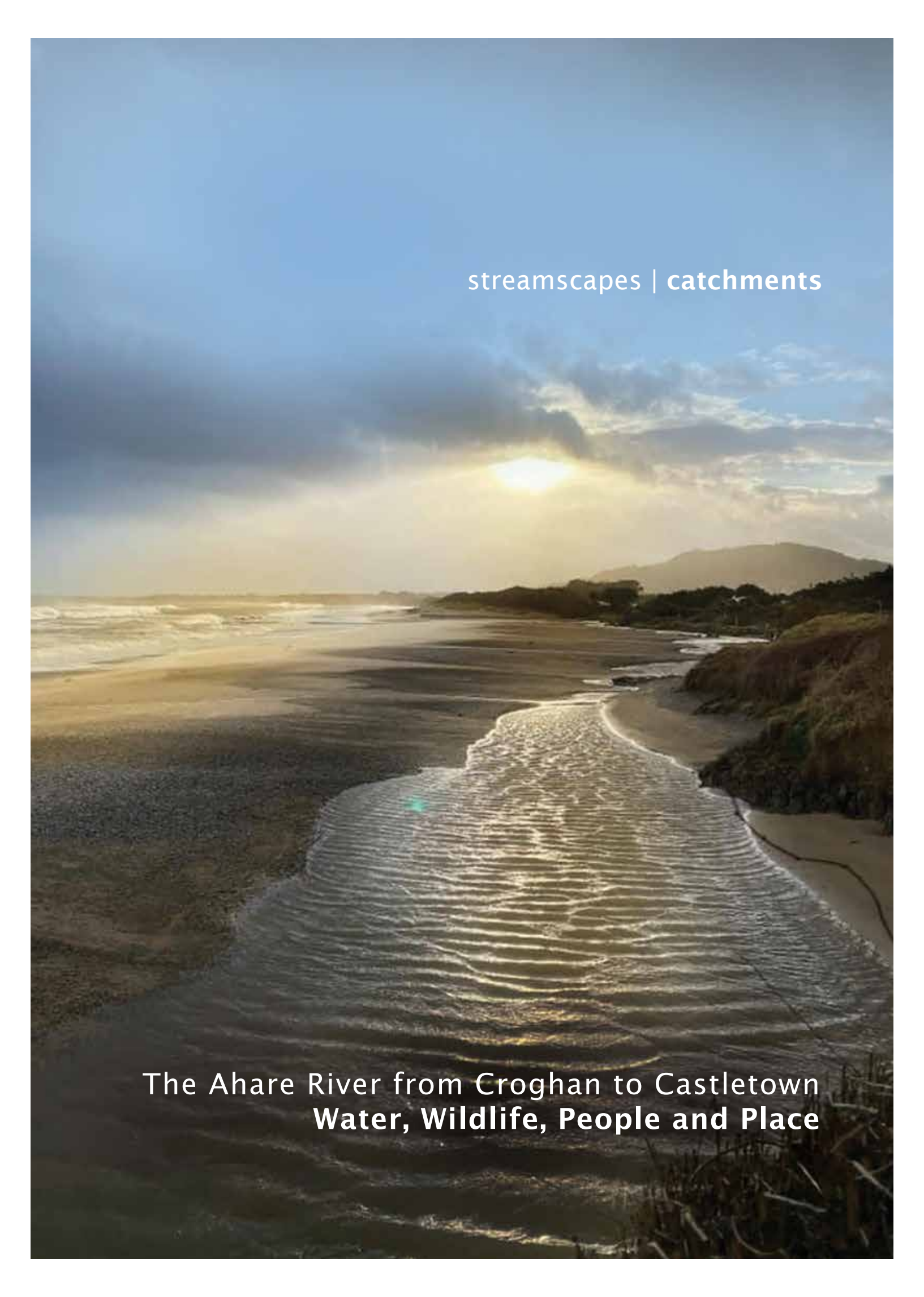




streamscales | catchments

The Ahare River from Croghan to Castletown
Water, Wildlife, People and Place

Welcome to the Ahare & Inch River Catchment

From the foothills in the west of the Catchment to the sea at Castletown, the streams from Rathpierce Hill and Croghan Mountain form the Inch and Clonogue River. Flowing through green and fertile countryside, these rivers join together to become the Ahare, also known as the Kilgorman or Inch River. It then flows through the floodplain at Ahare before entering the Irish Sea at Kilgorman on Clone Beach in North County Wexford.

This important river runs through a historic wetland, which is a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). The river catchment is home to brown trout, white trout, salmon, european eels, lamprey and mullet, and its estuary is a nursery for flounder. Many wildflowers are to be found in the area and adjacent to the river. In spring, wild garlic alerts the senses to its presence along the riverbank and primroses, lesser celandine, honesty and dandelions festoon the banks. Throughout the seasons many other wildflower species make their appearance and shower us with their colourful beauty.

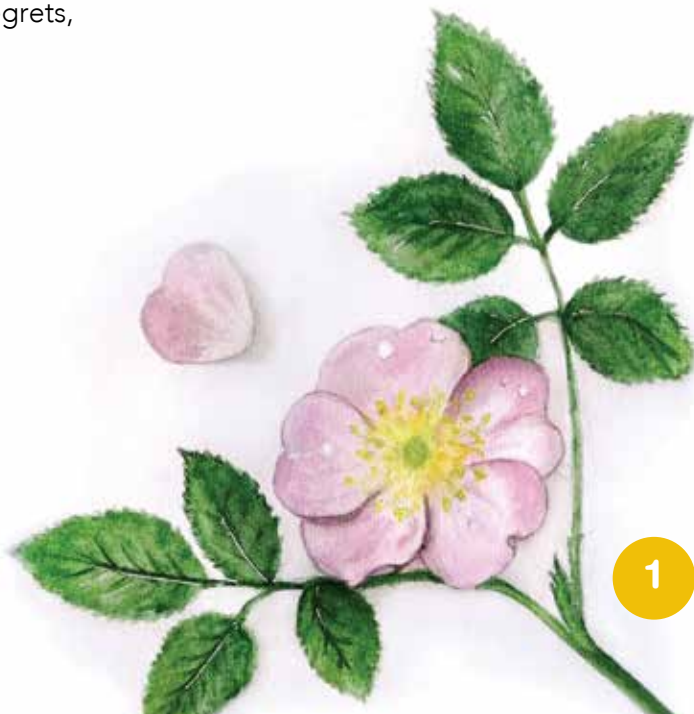
There is an abundance of wildlife along its riverbanks with otters, kingfishers, little egrets,

herons, moorhens, spotted woodpeckers and cormorants. On the estuary and coast, there are a variety of birds to be seen such as oyster catchers, gannets, gulls, wagtails and various feathered seasonal visitors also. Porpoises and seals can also be observed from the shore. Wild coastal flowers such as sea holly, thrift, rock samphire, sea rocket, sea lavender, soapwort, wild carrot and sea mayweed are among those found along the strand and headland.

There is much beauty, biodiversity, history and folklore associated with the Ahare River catchment and we hope to share some of this with you in this publication. Enjoy!

**CATHY LEE, CHAIRPERSON,
FRIENDS OF THE AHARE RIVER AND BIODIVERSITY
DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

The Friends of the Ahare River and Biodiversity Development Group was founded in 2019 by people with a great love of nature and our Ahare River catchment. The group works together to promote awareness of our local biodiversity. Our mission statement is to work with our catchment community and "Protect, Promote and Enhance our Natural Environment". Core Group Members include: Sean Walsh, Andy Kelly, Aidan Lee, Jackie Byrne, Graeme Blyth, Ann Walsh, & Cathy Lee.



Foreword from Joe Duffy

My family has been coming to this beautiful part of Wexford for over 25 years. The people of this area are welcoming, friendly and hospitable. The area itself is unique, rare and very beautiful – it has to be treasured.

The quality of our river environment is fundamental not only to the survival of our fish species and other aquatic life, but also to our human wellbeing. The riparian habitats (trees and shrubs) provide shelter and shade for aquatic life, food for fish and the stability of our riverbanks. They also reduce riverbank erosion, which can lead to siltation of the riverbed and impact on the healthy aquatic life of the river and spawning habitat. Why should we as a community protect our Ahare/Inch river catchment? Caring for our natural environment has never been so important than it is today, with changes to climate patterns and the dramatic loss of biodiversity.

The Ahare/Inch River catchment provides a fantastic range of services to our community. This includes spawning and nursery habitats for a whole range of fish species such as Sea

Trout, Brown Trout, Salmon, Lamprey, European Eels and even Flounder and Sea Bass. The river provides drinking water for farm animals and wildlife and is a great recreation and social amenity with local and holiday visitors. There are great angling opportunities to be had also. Share and reflect on your own memories and moments, that you have perhaps experienced in your interaction with this special river. Maybe you saw a kingfisher, little white egret, wildflowers or even an otter by the riverside and hopefully they will be captured not only in our hearts but also celebrated in this wonderful StreamScapes publication, which focusses upon our special River Catchment.

This area is unique, rare and very beautiful and we want our wonderful river and natural environment to be preserved in the future, for our children and for generations to come. Hopefully we can all work together to conserve these rich resources.

**JOE DUFFY, BROADCASTER, AUTHOR
AND PROUD CASTLETOWN RESIDENT!**




What is a 'Catchment'?

When you think of it, we all live in valleys, no matter how steep or broad, and all of our valleys have streams and rivers. From the hills above us to the sea below, these watercourses make their way across our landscape and define the catchment in which we live. Mountain streams run swiftly and tumble over waterfalls, while lower down in the valley a wide river flows easily past green fields, through our communities and down to the sea. In this river, along its banks and into the surrounding landscapes, may be found a wealth of biodiversity; fish, birds, insects, animals, trees, wildflowers, and people, but only if our waters run pure and clean. Our catchment also contains our farms and factories, towns and toilets. We need all of these, but we must also come to understand how, as we work, play, cook, clean and garden, we have a huge impact on water quality around us. This book introduces us to the Ahare River Catchment and the wonderful variety of biodiversity that clean waters support,

and the various people and agencies who are striving to ensure that the Ahare River achieves high status water quality and becomes a resource that we can all enjoy. It also encourages us to be aware of how we can minimise our own impact and be active participants in protecting the waters of the river catchment. I spend a lot of my time travelling the country and working with communities to help them tell their stories through booklets like this. I can tell you that it is the Cathy Lee's and the Andy Kelly's of these communities who are the ones who create huge enthusiasm and hope around our Aquatic & Biodiversity resources, and they get huge support, as in this Ahare River example, from LAWPRO staff & Community Water Officers like Fran Igoe, Justin Ivory, Dónal O'Keeffe, and Ann Phelan. I extend my congratulations to all on their tireless efforts.

MARK BOYDEN, STREAMSCAPES SERIES EDITOR



Supporting Waters & Communities

Water has always been of profound interest to me and has constantly been associated with positive adventures, observing wildlife and the great outdoors. I passionately feel we all have a right to live in a clean and healthy environment with our family and communities. To reflect this, I have actively sought a career in environmental and freshwater sciences. Now working with the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), my focus is to raise awareness of water quality challenges, find and recommend solutions to water pollution, and ultimately improve Ireland's water bodies to healthy waters.

Over the past three years, the local community of Castletown, through 'Friends of the Ahare River', has been working hard and significantly raised awareness of the importance of the river, its estuarine habitat and its wildlife. LAWPRO has closely supported the development of the group's objectives and implemented projects and initiatives that benefit the Ahare River Catchment. In my role as Community Water Officer, I would like to thank the group and wider Castletown community for being so welcoming, for doing such great work locally for the river and for biodiversity. I wish for their continued award-winning success!



**DÓNAL O'KEEFFE, CATCHMENT SCIENTIST,
LOCAL AUTHORITY WATERS PROGRAMME
(LAWPRO)**



Scoil Ghormáin Naofa, Castletown National School

For a few years now, we at Scoil Ghormáin Naofa have enjoyed a fruitful friendship with Cathy Lee and the Ahare Biodiversity Group. As a school conscious of its responsibility on educating children about the importance of protecting their local environment, it has been hugely beneficial to have had the support of Cathy and co in bringing many initiatives to our pupils. Over the years we have enjoyed conservation workshops, observed electro-fishing at the river, taken part in scavenger hunts on Clone Beach, hosted moth observation workshops and constructed bat boxes. Cathy provided the perfect welcome to the local community to our displaced Ukrainian pupils by involving them in the wonderful pollinator

project whereby they planted wildflower seeds and have watched them grow. Inland Fisheries Ireland has been instrumental in providing a wealth of education and Donal O'Keefe of LAWPRO, along with Cathy inspired interest in our pupils by giving talks and running competitions of great interest to the pupils. At Scoil Ghormáin Naofa we promote environmental awareness through our Biodiversity Policy but it is with the help of The Ahare Biodiversity Group that truly embeds these learnings and we are hugely grateful for this. We look forward to many adventures in the future!

**EMER RUSSELL, PRINCIPAL, SCOIL GHORMÁIN
NAOFA, CASTLETOWN, GOREY, CO. WEXFORD**





Bats of the Ahare River

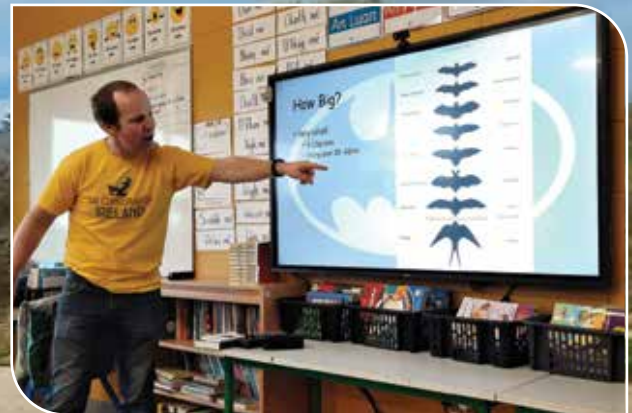
The Wexford Bat Group was founded in 2022 to build an appreciation of the natural wonder of bats.

In County Wexford, we are lucky to find eight of the nine bat species resident in Ireland, and with our diverse landscapes, we never have too far to go to observe bats. On a casual visit to the grounds of Toss Byrne's pub in Inch, common pipistrelle bats were seen feeding along the hedge line by the Inch River, while a Daubenton's bat, also known as the water bat, was seen feeding over the water surface close to the bridge in Castletown. We aim to educate the public on the importance of bats as part of our native fauna. For too long, bats have been maligned and the subject of false myths. A healthy, stable bat population is indicative of a good environment. As part of this aim, two talks were given to pupils in Castletown National School. Through our work we also aim

to expand the scientific knowledge of bats in the County by taking part in national surveys and undertaking our own local projects. Finally, the group undertakes practical actions such as constructing bat boxes. We are affiliated with Bat Conservation Ireland and run voluntarily. The group is most active in the summer months when bat activity is at its peak. Group activities include bat walks & talks, where attendees are shown how to use a bat detector to help find and observe bats. These walks are dispersed throughout the County to give everyone a chance to attend without travelling too far. Newcomers are always welcome.

For updates please email: wexfordbatgroup@gmail.com, and for further information visit, www.batconservationireland.org

ALAN POOLE



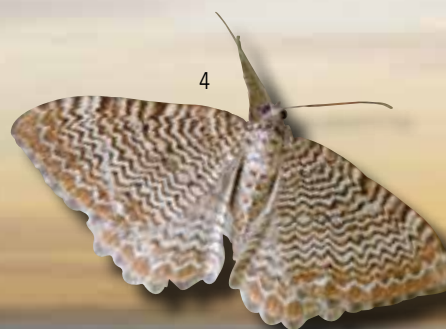
Moths of the Ahare



Moth diversity in County Wexford can be quite significant due to the varied landscapes and habitats found in the area. Moths are highly diverse insects, and they play crucial roles in various ecosystems as pollinators and as a food source for many other organisms. Factors influencing moth diversity include:

- **Habitats:** The county comprises a mix of environments, including woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, and coastal areas. Each of these habitats can support different moth species adapted to specific conditions.
- **Climate:** The local climate plays a vital role in determining the presence and abundance of moth species. Ireland's temperate maritime climate is generally suitable for a diverse range of moth species.
- **Vegetation and Plant Diversity:** The variety of plants and vegetation in the region provides food sources and breeding sites for different moth species.
- **Human Impact:** Human activities, such as urbanisation, agriculture, and land management practices, can have both positive and negative impacts on moth diversity.
- **Conservation Efforts:** Efforts to preserve natural habitats and conserve biodiversity can positively affect moth populations in the region.

MICHAEL O'DONNELL



1 Grass Emerald Moth
2 Poplar Hawk Moth
3 Elephant hawkmoth
4 Scallop Shell Moth

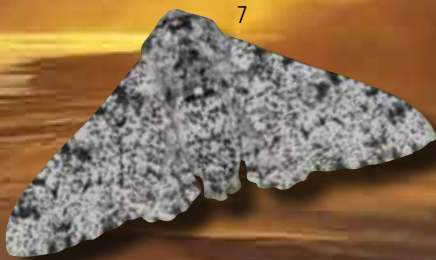
5 Angle Shades Moth
6 Garden Tiger Moth
7 Peppered Moth
8 Cinnabar Moth

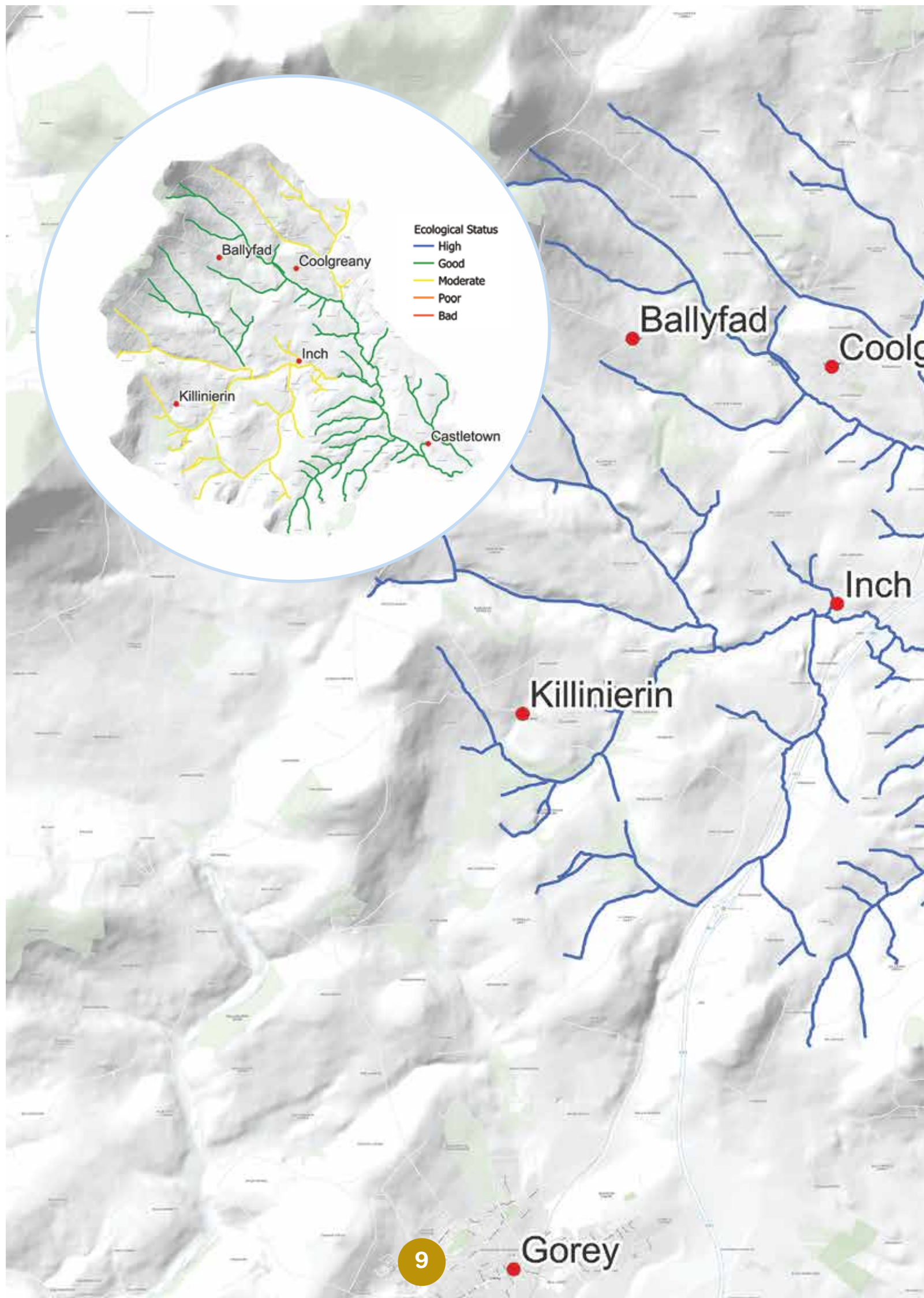
Along the Coast

Here in the southeast we are very fortunate to host both of Ireland's native seal species; both grey and harbour seals can be seen hunting or travelling in our shallow coastal waters or hauled out on land, either individually or in larger transient colonies. Both species play critical roles in our native ecosystem. As apex predators and nutrient recyclers, they help to maintain healthy and thriving coastal ecosystems. It is a marvel of the natural world to see these populations slowly recovering after being driven to the edge of extinction within the past several decades. You may also be lucky enough to witness a grey seal pup on our local beaches, during the winter

months. Every year Seal Rescue Ireland monitors hundreds of pups along Ireland's coastline, to ensure as many survive as possible. Seals are semi-aquatic marine mammals and rely on protected areas of coastline and offshore islands that aren't disturbed by humans in order to survive. If you see a living or dead seal on any of our beaches, please remain at least 100 metres away, do not approach or touch the animal and report it right away to Seal Rescue Ireland's 24/7 Rescue Hotline: 087 195 5393.

**JESHUA TAUCHER, PROJECT MANAGER,
SEAL RESCUE IRELAND**







The Ahare & Inch River Catchment

An Ecological Study of the River Ahare: Summary

Field surveys of the Ahare River and its surrounding areas were conducted in July, September, and October 2022. The majority of the lands adjacent to the river are privately owned, so the survey was mostly done from the roadside, using visual assessment and aerial photography to identify habitats. In inaccessible areas, binoculars were used to identify plant species. The estuarine section of the river and beach were surveyed on foot as they are publicly accessible. During the study, several habitat types were recorded, including tidal river, lowland depositing watercourse, improved agricultural grassland, immature woodland, drainage ditches, wet grassland, dry meadows and grassy verges. Stone walls and other stonework, wet willow-alder-ash woodland, reed and large sedge swamps, upper saltmarsh, and hedgerows. The river was classified as a tidal river downstream of Ahare Bridge, where there are regular fluctuations in salinity, turbidity and water flow due to tidal influence. Upstream of the bridge, the river was classified as a lowland depositing watercourse, where fine sediments are deposited on the riverbed.

The surrounding lands were dominated by improved agricultural grassland, mostly used for grazing livestock or silage production. Some areas had been drained and converted into fields, resulting in reduced biodiversity. Additionally, there were areas of immature woodland, drainage ditches, wet grassland and dry meadows along the riverbank. Stone walls, typical of field boundaries, were present in the study area. Furthermore, the riverbanks contained wet willow-alder-ash woodland, while a large reedbed dominated by common reed was found further downstream. Some areas of the riverbank were classified as upper saltmarsh, where vegetation was dominated by rushes and red fescue, and a variety of habitats were observed along the hedgerows that acted as field boundaries. Overall, the study identified a diverse range of habitats along the Ahare River and its environs, each supporting unique plant and animal communities. However, intensive agricultural practices in some areas have led to habitat modifications and reduced biodiversity.

FAITH WILSON



Farming & the Ahare

IN CONVERSATION WITH PETER BYRNE, DAIRY FARMER

What type of farming do you do?

Dairy farming

Where do you farm? I farm in the townland of Ahare, Castletown, Gorey, Co. Wexford and at Kilcavan, Tara Hill, Gorey.

What is your herd type? I have a herd of 180 dairy cows plus 150 replacement followers from our own stock. I stock Holstein Friesians as they are good milkers.

Tell us about your family. I'm married to Patricia with two sons, Patrick and Daniel. Daniel, the youngest, has followed me into farming.

Do you have a farming history in your family? My grandfather was a blacksmith in Castletown but always had a grá for farming. He didn't want my father to become a blacksmith, as the life was too hard and it was difficult to make a living from it. My grandfather bought a bit of land in Castletown and the family farm was on a very small scale. My grandmother, however, came from a farming background and had a family farming history dating back over 400 years in Wicklow. My father inherited a relative's house and some land and that's where I'm based.

Where did you learn your farming skills from? I worked with my father since I was 14 years old and learned all about farming from him – learning on the job so to speak. My father learned his wisdom as he went along and learned from his mistakes.

Was it a natural choice for you to become a farmer? Yes, I love the work.

Do you feel a connection to the land and what does that mean to you? Yes, I feel connected to the farm.

What improvements in farming practices made a difference in your dad's time? Mechanisation made a big difference to farming and made life a bit easier.

Has farming progressed since your father's time? What advantages do you feel you have now? Farmers have gained more financially and are more environmentally friendly than in my father's time. There was not the same environmental awareness as there is now.

What advantages do you feel there are today compared to your father's time? I think farmers had a better sense of community back then and they came together to help each other. The farming community today will still help if you need it, but it is not the same as years ago. There were more local farmers in my father's time and only around four are now farming around the Tara Hill area.

What are the challenges farmers face today? Not knowing what's ahead of you and what state regulations are coming down the line. For example, a reduction in the dairy herd numbers and resulting reduction in farm incomes. I worry about my son's future in farming going forward.

Are farmers getting good support and advice from farm bodies? I don't think the farming organisations such as IFA and ISCMA represent farmers strongly enough. Teagasc handles farm administration for farmers.

What is the public perception of farmers today? Do you think it's positive or negative? I think it's generally positive – I have no complaints from my neighbours about farming practices. I don't agree with the vegan argument that we should all eat a grain and vegetable diet. Meat is not bad for you and people should have a choice.

Do you think that we are experiencing biodiversity and climate change challenges? Yes, there are changes but I think that these weather patterns we have now are part of a bigger evolution of weather cycles that have always happened.

What changes do you see as a farmer? Nature finds its own balance, I think. I do see a lot more buzzards overhead in the area and they might be responsible for the reduction in the hare population in the locality. Things always evolve and change.



Fish of the Ahare

Estuaries and inshore waters provide significant nursery habitat for the larval and juvenile forms of fish species, in addition to providing shelter and food for many young and adult fish, crustaceans and shellfish. These in turn provide food resources for other levels of the food chain including shore birds, waterfowl, larger fish and marine mammals. Intertidal areas host high densities of bottom-dwelling fauna, in particular worms and molluscs. This in turn makes them important habitats for juvenile fish such as bass and flounder, and juvenile crustaceans such as crabs, which inhabit such habitats in high numbers.

Estuarine fish can generally be divided into a number of groups:

- 1 Estuarine dependant (opportunists) species
- 2 Marine stragglers
- 3 Riverine species
- 4 Truly estuarine species (residents)
- 5 Migratory species

Damage to these habitats can have disproportionate effects on certain fish stocks by impacting spawning and juvenile fish, not only damaging inshore stocks but also affecting recruitment to offshore populations.

**DONNACHADH BYRNE, SENIOR
FISHERIES ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER, IFI**



Angling in the Ahare River

My brother Brendan and I spent many long summers in the 1960's living with my aunt and cousins, just outside of Courtown, and were frequent visitors to my grandparents' home in Castletown. There is an interesting contrast between the Ahare River and the neighbouring Owenavarragh River, which flows to sea through Courtown Harbour. At that time Bolgers' salmon nets were still in operation along the lower sections of the Owenavarragh River, just above Courtown Harbour and on several occasions during flood conditions, we were excited and privileged to witness significant runs of salmon moving upstream from the sea. Sea trout populations were abundant in the Owenavarragh itself, but the fish were generally small, what I now know to be finnock, averaging 25cm to 30cm. There were some larger sea trout in the river and my cousins, who at times were tempted to poach the middle pools, captured a sea trout of some 8 to 9lbs from a pool close to the old Mass Rock, upstream of the bridge on the Gorey to Courtown road.

In contrast, the Ahare River held sea trout (known locally as white trout), of a much higher average size. The flat, slow flowing floodplain, which typifies the lower sections of the river, ensured deep pools which provide ideal holding areas for these large sea trout. It was not unusual for sea trout of 2.5 to 4lbs to be taken from the river at that time. The river not alone held large sea trout but also very large numbers of these fish. This attested to the fine spawning conditions, which were to be found in the two tributary streams, the Inch and Coolgreany Rivers. To generate such a population of large sea trout, the river's productivity was apparently far higher than that of the Owenavarragh, which was more typical of an east coast salmon river. Another feature of the Ahare was the highly unstable nature of the river mouth flowing



Catchment

out onto Clone Strand. The constantly shifting sands ensured that the direction, flow and volume of freshwater entering the ocean was forever changing, depending on the seasons and on sea conditions, particularly over the winter period. I can well remember that, at times, the river was so distorted by nature that it flowed in a multitude of shallow streamlets across the very broad river mouth, out into the sea. On a rising tide, you could clearly see the shoals of sea trout running the gauntlet across these shallow areas and dashing into the pools of the river itself. The Ahare also held the occasional summer grilse or one-sea-winter salmon, but these were in very low abundance in comparison to the significant runs of salmon entering the neighbouring Owenavarragh River.

Recent sampling has shown that the Ahare River has the potential to again achieve the water quality and productivity that it had in the 1960's. Those living in the catchment need to be encouraged to adopt the restoration of the Ahare River as a key local restoration project. Pressures on the catchment need to be tackled to ensure fish passage, reduce discharges from septic tanks, sewage-treatment plants, agriculture and where present, forestry. One great advantage is the presence of a remnant stock of magnificent large east coast sea trout, which are themselves resilient, and would respond quickly to improvements in water quality and river habitat restoration. As stocks recover, the river could again prove to be an important sport fishery along the east coast, and a welcome additional recreational asset for the local community.

**KEN WHELAN, FISHERIES SCIENTIST,
AUTHOR & RADIO PERSONALITY**

Dublin Angling Initiative

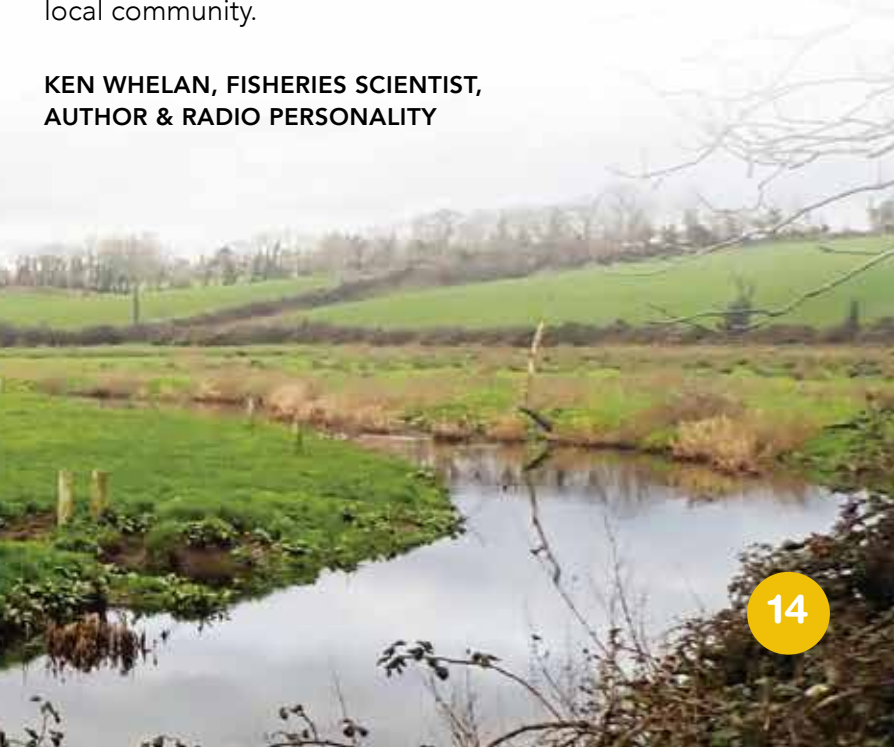
I began fishing as a child, mostly on small rivers similar to the Ahare, trying to find a trout or, rumour had it, a salmon. However, the first fish I really remember catching were perch at Williamstown Harbour on Lough Derg, where you could hardly see the water for the fish. But it was the smaller rivers and streams where most of my effort was spent, idling away the hours trying to catch something. Through fishing I developed a love of nature and the outdoors that has lasted to this day. I realised that being outdoors fishing gave me a chance to relax and unwind that nothing else in life came close to doing.

After many years working in other sectors I finally realised that I wanted to work outdoors with nature, and in particular, with fishing. I applied to work with Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) in 2018 as a Seasonal Fisheries Officer and to my delight also found myself running the Dublin Angling Initiative (DAI). The DAI was set up in 1995 and aims to promote, develop and improve angling for young people from the greater Dublin area. It is a wonderful programme that helps teach young people how and where to fish, and hopefully introduce them to a bit of nature and all the benefits it has to offer.

I think it is really important to look after our environment, as modern life puts so much pressure on it every single day. Inland Fisheries Ireland is the environment agency responsible for protecting, managing and conserving Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resources. I hope in my job I can contribute to this, by spreading the word and helping people to become aware of what wonderful rivers, lakes and fishing we have in Ireland.

We brought some local children from Castletown National School to look at the Ahare River to see what the water quality was like, and what fish might live there. Rivers like the Ahare really matter! They are worth fighting for, sticking up for and looking after – so that the next generation of young people can find out where the trout might hide. I also hope that many young people learn to fish as it brings so many benefits – getting out into the fresh air, a chance to concentrate and relax at the same time, and hopefully a hobby that can last a lifetime. We were delighted to run some angling workshops for youngsters on Clone Strand and look forward to doing more in the future.

RORY KEATING, CO-ORDINATOR, IFI



Reflections from the Riverbank

A river of fish: From Croghan mountain the Ahare River also known as the Inch or Kilgorman Rivers meets up with the Clonogue river and continues its journey to the sea at Castletown. In 1885 the "About Wexford, Country Guide and Directory" referred to the river as being abundant in salmon and trout. Things have changed a lot since then and while the river is still a salmon and trout river, many winds of change have blown since then.

Phantom ship: Ghost stories abound about the river. One story is of a fully rigged sailing ship that sails through the mists upriver from the sea. This ship is reported to have been wrecked off Clone beach. There are locals who claim to have seen this phantom ship and it scared the gizzards out of them. There are also reports of a ghostly light that comes from the old burial grounds at Kilgorman. This was reportedly seen at night coming down from the graveyard and it moved along the riverbank. This was observed several times from Clone and while there were those who dismissed the sightings, there was none brave enough to investigate this light at night.

Ghostly mists: A mist forms along the river on a summers evening and is known locally as "The Murneen Tuc". This is possibly a reference to an old Irish name known in the area as a river fog. Long ago people thought it was a supernatural phenomenon and that it was haunted.

What makes the river special: The Ahare river exits the land at Kilgorman to Clone beach with reed banks on either side providing a great wildlife habitat. Kayaking up the river from the estuary is a fabulous way to see the river and its wildlife. The river estuary has in the past flowed into a lagoon which picked up the flow from the Dooroge stream also on Clone and exited to sea in a northerly direction. This lagoon has been a special nursery for juvenile flat fish and people have talked about being in the lagoon and experiencing a flurry of sand under their feet as a flounder made a quick escape. Eels from the Sargasso Sea enter the estuary and migrate up the Dooroge stream every year. The sound of children's laughter resounds through summer days as when the water levels are low they love to play in the lagoon. The flash of the silver bellies of the young sea trout as they jump and flip in the estuary and the sound of the sandpipers and oyster catchers as they amble along the banks of the estuary mouth are wonderful sights to behold. Heron and white egrets patrol the lagoon and estuary on the lookout for a tasty bite to eat. Even dolphins have been known to hunt sprat and mackerel up onto the beach like a scene out of a David Attenborough Living Planet movie. One time even the local children got involved hauling the mackerel out on the beach. It was a once in a lifetime amazing sight to see.

ANDY KELLY IN CONVERSATION WITH CATHY LEE

Junior Stories from the Waterside:
Celebrating World Wetlands Day
2023 Winning story: Treasure at
the Ahare!

I have always liked the Ahare River. Sometimes I go there to get a little peace, and just watch the birds and rabbits and try unsuccessfully to catch the little black minnows in the water. I cycle down in the summer mornings to paddle and read my book. One day as I was wading in the river, I saw something shiny, buried in the rocks. At first, I thought it was just another minnow taking a rest, but when it was still there 20 seconds later, I went over to investigate. I reached down and my hand touched something smooth and cold. I pulled it up and examined it closely, realising it was a big silver coin. We've been learning about the Spanish in school and I kid you not, this coin in my hand looked exactly like one of those old Spanish coins on the pirate ships. What were they called again? Oh....peso! This coin in my hands looked exactly like one of those old Spanish peso coins! This coin could be worth a fortune! There wasn't a moment to lose, as I hopped on my bike and pedalled as fast as I could, away from the peace and serenity of the river and towards home. The only sounds I could hear was the ragged breathing of my lungs and the frantic thoughts of my brain. What was it worth? A thousand euro? More? Enough to get me a new hurl at least! I burst through the back door, yelling for Mam. "Look at what I found Mam. It's treasure!" I said breathlessly. But Mam took one look at my treasure and laughed. "What?", I asked. "That's not treasure" she said, "that's the old Irish pence, it's worth about 50 cents!" "Oh well", I thought. "There's plenty more treasure in the sea! I was just unlucky this time."

**ELLEN DIXON, AGED 12 6TH CLASS,
SCOIL GHORMÁIN NAOFA,
CASTLETOWN, GOREY, CO. WEXFORD**

From the National Folklore Collection 1938

Hiddentreasure: A story is told of a crock of gold hidden by sea captain at Ahare Bridge. A large vessel was wrecked off Sallin* and the captain and a cabin boy were saved. They came up along the river and buried a crock of gold at Ahare Bridge. When it was hidden, the captain said to the little boy "I will leave you here to mind the gold" and he hit him a stroke and killed him. For years afterward, it was said a young boy with his head bent was seen walking up and down this bridge. When the form was seen crossing the road, if an animal was nearby, he was sure to die. People by the name of Condren who live near the bridge lost a fine black horse in this manner. I got the story from my aunt and she heard it from her grandfather, Michael Redmond, who lived at Tara Hill and died about 41 years ago.

**Also known as Saleen*

**7th FEBRUARY 1938, PATRICK REID
TARA HILL, GOREY, CO WEXFORD**

Leisure

WHAT is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?—
No time to stand beneath the boughs, And stare as long
as sheep and cows:
No time to see, when woods we pass, Where squirrels
hide their nuts in grass:
No time to see, in broad daylight, Streams full of stars,
like skies at night:
No time to turn at Beauty's glance, And watch her feet,
how they can dance:
No time to wait till her mouth can Enrich that smile her
eyes began?
A poor life this if, full of care, We have no time to stand
and stare.

BY WILLIAM HENRY DAVIES

Inch / Ahare / Kilgorman River - an Overview

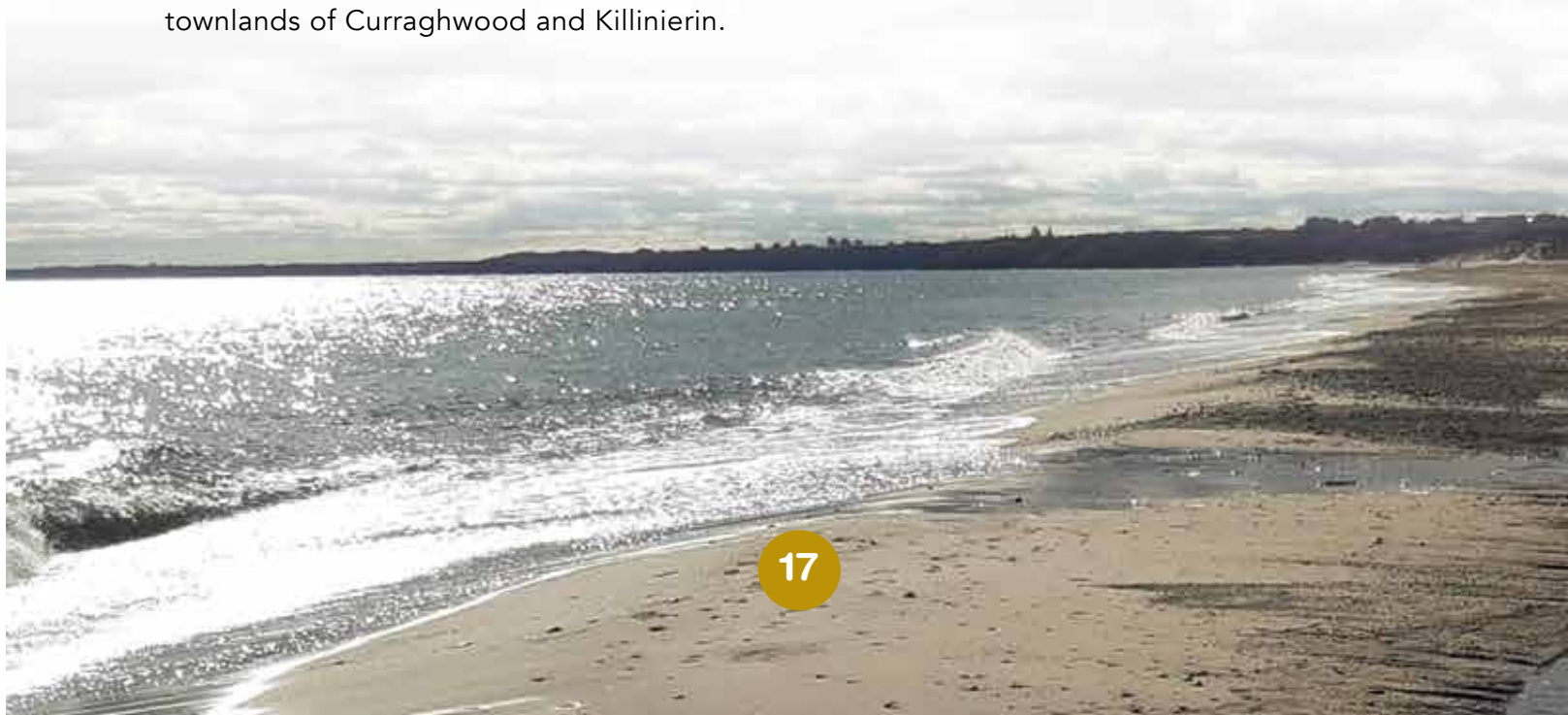
Names are complicated things, and this river has a few, so let's get the disagreements out of the way early. Most of it is the Inch River. Some people refer to some sections as the Ahare River and others call the lower section the Kilgorman River. Now that everyone disagrees, let's call the whole thing from source to sea the Ahare River for now.

Laraheen Hill and Barracurragh Hill bring up much of the headwater streams that form Inch River. The river flows for about 11.5km in a curving generally easterly direction to the Irish Sea at Clone Strand. There is good fishing to be had on this river with Brown trout and it is an important salmon river. Sea trout are known from the Castletown Bridge hrough Ahare Bridge and to the sea with the main sea trout run in July each year. The habitats on the banks of the river are mostly agricultural grasslands. There is a lot of good grazing land and some wet grasslands. In some places the river also drains some former bogs and fens that are partly or mostly reclaimed. Planted forestry is present in the upper parts of the river around the townlands of Curraghwood and Killinierin.

The biggest change the river has seen in recent times is the development of the M11 motorway near the Inch Parish Church in the Townland of Inch.

Downstream of Inch Bridge the river widens and meanders and from Ahare Bridge it expands still further into a wetland system called Kilgorman River Marsh that is a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) to look after the fragile species and habitats. Strawberries are one Wexford staple of summer and the other is caravan and holiday parks filling up with summer visitors. The Inch River passes some caravan parks in the Townlands of Kilgorman and Upper Clone in their well-appointed locations overlooking both the river and the Irish Sea with the soft sands and sun of Clone Strand. The shape of the riverbed as it crosses the strand varies over time with the pushing of the tides and the strength of flow in the river carving new channels from time to time, presenting tourists and locals alike with a new and varied perspective on the river and beach at each visit.

VINCENT MURPHY



Characteristics of the Ahare River Catchment

The geology and soils of Castletown Village consist of Ordovician Dark blue-grey slate, phyllite and schist from the 'Maulin Formation', while upstream near Castletown Bridge, there are green, red-purple and buff slate, and siltstone from the 'Oaklands Formation'. The lower part of the Ahare River system is underlain by Ordovician green and grey slates with thin siltstone from the 'Ballylane Formation', and at the coast, the 'Oaklands Formation' occurs again. The catchment slopes are covered by glacial till and the immediate environs of the Ahare River have alluvial soils, with blown sand dunes at the coast.

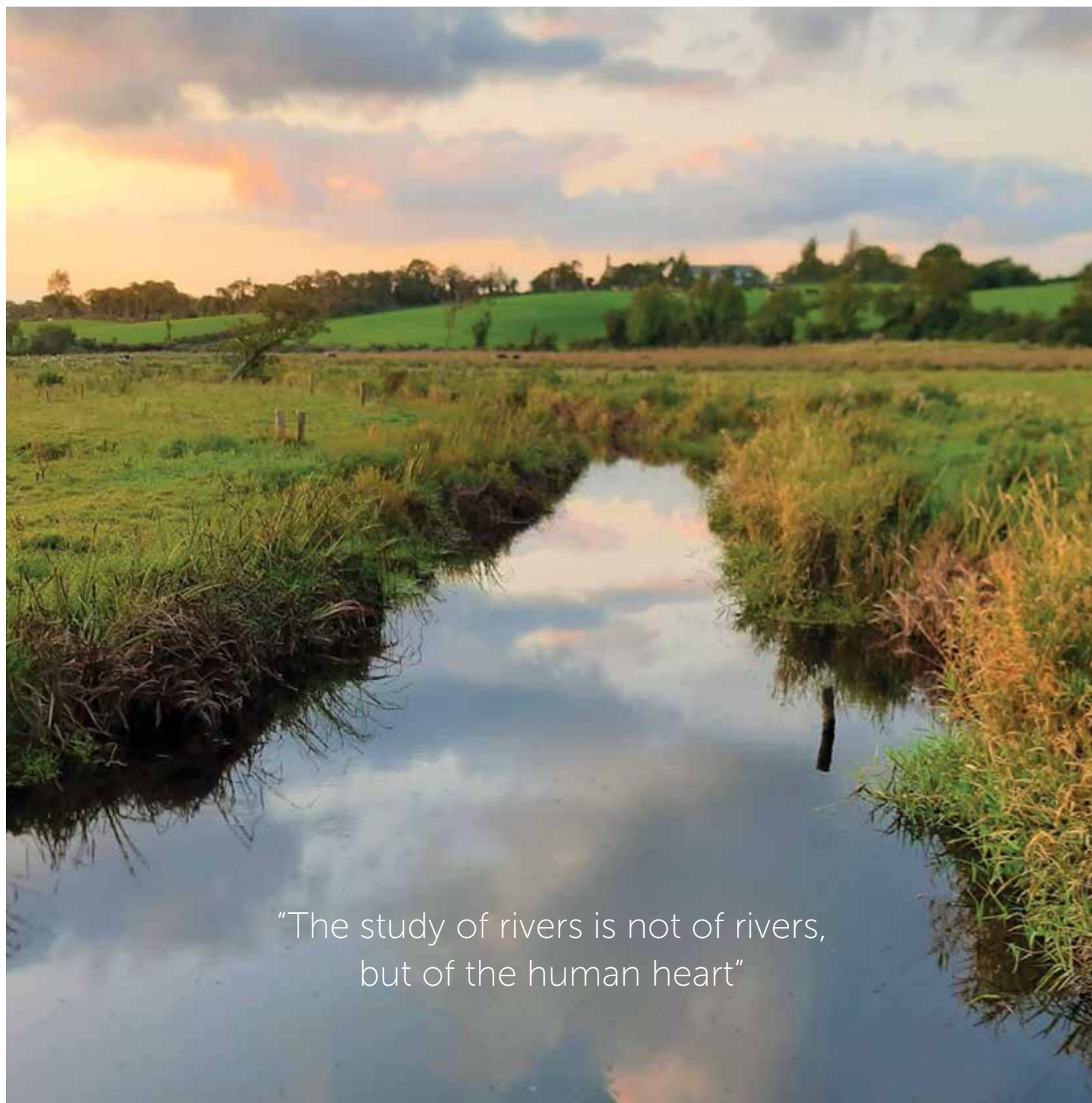
The Clonlough tributary rises on the slopes of Croghankinsella Mountain through Coolgreany Village and joins the Ahare River at Clonlough. Many headwater streams of the Ahare River are also present. Water quality is monitored as part of Ireland's reporting obligations under the EU Water Framework Directive, with samples taken at standard locations, including Castletown and Ahare bridges. Over the years, water quality in the Ahare River has improved, but it remains classified as 'At Risk' – nitrates are a particular concern, especially in ground water. Some lands along the northern bank of the Ahare River within the study area have formal nature conservation designations, including the proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) known as Kilgorman River Marsh. Further north along the coast, the sand dune system at Kilpatrick is also designated for nature conservation.

Best Practice

In our pursuit of livelihood, recreation, and household management we have a huge ability to harm, or help, our local Water Quality and Biodiversity. We are dependent upon clean water coming to us from upstream, while other folk, as well as wildlife, depend on the water we discharge, being as clean and clear as possible. It can be helpful to think of our sinks, showers, toilets, and washing machines as tributaries of our local river! Outside, on our farms and in our gardens, we also have a huge capacity to help or hinder water and habitat quality. Here are a few tips to lessen our impacts:

- Avoid any Cleaning Products which contain Phosphates or Bleach – they spoil the good work of your sewage treatment/septic tank, leading to aquatic pollution – use eco-friendly products or learn how to make your own citrus- and vinegar-based cleaning agents*!
- Use the minimum of any cleaning products – enough is enough!
- Any common Household Product labelled 'Hazard' or 'Poison' or 'Toxic' or 'Irritant' must be treated as Toxic Waste when disposing of – follow Local Authority Guidelines, and never rinse down sink or into drains; this includes Paint, Antifreeze, Drain Cleaners, 'Air Fresheners', Carpet & Upholstery Cleaners, Toilet-water 'Fresheners', Bleach & Ammonia...they're all poisonous!!!
- Keep your garden low-maintenance and low water-dependent; use native plants & trees to establish suitable local habitats and assist insects/pollinators, birds, mammals & fish.
- Avoid pesticides, herbicides, and application of synthetic fertilisers – they are all enemies of Biodiversity and Soil Health.
- Whether digging your garden, preparing a building site, or ploughing a field, remember that Silts & Sediments are one of the biggest enemies of Aquatic Biodiversity...contain them as best you can.
- Allow for healthy riparian zones along streams and rivers... these help buffer the effects of fertilisers and silts, and enable a flourishing of riverside vegetation.

*To learn how to make your own Household Cleaners visit:
<https://www.rte.ie/lifestyle/living/2020/0422/1134147-10-cleaning-hacks-with-vinegar-lemons-and-bicarb/>



“The study of rivers is not of rivers,
but of the human heart”

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