabilitation-course/>)







## Education: Courses - Veterinary

### Advanced Wildlife Veterinary Treatment Course

In 2024 WRI began a new collaboration with M1 Drogheda Chamber Skillnet. This proved extremely popular with the delegates as many were eligible for a 30% discount through Skillnet, making the course affordable to an even wider audience.

We were delighted to again bring over vets Vicki and Mark, to teach this two-day course which 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.

Vicki and Mark are wildlife and exotics specialists from the UK, with extensive experience and qualifications. 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 very well received, with delegates attending from nationwide. 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.

(<http://wri.ie/advanced-wildlifeveterinary-treatment-course/>)







# WILDLIFE CRIME CONFERENCE '24

17TH OCTOBER. JOHNSTOWN HOUSE. CO MEATH



## Education: Conference – Wildlife Crime 2024

### Wildlife Crime Conference 2024

In October 2024, WRI co-hosted our 6th Wildlife Crime Conference in partnership with PAW Ireland. Held in Enfield, Co. Meath, the event brought together over a dozen expert speakers and panelists from across Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK, showcasing the strength and necessity of cross-sector collaboration in tackling wildlife crime.

The morning sessions began with a keynote from Minister Malcolm Noonan, followed by insights from the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit, NPWS, An Garda Síochána, and Inland Fisheries Ireland. These sessions examined the roles of various enforcement bodies and partnerships in protecting wildlife.

An expert panel session offered delegates the opportunity to engage directly with key speakers. The Environmental Protection Agency and ISPCA also contributed to discussions on enforcement surveillance and complexities in prosecuting wildlife crime, followed by a fascinating presentation from the Revenue Commissioners on wildlife trade and trafficking.

The afternoon focused on prosecution and crime scene best practice. Judy Peters introduced the training initiatives and workshops provided by La Touche, followed by detailed input from the Department of Agriculture's Regional Veterinary Laboratory and case studies from the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

Outdoor practical sessions led by NPWS, DAFM and the NWCU explored the integrity and investigation of a badger baiting and a raptor poisoning mock crime scene. The day concluded with a full delegate and panel discussion on interagency collaboration, reinforcing the theme of integrated efforts to detect and prosecute wildlife crime effectively.

The programme was rich in expertise and designed to foster actionable outcomes for conservation and enforcement professionals alike. The event reinforced WRI's commitment to building capacity, raising awareness, and driving systemic change in wildlife protection across Ireland and beyond.

## Conference Programme

Thursday 17th October

Registration & Coffee

Opening Remarks

Chairperson introductions and welcome

*Joint Efforts of NWCU, PAW UK, and Key Stakeholders in Combating Wildlife Crime*

*Guardians of Nature – Strengthening Partnerships for Wildlife Protection*

*An Garda Síochána's Role Relative to Wildlife Crime*

*Interconnected Enforcement: Inland Fisheries Ireland's Role in Wildlife and Environmental Protection*

Expert Panel: Your Questions Answered

Coffee

*EPA's Role of Inspection Surveillance In Environmental Protection*

*Navigating Complexities in Animal Welfare and Wildlife Crime Cases*

*An Overview of PAW Ireland and Deer Crime Prevention*

*Unveiling the Underworld: intercepting wildlife trafficking to safeguard biodiversity*

Expert Panel: Your Questions Answered

Lunch

Overview of Afternoon Sessions and La Touche Training Initiatives Prosecution Case Studies

*Best Practice for Crime Scene Preservation*

Prosecution Case Studies in Wildlife Crime: Insights from the National Wildlife Crime Unit

Practical: Recognise, Record, and Protect – Preserving the Integrity of a Badger Baiting Crime Scene

Coffee

Practical: Recognise, Record, and Protect – Preserving the Integrity of a Raptor Poisoning Crime Scene

Discussion: 'Interagency Collaboration in Detecting and Prosecuting Wildlife Crimes'







## Education: University & 'Wild Schools'

### University College Dublin – Wildlife Module Delivery

For the ninth year, WRI was invited to deliver wildlife treatment and first aid training to 40 final-year veterinary nursing students at UCD.

We brought over UK wildlife veterinary nurse Aneesa Malik to lead the hands-on sessions, which were very well received.

Thanks to data from WRI's 2013 Wildlife Veterinary Health Survey, wildlife care is now a compulsory part of the curriculum, ensuring future nurses are prepared to treat wildlife casualties in practice.

#### Student Feedback:

*"I loved my time here, I learned so much valuable handline and nursing skills which I will 100% be using in my future career as a vet nurse"*

### Teaching Materials: 'Wild Schools'

This is a nationwide resource created by WRI's Education Officer and is available through Scoilnet. It facilitates teachers to deliver information to students about the importance of Irish wildlife.

The Wild Schools pack feature a range of engaging materials, including videos, worksheets, debate prompts, quiz questions, and clear project goals—alongside an instructional video and workbook guiding students in creating wildlife-friendly spaces in their school or community.

This resource has become a huge success. 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.







## Community Outreach: Schools

### Santa Sabina Secondary School Talk

In March 2024, WRI visited Santa Sabina Secondary School in Sutton, Dublin, to deliver a Wild Schools talk focused on Ireland's native wildlife and the importance of conservation. The session was part of our broader education and outreach initiative, aimed at fostering a deeper appreciation of local biodiversity among young people. We introduced students to a variety of native species through engaging stories, interactive discussion, and practical advice on how they could make their school and homes more wildlife-friendly.

A particular highlight was the opportunity to handle our taxidermy. They provided a rare chance to see Irish wildlife up close and sparked curiosity throughout the classroom. The response from students and teachers alike was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing a greater interest in wildlife and environmental issues.

### 'Fighting Words' Talks

WRI has partnered with Fighting Words, a creative writing organisation, to develop educational programmes that blend storytelling with wildlife conservation. Through this collaboration, students explore the lives of Irish wildlife such as badgers, bats, puffins and foxes.

These sessions aim to foster both creative expression and environmental awareness among young participants.

This partnership exemplifies WRI's commitment to interdisciplinary education, using narrative arts to deepen understanding of Ireland's native species and promote conservation efforts.





## Community Outreach: Library & Retirement Group

### Origami & Irish Wildlife: Crafting Awareness, One-fold at a Time

In November WRI delivered a wildlife talk and origami workshop at Duleek Library for school children from two schools from Stamullen, Co Meath. Following the talk the children had the opportunity to create wild animals using the ancient art of origami.

A taxidermy exhibition was on view at the library for the week, allowing the wider Duleek community to engage with and learn about Ireland's native fauna.

### East Meath Active Retirement Association Talk

In March, WRI were invited to give a talk to the very active EMARA of approx. 50 individuals who meet monthly in Julianstown. As hedgehogs are 'suddenly' seen in March, typically due to them coming out of hibernation around this time, the group asked for a talk on hedgehogs. Many of the attendees are keen gardeners and had been accustomed to using pesticides which, following the talk, they would no longer use, thanks to their new understanding of the risks posed to hedgehogs – more wild lives saved!







## Community Outreach: Wellness – Mind & Body

### World Wildlife Day Yoga & Sound Bath for Reconnection to Nature

In March WRI hosted a Yoga and Wellbeing event, offering participants an opportunity to reconnect with the natural world through mindfulness and movement -combining yoga with sound therapy.

The event was framed around themes of ecological awareness and our intrinsic connection to all living beings. By linking physical and mental wellbeing to environmental consciousness, the event offered a powerful reminder that healing ourselves and healing the planet go hand-in-hand.

Participants left feeling renewed and inspired to carry this sense of connection into their everyday choices, making World Wildlife Day not just a celebration, but a call to mindful stewardship of Ireland's wild places and creatures.

### Temple Street Children's Hospital Talk

In April, WRI delivered two wildlife talks at Children's Health Ireland in Temple Street. Using wildlife footage and taxidermy we introduced a young group of patients to some of Ireland's native animals in an interactive way. The children got to see wildlife they had never encountered which sparked curiosity with the natural world despite being in a clinical environment. We then met with an older group of children for a more in-depth discussion on Irish wildlife, focusing on species behaviour, habitats, and conservation. The session concluded with a lively quiz. These hospital visits highlight WRI's commitment to inclusive education and reaching audiences who may not have the opportunity to engage with wildlife in traditional settings.







## Awareness Raising: Festivals & Shows

### Royal Meath Show 2024 – Stall

On 1st September 2024, WRI joined forces with the Meath Environmental Network (MEN) to host a shared information stall at the Royal Meath Show in Trim. The event provided a valuable opportunity to engage with the public, share educational materials, and highlight the importance of protecting Ireland's wildlife and natural habitats. Visitors to the stall were invited to learn about wildlife, biodiversity, and how they could support local conservation efforts in their own communities.

### Samhain Festival of Food & Culture – Stall

The Samhain Festival of Food & Culture 2024 took place in Kells, Co Meath, from 7th to 10th November 2024. This festival celebrated Ireland's rich culinary and cultural heritage.

WRI attended this festival with an engaging stall representing WRI, Meath Environment Network (MEN), and PAW Ireland. The stall highlighted local biodiversity, featured interactive displays and informative materials, aiming to educate attendees on environmental stewardship and the importance of community involvement in ecological initiatives.

This participation was part of a broader effort by Meath County Council's Climate Action Section to promote sustainability during the festival. The council's involvement included activities such as food and heat waste reduction information, emphasizing the community's commitment to environmental awareness and action.





## Awareness Raising: Biodiversity – Workshop & Walk

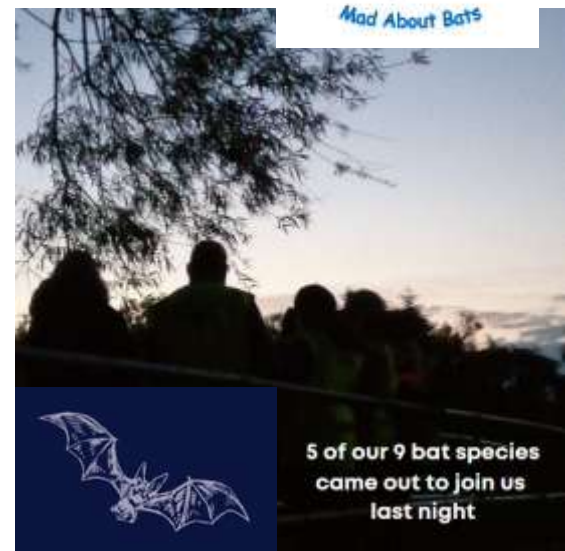
### Hedgehogs & Otters – Talk & Origami Workshop

To celebrate National Biodiversity Week, WRI hosted a family workshop at Sonairte Ecology Centre, Laytown, on the 25th May, focusing on two much-loved native species—the otter and the hedgehog. The event included a hands-on demonstration showing how to build a hedgehog house to encourage these charming creatures into your garden. Each attendee got to take home a colourful instruction manual. We were joined by Hugh McElveen who led an origami session, teaching participants how to create an otter using this traditional paper-folding art. The attendees were very engaged, with lots of questions and anecdotes.

### Bat Walk, Co-hosted with Kildare Bat Group

Excellent numbers arrived in June for our evening Bat walk led by Anna Collins from Kildare Bat Group along the Boyne river in Rossnaree, Co Meath. It provided the opportunity to walk at dusk with an experienced guide searching for these beautiful animals.

Attendees young and old got to learn about the life cycle of these fascinating creatures and, using specialised equipment, to see and hear some local bats including brown long eared, common soprano pipistrelle, daubentons and leister's.




Kildare Bat Group  
Mad About Bats



5 of our 9 bat species  
came out to join us  
last night





 **Over 90% of seabirds** worldwide have plastic in their Gastrointestinal Tract

## Awareness Raising: Biodiversity – A Rubbish Year!


### Team Up Clean Up:

This successful community initiative continued throughout 2024. WRI volunteers along with people from around Meath, Louth and Dublin meet once a month to clear rubbish from the Boyne River estuary and surrounding area.

Tackling marine litter in Ireland is essential not only for the protection of marine life and coastal ecosystems, but also for safeguarding public health, local economies, and biodiversity. Plastic and other debris is ingested by wildlife leading to injury or death, while toxins from waste contaminates the food chain.

### Convergent CSR Impact Day

In June we were delighted to welcome a large group of staff from Convergent for their volunteer impact day. This was a huge help to those of us doing the monthly clean and it was great to see the larger than normal 'haul' removed from the Estuary with this group. They also supplied refreshments afterwards giving us the opportunity to chat about future collaborations.

 A 2020 study found **microplastics in 73% of deep-water fish** sampled off the Irish coast



#### WHEN?

**Friday, 27th September, 2024  
at 10am**

#### WHERE?

**Meeting Point:**

**River Nanny Laytown Carpark**



**Convergent**  
TECHNOLOGIES



2024





## WRI Estuary Litter Picking Stats 2024:

Every month: for 2 hours, 4-8 volunteers, collected approx. 10 bags of rubbish (plus miscellaneous; sink, carpet, traffic cones, kids slide! etc)

**12 months** = 150 hours of voluntary labour, removing 120 bags of rubbish, plus miscellaneous items, weighing approx. **1 tonne!!**



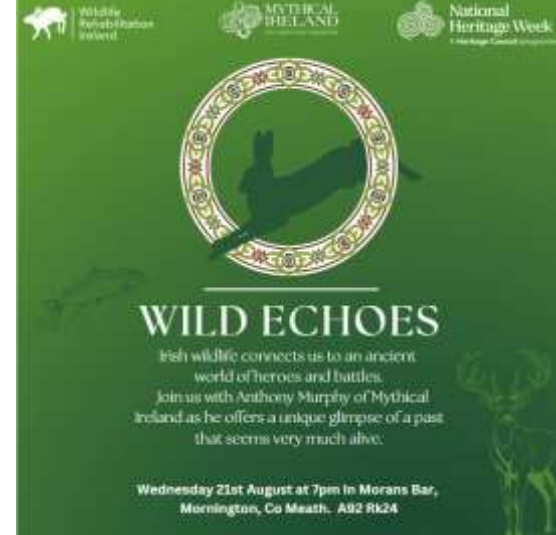
**8 MILLION TONNES OF PLASTICS  
LEAK INTO THE OCEAN EVERY YEAR**

**Equal to dumping one garbage truck  
into the ocean every minute**

**There are over 150 million tonnes  
of plastics in the oceans today**







## Awareness Raising: Heritage & Folklore

### Wild Echoes Talk

In August, during National Heritage Week, WRI and Anthony Murphy of Mythical Ireland co-hosted an event titled “Wild Echoes” at Moran’s of Mornington.

This relaxed “fireside” chat transported attendees back to the era of the Tuatha Dé Danann and other legendary figures in Irish folklore. The discussion highlighted how ancient Irish communities revered and sometimes feared wildlife, emphasizing the deep connections between people and animals in mythology and daily life.

The event aligned with the 2024 Heritage Week theme, “Connections, Routes and Networks,” by exploring the cultural and ecological networks that have shaped Ireland’s heritage.

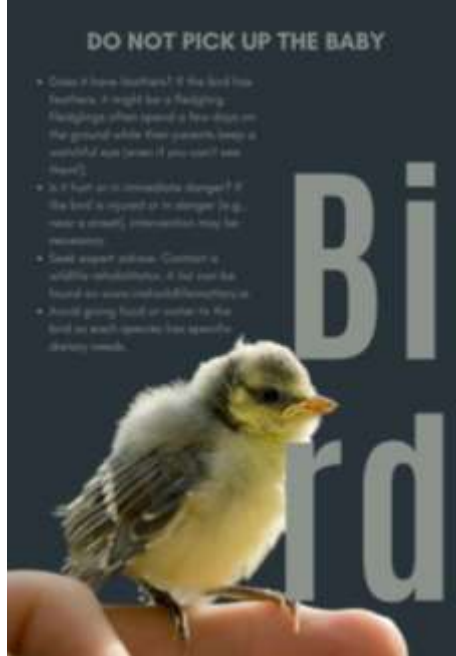
### Seal Stories Website Launch

In February WRI were kindly invited to the launch of the Seal Stories website in Dublin. It’s the product of a collaboration between the Irish Seal Sanctuary, the National Folklore Collection, UCD and the School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore, UCD.

The site enables the public to explore the locations of documented stories and accounts of seals, texts of the stories themselves, in both Irish and English, and information regarding the storytellers and collectors of the material. This resource serves as a valuable tool for those interested in Irish folklore, marine life, and cultural heritage.

(<https://www.ucd.ie/irishfolklore/en/sealstories/>)





## Awareness Raising: Protecting Wildlife

### Engaging the Public with Practical Wildlife Advice

WRI ran a social media campaign to raise public awareness around the damage cats do to wildlife, creating a poster for veterinary clinics to help spread the message.

We also designed a separate poster on fledglings, offering clear guidance on what to do if you find one, and encouraged members of the public to ask their local vet to display it prominently.

To support broader engagement, we've also developed a growing collection of leaflets and postcards, which we distribute at events.

These cover a range of topics including bird safety, wildlife-friendly gardening, species protection, and wildlife crime, helping to equip the public with accessible, practical information to better coexist with and protect native wildlife.







# Wildlife Hospital: Update

## Wildlife Teaching Hospital – 2024 Update

Throughout 2024, WRI continued to focus its efforts on advancing plans for the development of a permanent Wildlife Teaching Hospital at our Mornington site. We held meetings with a wide range of stakeholders to explore a new planning application for a location adjacent to our current facilities.

By December, we had assembled a dedicated project team of experts to begin preparing the application and held a pre-planning meeting with Meath County Council. In parallel, we received mentorship from the Local Enterprise Office to further develop the Hospital's business plan, and began exploring EU funding avenues to help realise this much-needed facility.

## 2024 Activities

Behind the scenes, our small but effective team held weekly meetings and worked tirelessly to deliver WRI's education and outreach activities described in this report. Their continued effort ensured the organisation stayed active and visible while laying the groundwork for the Hospital's development.

Our Site Maintenance Manager made excellent progress on portable infrastructure to support the future Hospital. He built duckling boxes, fox enclosure panels, and cage blocks from donated materials, and created hedgehog highway signs and nest boxes. His work has been vital in preparing adaptable resources for use at the new site.

Stunning wildlife photos below taken onsite by local photographer John Reynolds.





## Strategic Collaborations & Community Stakeholders

### Collaborative Conservation Efforts

At WRI, we continue to work closely with key government bodies, statutory agencies, and local communities to champion the welfare and rehabilitation of Ireland's wildlife.

Through collaborations with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, local authorities, and academic institutions we aim to help strengthen national efforts to protect wildlife through both proactive conservation measures and direct care for animals in need.

We are committed to supporting veterinary professionals, rehabilitators, and members of the public by providing accessible training, resources, and expert guidance.

By building partnerships and encouraging community involvement, we aim to create a more informed and capable network of people dedicated to safeguarding Ireland's wildlife and the habitats they depend on.



# Strategic Collaborations & Community Stakeholders



## Irish Environmental Network

WRI has been a proud member of the IEN and the Environmental Pillar since 2017. It is a coalition of environmental NGOs and through this membership, WRI is part of a collective voice advocating for stronger environmental policy and meaningful change.

In 2024, WRI participated in the IEN's annual gathering held in Cloughjordan, a valuable opportunity to connect with other environmental organisations. We are also deeply grateful to the IEN for the essential core funding provided, which enables us to continue delivering our work in wildlife protection, education, and advocacy.

## The Wheel

WRI is a long-standing member of Ireland's national association of community and voluntary organisations. The Wheel provides training, resources, and advocacy, helping organisations like WRI strengthen their governance, strategy, and impact. Since joining in 2016, WRI has regularly engaged with The Wheel's online training opportunities and webinars. In 2024 alone, we attended numerous Zoom sessions covering topics such as governance, communications, political advocacy, and digital tools, valuable learning that continues to inform and support our work.

## Scoilnet

Scoilnet is Ireland's official portal for teachers. It is managed by the Department of Education and provides trusted, curriculum-aligned resources to support teaching and learning in primary and post-primary schools across the country.

WRI's Wild Schools Resource is designed to educate students about various aspects of wildlife, including species information, habitats, human-wildlife conflict, and practical conservation through quizzes, audio-visual materials, and engaging projects. The Wild Schools resources are now available for download on [www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie)



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

Popular Resources  
scoilnet 2020



# Strategic Collaborations & Community Stakeholders



## **Meath Environmental Network**

WRI has been an active member of the Meath Public Participation Network – specifically the Meath Environmental Network (MEN) – since 2014, regularly attending meetings both in-person and online.

MEN is a dedicated community group focused on promoting environmental awareness and sustainability throughout County Meath. They meet monthly to address local ecological concerns, share resources, and plan grassroots initiatives aimed at protecting and restoring the natural environment.

In 2024, WRI was proud to collaborate with MEN at two major local events—the Royal Meath Show and the Samhain Festival of Food & Culture where we jointly hosted information stalls. These vibrant, well-attended gatherings provided an ideal platform to connect with the public, share educational materials, and amplify our shared message on the importance of environmental stewardship, community action, and wildlife protection.

## **International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council**

Internationally, WRI is a member of the IWRC, an organisation that provides education, training, and resources to support wildlife rehabilitation and conservation efforts around the globe. WRI's affiliation with the IWRC began in 2010, running IWRC Courses in Ireland before creating WRI's own wildlife Courses. In 2024, WRI participated in a number of IWRC-hosted webinars and virtual meetings, gaining valuable insights and connecting with professionals working to advance best practices in wildlife care worldwide.

## **Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature**

In 2024, WRI became a member of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN), a global network of organisations and individuals dedicated to advancing legal frameworks that recognise and uphold the inherent rights of nature. As part of this growing movement, WRI participated in GARN-hosted online discussions engaging with international peers to explore how rights-based approaches can strengthen wildlife protection and environmental justice in Ireland and beyond.



# Strategic Collaborations & Community Stakeholders

## Supporting Wildlife Rehabilitators

While WRI has been unable to reopen our doors to wildlife casualties, we remain actively involved in supporting rehabilitators across the country, many of whom continue to experience high volumes of calls for assistance. Our dedicated volunteers monitored WRI's inbox throughout the year, providing advice and referring cases where possible to ensure injured wildlife received appropriate care.

In addition to guidance, we offered direct support by supplying food and equipment to several rehabilitators when requested. We actively encourage rehabilitators to reach out for assistance, and many do so following participation in our wildlife training courses. These ongoing connections help strengthen the national network of wildlife carers and reflect WRI's continued commitment to supporting those on the front line of animal welfare.



## Supporting Veterinary Professionals

WRI continues to provide guidance to veterinary professionals across Ireland through email support and case-based advice. When queries fall outside our direct expertise, we are fortunate to be able to refer veterinary practitioners to our network of experienced UK wildlife vets who offer specialist input. This ensures that even complex or unfamiliar cases can benefit from expert support, improving outcomes for the wildlife patients involved.

We are especially grateful to our UK veterinary instructors, who not only bring exceptional skill and knowledge but also generously contribute their time to deliver training, respond to queries, and guide clinical decision-making. Their ongoing involvement allows us to strengthen veterinary capacity in wildlife care and support best practice across Ireland's veterinary community.



## Strategic Collaborations & Community Stakeholders



## Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime

WRI has been a member of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW Ireland) since its inception in 2020. PAW Ireland brings together statutory bodies, non-statutory organisations, and other stakeholders with a shared commitment to tackling wildlife crime through education, publicity, and collaborative action.

At WRI, we are deeply concerned about the growing number of wildlife crimes occurring across Ireland and are committed to playing an active role in reducing them. We believe that awareness raising is key, not only to inform the public, but also to increase the reporting of offences, which in turn can lead to investigations and, ideally, convictions that act as a meaningful deterrent.

Through our involvement in PAW Ireland, particularly within the Education and Publicity Subgroup, we continue to push for greater visibility of these issues and stronger protections for Ireland's wildlife.

# Wildlife Health Veterinary Survey

In October 2023, WRI launched a Wildlife Health Survey aimed at veterinary clinics that have encountered and treated wild animals. The survey gathered insights on diagnosis, treatment, and observations, with the goal of improving wildlife care and support for veterinary professionals.

The survey work and calls took place during 2023 and 2024, and the results will be analysed and shared in 2025. The findings will help inform our work in wildlife veterinary care and strengthen our case for improved training and resources for those treating wild animals.

[illegible]



# Strategic Collaborations & Community Stakeholders



## UCC Law and the Environment Conference 2024

In April WRI attended the 20th annual Law Conference, the event brought together researchers, legal practitioners, policymakers, and civil society organisations to explore current developments in environmental law, regulation, and policy. This year's theme, Rights, Remedies and Restoration in Environmental and Natural Resources Law, framed a series of insightful presentations on critical issues such as the new Nature Restoration Law and planning law. There was strong representation from our wider network, with WRI team members in attendance and familiar voices contributing to the event. Niamh Guiry, a speaker at WRI's 2023 Wildlife Crime Conference, featured on the programme, bringing valuable expertise to the discussion. Another speaker, solicitor and environmental planning specialist Kieran Cummins, also a member of the Meath Environmental Network, further highlighted the growing connections between legal, conservation, and community-based efforts to safeguard Ireland's natural environment.

## UK Wildlife Crime Enforcers' Conference

Following the cross-border collaboration theme explored at the WRI/PAW Ireland Wildlife Crime Conference in October, Kevin Kelly, head of the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) and a speaker at our event, invited PAW Ireland members to attend their UK Wildlife Crime Enforcers' Conference, held in Bedfordshire, supporting stronger international links. The event brought together almost 200 delegates from law enforcement, statutory agencies, and NGOs. PSNI officer and WRI conference speaker Emma Meredith received an Outstanding Service Commendation for her work.

As a member of PAW Ireland, WRI attended and met with colleagues to explore new opportunities for partnership. This follow-through reflects WRI's ongoing commitment to fostering cross-border and international cooperation to better protect Ireland's wildlife.



# Wildlife Crime – Persecution

## Wildlife Persecution

Wildlife persecution remains a serious and ongoing issue across Ireland, with protected species such as badgers, birds of prey, and hares, and vulnerable yet vital habitats continuing to suffer through illegal poisoning, trapping, shooting, and habitat destruction.

These acts not only threaten individual animals but also undermine broader conservation efforts and damage our shared natural heritage. Despite increased public awareness, many of these crimes still go unreported or undetected, making enforcement particularly challenging.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) continues to work tirelessly to investigate and respond to cases of wildlife crime, often under difficult circumstances.

Prosecutions remain hard to secure due to the remote nature of many offences, the need for strong evidence, and limited resources. However, their commitment has led to significant progress, including increased collaboration with An Garda Síochána and the offering of specialist training for staff.

WRI acknowledges and supports the crucial work of NPWS in protecting Ireland's most vulnerable species.





# Wildlife Crime – Collaboration

## Working Together to Combat Wildlife Crime

WRI continues to play an active role in wildlife crime prevention through our engagement with PAW Ireland (Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime), particularly within the Education & Publicity Subgroup.

These collaborative meetings focus on strengthening wildlife crime prevention, reporting mechanisms, and public awareness.

As a committed member, WRI has helped progress educational initiatives that support PAW's mission to raise awareness about wildlife crime across Ireland.

In 2024, we attended key wildlife crime meetings including one between PAW Ireland and the NPWS in May. This involved some of the same individuals that attended the meeting with the NPWS in Jan 2023 that WRI attended with other Environmental Pillar members

WRI also made a formal submission to NPWS during its September public consultation on reviewing and updating wildlife legislation.

WRI welcomes efforts by An Garda Síochána (AGS) and NPWS, who co-hosted a joint workshop at the Garda College in the summer, which is an encouraging sign of growing cross-agency collaboration.



# Wildlife Crime – Education

## Informing the Public and Empowering the Next Generation

This remained central to WRI's mission in 2024. We commissioned illustrator Aga Grandowicz to produce a new series of six species-specific wildlife crime awareness leaflets designed for the general public. These engaging and informative materials aim to help people recognise, understand, and report illegal activities involving native wildlife species.

In addition, a member of our team brought wildlife crime education to a new setting by delivering a mock crime scene workshop in a school, through her work with another sustainability-focused organisation.

Our largest educational initiative this year was co-hosting the Wildlife Crime Conference 2024, held in Johnstown House, Enfield.

The event brought together professionals from enforcement, animal welfare, law, and education to build stronger networks and knowledge around preventing wildlife crime in Ireland.

**Date:** Thursday 17th October 2024

**Location:** Johnstown House, Enfield, Co Meath

**Content:** Wildlife Crime Scene Investigation  
Mock Wildlife Crime Court Cases

**Speakers:** Irish wildlife and environmental crime enforcement agencies and organisations, UK National Wildlife Crime Unit and La Touche Training.





# Wildlife Crime – Awareness Raising

## Bringing Wildlife Crime into Public Focus

WRI ramped up its public outreach in 2024 to raise awareness of wildlife crime and how to report it.

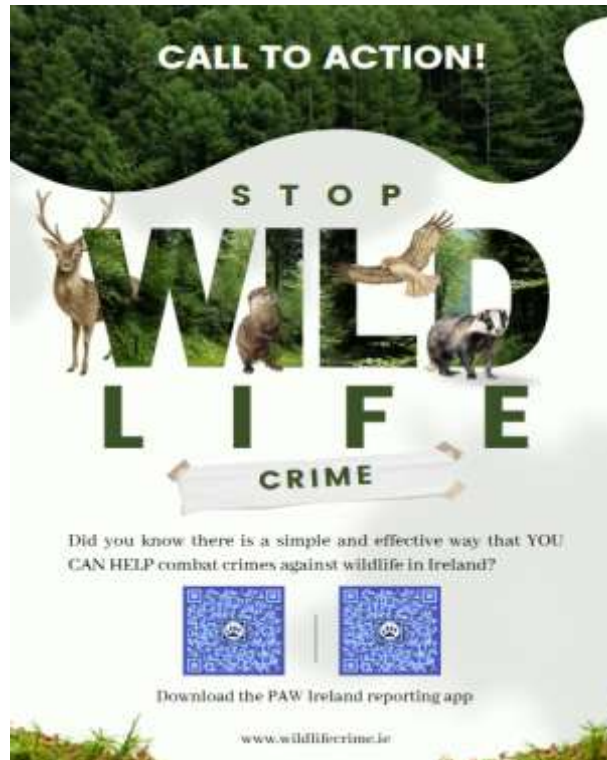
Our social media campaigns issued frequent calls to action, highlighting key threats to wildlife and encouraging use of the PAW Ireland App and the website [wildlifecrime.ie](http://wildlifecrime.ie).

We also developed and distributed eye-catching bumper stickers and wheelie bin decals with clear reporting instructions. These were given to delegates at the Wildlife Crime Conference and made available for wider distribution.

We also used in-person opportunities to engage the public, including hosting a stall at the Samhain Festival of Food & Culture in Kells.

There, and at our conference, we distributed our new leaflets and invited attendees to take extra copies to help spread the message.

These materials and face-to-face interactions continue to be a powerful part of our effort to inform and activate the public in protecting Ireland's wildlife.





## Communications: Websites

### Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland

([www.wri.ie](http://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.

### Wildlife Crime Ireland

([www.wildlifecrime.ie](http://www.wildlifecrime.ie))

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

### Irish Wildlife Matters

([www.irishwildlifematters.ie](http://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.







## Communications: Radio & Campaigns

### Wildlife Wild Watch:

WRI's Education Officer participates in a monthly on-air chat with Gerry Kelly of The Afternoon Show on LMFM. Topics and animal of choice are seasonal, with advice for listeners on how to help Irish wildlife.

The station has 120,000 listeners tuning in every day throughout Meath, Louth, Dublin, Monaghan and Northern Ireland.

### Inspiring Action Through Targeted Campaigns

In 2024, WRI ran several focused social media campaigns to engage the public in wildlife protection and advocacy. Our 'Slow Down for Wildlife' campaign highlighted the impact of road traffic on native animals and encouraged drivers to be more mindful, especially in rural and high-risk areas.

Ahead of elections, our 'Vote for Nature' campaign urged followers to ask candidates key questions about environmental policies and wildlife protection, empowering the public to advocate for nature at the ballot box. These campaigns helped raise awareness, spark conversations, and encourage real-world action for wildlife.





## Communications: Newsletter & Publications

### Sharing Our Message - Traditional Media and Newsletter

The Meath Coaster regularly include features from WRI. This magazine is delivered to 7,200 homes and also has an online edition.

The WRI Wild Echos Event in Morans was listed the Meath Chronicle as part of the Heritage Week event guide for 2024.

We deliver a quarterly e-zine to almost 2,000 subscribers, as well as sending an annual calendar to all our friends and stakeholders.

A wildlife eDNA project is ongoing (2023-2025) with results to be released May25.

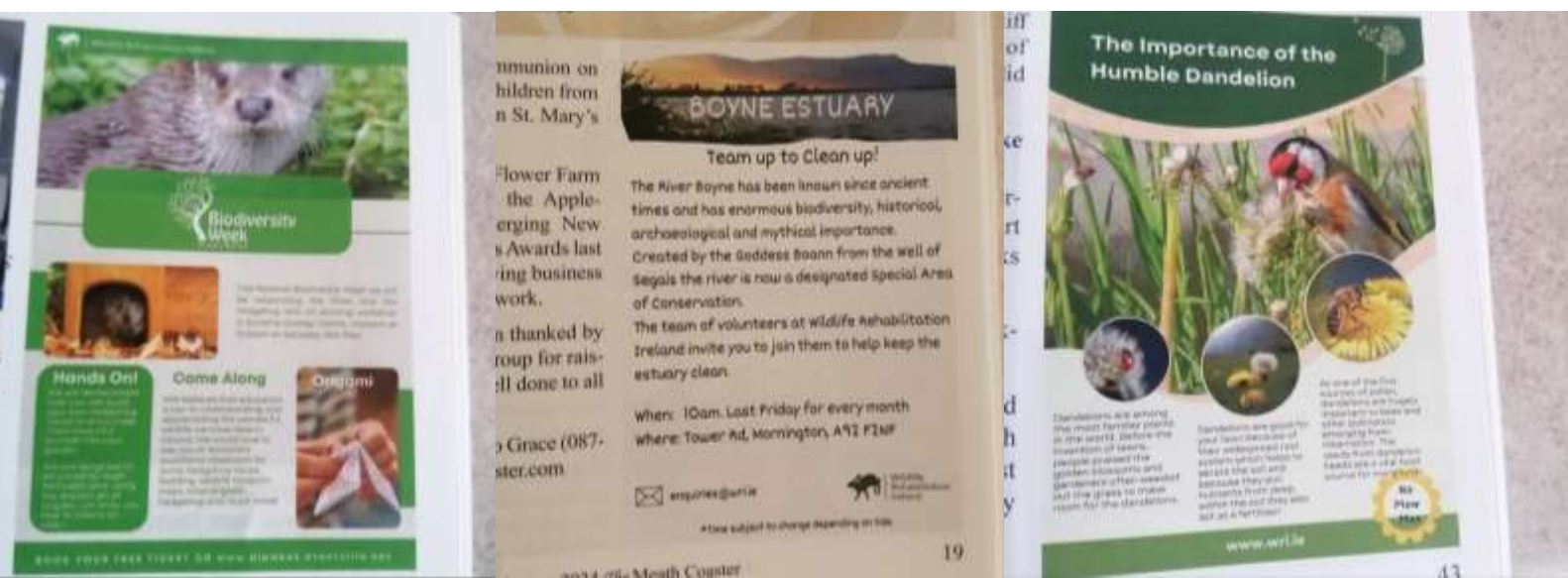
The Wildlife Veterinary Health Survey 2023/24 is being written up for publication in the Veterinary Ireland Journal in Oct25.

### Sharing Our Message – Social Media

Our social media platforms play a central role in how we connect with the public, share urgent wildlife updates, promote educational content, and encourage community action.

Through engaging posts, videos, and graphics, we raise awareness on topics ranging from wildlife rescue tips and seasonal advice to reporting wildlife crime and celebrating biodiversity. Our channels also serve as a platform for publicising events, webinars, and volunteer opportunities.

With nearly 19,500 followers across Facebook, Instagram, Bluesky, and X, our digital reach continues to grow, helping us advocate for Ireland's wildlife every day.





## Louth

News Sport Business Lifestyle Drogheda & South Dundalk & North

### Meath wildlife charity issues reminder not to cut hedges during nesting season

Fines can be issued if nesting birds or mammals are disturbed



The Chiffchaff is a member of the warbler family and is one of 16 warbler species that regularly breed in Ireland.

Allison Comyn

Drogheda Independent

Sat 2 Mar 2024 at 09:00



Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland, which has its headquarters in Mornington, Co Meath, is reminding people that it is illegal to cut hedges during nesting season in many places to protect nesting birds and their young.

During the breeding season, which typically runs from 1st March to 31st August, 55 of our 110 bird species nest in hedges and other vegetation. Cutting or trimming hedges during this time can disturb nesting birds, cause them to abandon their nests, and harm or kill their young.

In addition to being harmful to birds, cutting hedges during nesting season is often a violation of wildlife protection laws and can result in fines or other penalties. These laws are in place to protect wildlife and their habitats and to ensure that they can continue to thrive for future generations.

It is important to note that not all species of birds nest at the same time, and the nesting season can vary depending on the species and the location, and as well as birds, hedgerows can provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Here are some examples of wildlife that may live in or near hedgerows:

**Birds:** Hedgerows provide nesting sites and cover for many bird species, including sparrows, thrushes, warblers, and finches.

**Small mammals:** Hedgerows provide habitat and shelter for many mammal species, including hedgehogs, rabbits, voles, shrews, and bats, which use the linear form of hedgerows as a flight path.

**Insects:** Hedgerows can provide important habitat for a wide variety of insect species, including bees, butterflies, moths, and beetles.

**Mammals:** Hedgerows can provide shelter and food sources for mammals such as badgers, foxes, and pine martens.

**Wildflowers:** Hedgerows can also provide important habitat for wildflowers, which can attract pollinators and other insects.

Overall, hedgerows can be incredibly valuable for supporting a diverse range of wildlife species, especially in areas where natural habitat is limited.

## Public Engagement and Interest

### Why Hedge Cutting Restrictions Matter

WRI regularly reminds the public not to cut hedges outside of the permitted season because hedgerows are vital habitats for many of Ireland's birds, mammals, and insects.

During the spring and summer months, hedges provide essential nesting sites, shelter, and food resources.

Cutting or trimming hedges during this critical breeding period can destroy nests, harm young wildlife, and reduce available habitat at a time when species are most vulnerable.

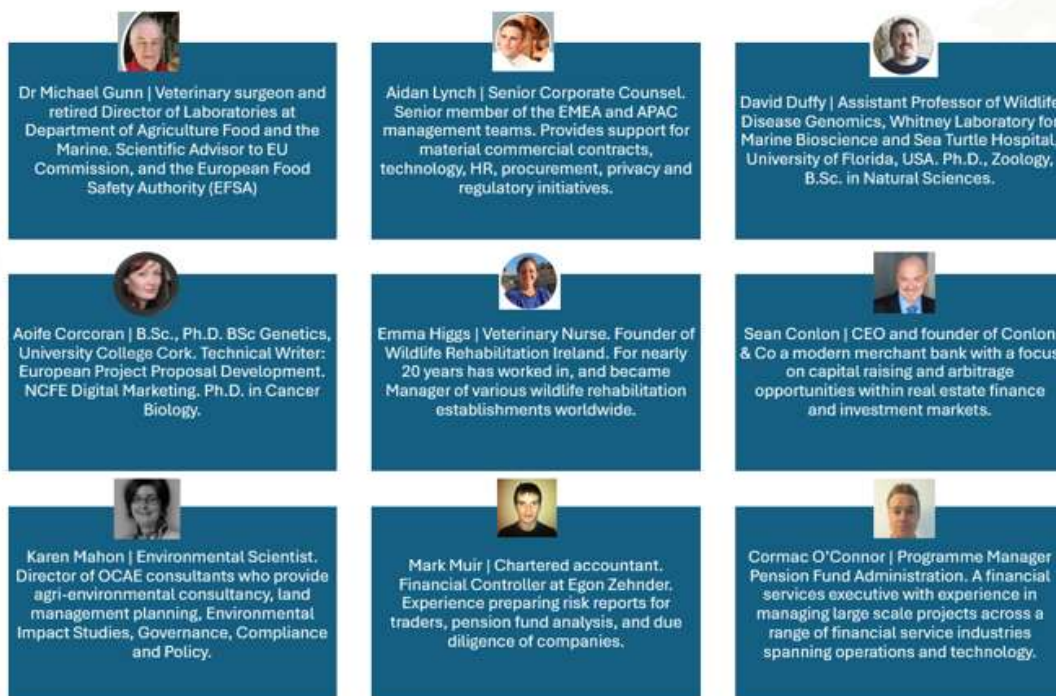
Protecting hedgerows aligns closely with WRI's mission to promote wildlife welfare, as healthy, undisturbed hedgerows are crucial for the survival of many of the species we work to protect and support through our education, advocacy, and rehabilitation efforts.



### Volunteer Interest and Public Engagement

WRI continues to receive strong public interest in our work, particularly around wildlife care and the development of our permanent Wildlife Teaching Hospital. Our team manage weekly email queries from individuals across the country and internationally, seeking opportunities to volunteer with WRI, guidance on how to assist with injured/distressed wildlife, attend our training course, or participate in internship programmes in our Wildlife Hospital.

This ongoing interest highlights the growing public commitment to wildlife welfare and the need for expanded national rehabilitation infrastructure.



## Who We Are: Directors & Team

### Directors

As WRI continues to grow, a broader range of skills is needed to guide its development.

Director recruitment remains open and transparent, with a focus on building a diverse and effective board that oversees operations and shapes the charity's strategic direction.

We are very grateful to our Directors for their time, expertise, and commitment. In 2024, the Board met monthly, with the AGM held in September.

### Staff

WRI had one staff member employed part time during 2024

### WRI Team

WRI is extremely fortunate to have an exceptionally committed team of volunteers who meet weekly to support every aspect of our work, from fundraising, accounts, and protocols to education, events, media, and IT.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to each of them for their ongoing dedication and invaluable contributions. In 2024, volunteers were recognised with informal get-togethers including a Summer Get-together, a Volunteer Day celebration hamper from the Volunteer Centre, and Christmas party in December.





# Who We Are: Patrons

## Webinars & Tutorials

Mary Reynolds, Founder of We Are The ARK and patron of Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland, is a leading voice for rewilding and biodiversity. In 2024, she gave an interview featured in our e-newsletter, encouraging people to transform gardens and green spaces into havens for wildlife and to embrace a more restorative relationship with nature.

### Sharon Shannon

Irish musician and WRI patron Sharon Shannon is a long-time advocate for animal welfare and wildlife protection. She has supported WRI through public events such as the WILD celebration in Roscahill, County Galway, and regularly promotes ethical living and conservation through her music and public platforms. Sharon has also praised WRI's educational work, including Irish Wildlife Matters, and continues to champion a national approach to wildlife care.

### Pete Wedderburn

Veterinary practitioner and broadcaster Pete Wedderburn is a passionate advocate for animal welfare and a strong supporter of WRI. He has used his media presence to highlight the need for a national wildlife hospital and to promote wildlife care and rescue. At home, he and his family care for rescued animals, reflecting his deep personal commitment to animal welfare.



## Doing their bit to make the world a better — and cleaner — place

Musician Sharon Shannon is not afraid to get her hands dirty in a bid to keep Galway's Claddagh beach a bit cleaner, writes Lorna Higgins



Musician Sharon Shannon displays killy ulpas found on Claddagh beach, Galway. Photo: Ray Ryan



# Our People: Ongoing Training & CPD

## Webinars & Tutorials

In 2024, WRI team members took part in a wide range of webinars and online learning sessions to build capacity, stay informed, and strengthen our impact.

These included events hosted by organisations such as The Wheel, the Local Enterprise Office, the Mammal Society, UNESCO, Devon Wildlife Trust, and Louth Volunteer Centre.

Topics ranged from biodiversity and climate adaptation to governance, funding, and communications, including “Wheel Townhall,” “Leader Funding Zoom,” and “Charities & Political Causes.”

We also attended the Meath County Council Biodiversity Officer’s session and teacher training on greening education systems in the lead-up to COP29.

In addition, our team engaged in practical skills-based training, such as “Canva for Beginners – Making the Most from Your Content,” and webinars focused on digital tools like “Using AI for Communications” with Karen Howley.

We also took part in thematic sessions, including “Move, Adapt, or Die: How Animals Cope With Climate Change” and “Nature, Art and Community.”

These diverse learning opportunities supported WRI’s work in education, advocacy, and organisational development, ensuring we remain informed, innovative, and responsive in a fast-changing world.







## Financial Support and Funding Partnerships: Supporting Wildlife Rehabilitators

### Support Provided By WRI

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

In 2024, WRI awarded a significant number of grants to delegates attending our Wildlife Crime Conference.

WRI operates a small-scale mealworm farm to support rehabilitators caring for insectivorous wildlife. The farm produces live mealworms, which are donated to wildlife carers for feeding bats, birds, and other insect-eating species in their care. This initiative helps reduce costs for rehabilitators while ensuring that recovering animals receive appropriate, high-quality nutrition.

### Oilspill Response:

In response to the 2024 oil spill along Ireland's east coast, WRI donated essential equipment and PPE to Kildare Wildlife Rescue and the Oiled Wildlife Response Network. Led by KWR, a coordinated effort involving NPWS, BirdWatch Ireland, Seal Rescue Ireland, and trained responders worked to rescue and rehabilitate affected seabirds, mainly Guillemots. Around 140 birds were recovered, though many more likely died unseen at sea.

The rehabilitation process was intensive, requiring careful washing. The 'lucky ones' were successfully released weeks later. This incident underscores the urgent need for a formal national oiled wildlife response plan







## Financial Support and Funding Partnerships: Donations Received

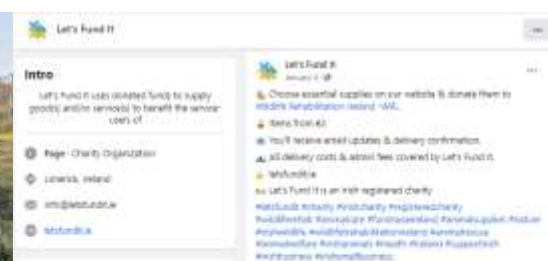
### Thank yous:

We are deeply grateful to our generous supporters who contributed to WRI's work throughout 2024. Each of these donations plays a vital role in strengthening WRI's capacity to protect Ireland's native wildlife. Special thanks to *LetsFundIt* for their donation used to purchase equipment for our hedgehog outdoor runs. We also received a bequest from *Sinead*, whose legacy will directly support our ongoing wildlife protection efforts. Additionally, we are grateful to *Sean Conlon* for his donation towards the Teaching Hospital project. We would also like to acknowledge a payment directed to WRI through the court system, following a wildlife crime case prosecuted by the *NPWS*. These funds are being used to support wildlife crime awareness and advocacy.

### & More Thanks yous!

We're incredibly grateful to *Access Plastics* for their donation of Polycarbonate sheets. These virtually unbreakable sheets have been used to build secure enclosures that help protect recovering wildlife during their rehabilitation. Thanks to their exceptional strength, water resistance, and light transmission, these materials offer a safe, durable, and easy-to-clean solution—ideal for our needs. Support like this plays a vital role in helping us provide the best possible care for wildlife in need.

Lastly, our sincere thanks go to the *Wild Wardrobe* charity shop for their generous contribution, which helps sustain our educational and outreach activities.





## Financial Support and Funding Partnerships: Grants Received

### 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, € 49,192 | IEN Digitalisation Fund, € 870 | IEN Biodiversity Week Funding €350 | IEN Capacity Building Funding € 13,000 | IEN Meeting Attendance €300

Reforest Nation €1000

Meath County Council (MCC), Community Heritage Grant Scheme € 900 towards the PAW Ireland App | MCC Local Enhancement Programme €1,000 towards equipment | MCC Community Grant Scheme - (events) €500 towards Folklore Talk

Carranstown Environmental Project Grant, funded by Indaver Ireland, administered by MCC €1,000 towards Duleek Community Event





## Thank You

wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland extends sincere thanks to all our supporters, partners, and volunteers. Your commitment makes our work possible—protecting wildlife, educating the public, and building a future where nature is valued and safeguarded.

Together, we're making a difference.

