



MOUNTAINEERING  
IRELAND

## ***Mountain Environment Weekend 2025***

Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, 13-15<sup>th</sup> June 2025



Oileáil  
Teicneolaíochta  
an Aidiomhangh  
Atlantic  
Technological  
University



NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna  
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúla  
National Parks and Wildlife  
Service

## ABOUT THIS EVENT

The overall aim of the Mountain Environment weekend is to celebrate what makes Ireland's mountains special, by sharing knowledge of the mountain environment, through illustrated talks and time spent in the mountains, learning about habitats and species, and considering our role in helping to care for the mountain environment.

Mountaineering Ireland's Mountain Environment Weekend 2025 will be based out of the Glendalough International Hostel, at the heart of the Wicklow Mountains. The main focus of our outdoor activities will be around the Glendalough Valley and nearby Tonelagee Mountain. The event is delivered in partnership with Wicklow Mountains National Park (WMNP), with input from others including the Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC).

By involving people from different disciplines such as ecology, ornithology, geology, heritage and habitat management our learning and discussion about the mountain environment will be holistic. There will be a particular focus at this year's event on how we can balance the increased demand for recreation experiences with protecting the special qualities of Ireland's mountains and upland areas.

### **Accommodation and Food**

We have reserved accommodation at the Glendalough International Hostel, in rooms with 4 – 6 bunk beds. Accommodation must be booked at time of registration. Our booking in the hostel is self-catering, please bring your own breakfast, lunch etc (McCoy's shop in Laragh, 2km from the hostel is open 7am – 8pm and does sandwiches etc). We have made a group booking in the [Wicklow Heather Restaurant](#) for 7.30pm on Saturday evening; dinner is not included in the registration cost.

As Glendalough is close to where many Mountaineering Ireland members live, this year we are offering the opportunity for people to participate in one day rather than the full weekend.

We are encouraging participants to use public transport if possible and to facilitate other participants by car-pooling during the weekend.

## EVENT PROGRAMME

### **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> June**

**7.00- 7.15pm** **Event registration** and check-in at Glendalough International Hostel

**7.30pm** **Introductory talks at Glendalough International Hostel**

Welcome (Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland)

Introduction to Wicklow Mountains National Park (Ann Fitzpatrick, District Conservation Officer & Alan Lauder, District Conservation Officer and Deputy Park Manager for WMNP)

Birds of Prey and current bird monitoring projects in the WMNP (Andrew Butler, Conservation Ranger, NPWS)

### **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June**

**7.00am – Optional moth trap session**

Get an insight into the Glendalough valley nightlife as John Cromie shows us the contents of a moth trap placed near the hostel. Based on previous events this will be worth getting up for!

**8.00am – Breakfast** (remember, bring your own)

**9.00am** – Briefing for the day, followed by an introduction to the Wicklow Uplands Council, an NGO working for the sustainable use and enjoyment of the Wicklow Mountains (Lorna Kelly, Coordinator, Wicklow Uplands Council)

**10.00am – 5.00pm – Wicklow's Mountain Environment – Day 1**

A day of day of hiking, learning and discussion in the **Tonelagee area** – we will learn about different habitats and species, discuss the impact of social media on the mountains and see some of WMNP's peatland restoration work on the Barnacullian ridge, which Mountaineering Ireland volunteers are contributing to.

**6.15 – 7.15pm - Sharing information on current access issues** (Helen Lawless)

**7.30pm – Dinner at Wicklow Heather Restaurant** (not included in registration fee)

### **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June**

**7.00am – Optional visit to Glendalough's Monastic sites with local guide, Joan.**

**8.00am – Breakfast**

**8.45am – Photos from Saturday** and winners of photographic competition, briefing for the day

**9.30am – 4.30pm – Wicklow's Mountain Environment - Day 2**

A day of day of hiking, learning and discussion on **Turlough Hill - Glendalough Valley** – See some of Wicklow's rarer plants on Turlough Hill, look at mountain habitats and species, discuss deer and other management issues, learn about Wicklow's mining heritage and get fascinating insights into the history of the Glendalough Valley from archaeologist Graeme Warren. There will also be a NPWS representative to offer further insights on the park.

**4.30pm – Event closes**

## BOOKING

The fee for the Mountain Environment weekend is €150. This covers field trips, talks, two nights' dormitory-style accommodation (Friday and Saturday),

A reduced fee of €70 is available for local members who do not require accommodation, this covers the talks, and field trips.

The fee to join for one day (either Saturday or Sunday) is €40.

**Places are limited; tickets should be booked through Eventbrite ([here](#)).**

## ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- As we will be outdoors for two days, and traversing some steep, and rugged terrain, participants should bring hillwalking gear, including suitable footwear, raingear, sunscreen, insect repellent, plus a lunchbox and water bottle.
- Binoculars, camera, a notebook and field guides (if you have them) will all be useful.
- Participants may find it useful to have a copy of the detailed 1:25,000 EastWest Lugnaquilla & Glendalough Map (which can be purchased [here](#) or in McCoy's shop in Laragh), or the Discovery Series 1:50,000, sheet 56.
- To minimise impact and enable all participants to hear what is said while we're outdoors, group size will be limited.
- Dogs are not permitted on this event, to avoid disturbance to wildlife and because not all people are comfortable around dogs.
- Plans for the field trips may be adjusted on the day depending on weather conditions or the needs and interests of the group.

## Public Transport Options

We are encouraging the use of public transport to travel to this year's Mountain Environment Weekend. Below are some transport options that may be suitable for participants:

Buses, or a combination of bus and train, can be used to travel to Glendalough.

The [TFI Journey Planner](#) / [TFI Live App](#) can be used to plan a route to the event.

Routes that service the Laragh/Glendalough area:

- **Route 183 (Arklow – Sallins)**
  - Runs four times a day, in both directions ([Timetable](#)).
  - This service can be used to link Sallins train station to Glendalough; [Sallins info & routes serviced](#).
- **Route 181/St. Kevin's Bus Service (Stephen's Green – Glendalough)**
  - Summer timetable can be viewed below or at this [link](#).

We can also collect people from Rathdrum Train Station if arranged in advance.

## PHOTO COMPETITION

Photographs provide an excellent medium to celebrate what is special about Ireland's natural environment and to increase awareness of the mountain environment across the wider community.

To encourage participants to record and share photographs during the Mountain Environment Weekend, we're having a photographic competition with prizes in the following categories:

- People engaging with the mountain environment
- Flora and fauna
- Landscape and geology

Photographs taken on Saturday should be emailed to [christina@mountaineering.ie](mailto:christina@mountaineering.ie) for submission by 9pm on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June. **Maximum of 5 photographs per person.**

The winning photographs will be shown on Sunday morning. Photos submitted may be used on Mountaineering Ireland's website, social media, and other publications.

## WICKLOW MOUNTAINS

The Wicklow Mountains are part of the longest continuous upland area in Ireland, forming a natural divide between the east coast and the Midlands.

The range is characterized by its rounded peaks, the highest being Lugnaquilla. The mountains were formed over 400 million years ago, during the Caledonian orogeny, a period of intense geological activity that shaped much of Northern Europe.

The area's distinctive landscape is the result of glacial activity during the last Ice Age, which carved out deep U-shaped valleys and left behind numerous corrie lakes. The most famous of these glacial valleys is Glendalough, home to two picturesque lakes and a wealth of historical sites. The mountains are primarily composed of granite, giving them a rugged appearance.

The Wicklow Mountains also play a crucial role in Ireland's water supply, with several major rivers, including the Liffey, originating in the uplands. These waterways have not only shaped the landscape but have also been instrumental in the region's industrial history!

## WICKLOW MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Wicklow Mountains National Park has the largest land area of Ireland's eight national parks. It stretches across almost 23,000 hectares, featuring wide-open vistas, winding mountain roads and fast-flowing streams that descend into the deep lakes of the wooded valleys, including St Kevin's monastic settlement at Glendalough.

One of the most popular destinations in the Wicklow Mountains is Glendalough Valley. It holds a 6<sup>th</sup> century monastic site – that features a round tower, stone churches and a large cemetery, as well as fantastic walking trails and stunning views of the lake in the valley's heart.

The park hosts a diverse ecosystem and is home to a wide variety of plant and animal species. Its forested areas include native oak, ash and birch trees; and the park's gorse and heather covered slopes provide habitats for numerous animal species, including peregrine falcons, pine martens, otters and red grouse.

Conservation efforts in the Wicklow Mountains National Park focus on preserving and restoring native habitats, particularly blanket bogs and oak woodlands. These ecosystems not only support biodiversity but also play a crucial role in carbon sequestration, making their preservation vital in the face of climate change.

## WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL

Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC) is a community-led, non-profit organisation dedicated to the sustainable use of the Dublin and Wicklow Uplands for those that live, work and recreate there. Established in 1997, it serves as a forum for stakeholders including landowners, recreational users, environmental groups, and local communities. WUC promotes a balanced approach to upland management, addressing issues such as biodiversity, heritage, access, and rural livelihoods. Through collaboration, it supports practical initiatives and knowledge sharing that protect the natural environment while enhancing the social and economic well-being of the region. Its work ensures that the unique landscapes and traditions of the Wicklow Uplands are preserved for future generations.



## OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAMME AT ATU

The Outdoor Education Degree at ATU contains an exciting mix of academic work and practical training for instructor-level awards in adventure sports. Students gain an understanding of the developmental role of outdoor education and build experience in designing and running educational programmes. Through fieldtrips and lectures students explore and examine Irish landscape, heritage and ecology and realise the potential of adventure tourism, green exercise and nature therapy. Safety management, first aid and rescue are other core elements. One day a week is spent taking part in adventure sports on the mountains, lakes, rivers and sea. In year 1 the focus is on gaining personal skills in the sports and then on leadership level training in the following years.

## BIODIVERSITY RECORDING

We encourage Mountaineering Ireland members to report species sightings from the mountains through the National Biodiversity Data Centre's website <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/start-recording> or by using the Biodiversity Data Capture app. As there are few ecologists in the uplands, we can add value to the knowledge of biodiversity in Ireland's mountains, cliffs and coastal areas. In Northern Ireland, use <http://www.nmni.com/CEDaR/Recording/terrestrial-recording>.



*Photo taken by Julie Taylor.*

## BIOGRAPHIES

To give you a sense of the knowledge and passion feeding into this year's Mountain Environment weekend we've gathered brief biographies for some of those who are contributing:

### ANDREW BUTLER

Andrew is a Conservation Ranger in the Wicklow Mountains National Park. He started working for NPWS in 2012 firstly as an Education Guide in the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. After a brief foray as a warden for the Little Tern Colony in Kilcoole, Co Wicklow for a couple of years with BirdWatch Ireland he returned to NPWS as a Ranger in Meath and now Wicklow. Andrew started bird ringing in 2014 and is heavily involved in IWeBS, CBS and various bird monitoring projects in the WMNP.

### JOHN CROMIE

John Cromie is a keen hillwalker, mountaineer and wild camper, with a lifelong interest in nature. He has walked extensively in Ireland and Scotland, and in parts of Europe and the western US. While out in the hills, John is always on the lookout for wildlife, and eager to learn more about the creatures and plants that inhabit our montane ecosystems. He has been recording the biodiversity of Donegal for over 30 years, and has a particular interest in moths. John is active in nature conservation, representing environment groups on the government's Designated Areas Appeals Advisory Board, and has served on the board of Birdwatch Ireland. Living near the Bluestack mountains, John enjoys walking and trail running in some of the wildest and most remote parts of Donegal.

### ANN FITZPATRICK

Ann Fitzpatrick is the District Conservation Officer and Deputy Park Manager for the Wicklow Mountains National Park. She is responsible for the management of the Ranger and Education Teams in the National Park. Ann has worked for NPWS since 2001, most of that within the WMNP. Ann has a deep attachment to the mountains, spending most of her free time scrambling around and exploring in Wicklow and farther afield. Ann is heavily involved in managing many habitat restoration and species monitoring programmes in the WMNP and her special area of interest is the Peregrine Falcon, for which she has been monitoring populations across Leinster for the past 16 years.

### LORNA KELLY

Lorna, a graduate in Marine Science, Environmental Science, and Social Policy, has a diverse background spanning marine protection, community development, forestry, art education, and upland management. She brings a multidisciplinary approach to her current role with Wicklow Uplands Council.

### ANTHEA LACCHIA

Anthea Lacchia (Nature Tales & Trails) is a geologist and Mountain Leader. She holds a PhD about Ireland's fossil ammonoids (extinct relatives of cuttlefish) and works as a writer and science communicator, organising hikes and walks about nature and geology. Anthea is Regional Coordinator for Ireland for the Mountain Training Association.



## **ALAN LAUDER**

Alan Lauder is a professional nature conservation and wildlife projects specialist. He has worked across state and non-governmental wildlife and conservation organisations in Ireland and the UK since 1989. Hailing from Scotland, his experience in the mountains started at the age of thirteen when he went hillwalking for his Duke of Edinburgh's Award in the Southern Uplands. While he was at Stirling University in the 1980s, he took up rock and winter climbing, with occasional trips to Wales and northern England. Alan continued trad climbing into his thirties and the onset of family life. More recently, he has been balancing a lifelong interest in birds and other wildlife with hillwalking and his other outdoor interests. Alan aims to bring his knowledge and experience of managing and restoring upland habitats and species to his role as Chairperson of Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee and as a member of Mountaineering Ireland's Board of Directors. Alan is a member of the LIFE on Machair Steering Group.

## **HELEN LAWLESS**

Helen Lawless is in the lucky position of being able to combine her passion for the mountains with her role as Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Environment Manager. Helen works across the island of Ireland, aiming to protect Ireland's mountains, coastline and crags, to secure access and to encourage responsible enjoyment of these places. Helen lives in the Wicklow Mountains; her spare time is divided between enjoying the mountains and volunteering in her local community.

## **CHRISTINA MCINERNEY**

Christina recently began working for Mountaineering Ireland in the role of 'Hillwalking & Environment Officer'. She studied Environmental Science in the University of Limerick, where she was heavily involved in the college's Outdoor Pursuits Club as a hike leader and climbing instructor, and sitting on the committee as secretary and then chairperson of the club. After finishing her studies, she worked as an EHS engineer before making the switch away from industry.

She is thrilled that her new role combines her interest in the environment with her lifelong passion for outdoor sports - and aims to advocate for the environment while also promoting participation in the activities that she loves.

## **VINCENT Mc ALINDEN**

Vince lives, works and sometimes plays on a small farm on the south-eastern slopes of the Mourne and for 20 years embraced a 5-minute commute to the sorely missed Killowen Outdoor Centre where he looked after the environmental education side of things. He has been fortunate to enjoy 30+ years of great mountain adventures. Early club escapes began with Queens University Mountaineering Club before getting into mountain running and climbing further afield with the BARF club. Vince sees volunteering for Mountaineering Ireland as a way of giving a little back to the mountains and the people from whom he has gained so much.

## **HUGH McLINDON**

Hugh McLindon has worked in the National parks and Wildlife Service in Ireland since 1996. Throughout that time he has been a part of many teams and assisted in a wide range of projects. Hugh became the

Conservation Ranger for Co. Louth 2017, before transferring back to Wicklow in 2019. As a Conservation Ranger he applied his energy to several habitat restoration projects, species protection activities, volunteer programmes and the enforcement of the Wildlife Act and Habitat Regulations. His promotion to District Conservation Officer in 2023 has meant a change in role, with more planning and administration to ensure a greater number of environmental and recreation related projects are coordinated and brought to completion. In his latest role Hugh has helped to expand the volunteer programme and hopes to see further expansion in this growing area.

## **ORLA PRENDERGAST**

Orla Prendergast teaches on the degree in Outdoor Education at ATU's Castlebar Campus and delivers modules in the natural and cultural environment, and ecology. Orla also runs a range of Mountaineering Ireland courses such as Mountain Skills and Mountain Leader and is a member of Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Committee. Orla's passion both at work and in her spare time is being out in the mountains, climbing and walking and exploring and sharing her love of wild places with others.

## **ANDREA WEBB**

Andrea Webb is a Conservation Ranger in WMNP. She has worked with NPWS since 1998 where she started work in the National Park as part of the pathwork crew installing the Spink boardwalk. From there she joined the Park Education team until she moved to become a Ranger in Westmeath. After 10 years of yearning for the hills she returned to take up a Ranger position in Wicklow. Andrea loves the open space of the bogs and being in the mountains; having come from a background working in horticulture Andrea has maintained her interest in Botany.