

Mountaineering Ireland Club Environmental Officers' Workshop,

Saturday 19th September 2015, Boleybrack, Co. Leitrim

The overall aim of the day is to raise awareness amongst Club Environmental Officers of upland flora and fauna, particularly red grouse, and associated issues to do with the management of upland habitats. The day will be based out of Clancys of Glenfarne, Co. Leitrim, which is located on the N16 midway between Sligo and Enniskillen (www.clancysofglenfarne.com).

PROGRAMME

Indoor Session (9.30 – 10.30am)

Tea and coffee on arrival (restaurant will be open from 8am if people want to have breakfast beforehand).

Introduction to the day (Helen Lawless).

Background to the Boleybrack Red Grouse Habitat management Project and briefing on field trip (John Carslake)

Field Trip (11.30am – 3.00pm)

The workshop will continue outdoors on Boleybrack Mountain, where John Carslake will introduce the group to the Boleybrack Special Area of Conservation. During a walk across the hill participants will learn about red grouse, an iconic upland bird species, and the various actions taken to manage the habitat to improve the red grouse population (red grouse numbers nationally have fallen significantly in recent decades).

We will also look at the different plant species on the mountain, discuss their significance from the point of view of grouse, herbivores and other wildlife, and also the importance of some of these as indicator species for wet heath, blanket bog and dry heath habitats. While we're unlikely to see them all, discussion will also cover the other wildlife species that inhabit the mountain.

The collective approach underpinning the Boleybrack Grouse Project may provide a useful template for the management of mountain commonages across the country. It also highlights the role that farmers can play in rural development and supporting local communities, from an agri-food, tourism and wildlife perspective.

Return to Clancys of Glenfarne; tea and coffee

Indoor session (3.30-4.45pm)

The workshop will conclude with an overview of Mountaineering Ireland's current work on access and conservation matters and a discussion on the role of a Club Environmental Officer.

JOHN CARSLAKE

John Carslake is Ireland's only red grouse gamekeeper and wildlife manager. He has worked in Scotland and Northern England and moved to Leitrim to work on the Boleybrack Project three years ago. Ironically John's great grandmother came from just outside Manorhamilton. John has a passion for his work and believes that the skill-set associated with upland management is close to being lost in Ireland and consequently is determined to develop best practice in an Irish context and disseminate this widely. Work away from the mountain involves consultation and advisory work, working with Government and NGO's, together with the administrative and public relations side of the Project. As a specialist in upland management John believes that family holidays to the Scottish Highlands, Connemara and Donegal all played a part in entrenching a love for these wild spaces.

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- As we will be outdoors for much of the day, and possibly on some rough or boggy terrain, participants should bring hillwalking gear, including a packed lunch and something to drink.
- Camera, binoculars, a notebook and field guides (if you have them) will all be useful.
- To minimise impact and enable all participants to hear what is said while we're outdoors, this workshop is limited to a total of 13 participants.
- **To book a place email info@mountaineering.ie.** Preference will be given to Club Environmental Officers, with first preference to those who haven't already participated in an Environmental Workshop in 2015.