

WHAT DO NATURE-RICH GRASSLANDS DO FOR US?

NATURE-RICH GRASSLANDS ARE FIELDS THAT ARE FARMED, BUT WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN HEAVILY ALTERED BY AGRICULTURE. INSTEAD, THEY ARE MANAGED IN A LOW INTENSITY WAY. FOR EXAMPLE, WITH LOW LEVELS OF INPUTS SUCH AS FERTILISERS. THEY ARE ALSO KNOWN AS 'SEMI-NATURAL GRASSLANDS'

1. FOOD FOR STOCK, AND HUMANS!

NATURE-RICH GRASSLANDS PROVIDE VARIED AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR OUR STOCK, FOR EXAMPLE, CATTLE AND SHEEP. IN THIS WAY, THEY ARE PART OF PRODUCING HEALTHY FOOD FOR US TOO.

WE DON'T KNOW EXACTLY HOW MUCH NATURE-RICH GRASSLAND WE HAVE LEFT IN IRELAND. IN ENGLAND, THEY ESTIMATE THAT 97% HAS BEEN LOST, AND IT'S LIKELY THAT THE FIGURE COULD BE SIMILAR HERE.

2. A HOME FOR NATURE

NATURE-RICH GRASSLANDS PROVIDE SHELTER AND FOOD FOR INVERTEBRATES, SMALL MAMMALS AND BIRDS. THEY ARE A VITAL HOME FOR MANY TYPES OF WILDLIFE AND BIODIVERSITY.

MANY RARE AND DECLINING SPECIES RELY ALMOST ENTIRELY ON GRASSLANDS AND OTHER OPEN HABITATS, AND THIS INCLUDES ANIMALS, SUCH AS BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES, AS WELL AS PLANTS.

3. BEAUTY AND JOY

NATURE-RICH GRASSLANDS, BRIMMING WITH SPECIES, ARE BEAUTIFUL AND GIVE US JOY AND A SENSE OF WELL-BEING. THEY CAN HELP SUPPORT TOURISM TOO.

GRASSLANDS ARE AMONG OUR MOST DIVERSE HABITATS. RECENT SURVEYS IN IRELAND FOUND AN AVERAGE OF 40 PLANT SPECIES IN 2x2M PLOTS IN CALCAREOUS GRASSLANDS, WITH SOME PLOTS HAVING UP TO 73 SPECIES!

4. INTRINSIC VALUE

MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT ALL HABITATS AND SPECIES HAVE AN INTRINSIC VALUE, ASIDE FROM WHAT THEY CAN DO FOR US!

MANY IRISH PLACE NAMES ARE LINKED TO GRASSLANDS, SUCH AS...

CLUAIN – MEANING MEADOW (OFTEN SEEN 'CLON'/'CLOON')
PÁIRC – USED TO MEAN MANY TYPES OF FIELD
AICHE – MEANING GREEN, OFTEN FOR SPORT OR COMMUNITY (OFTEN SEEN AS 'FAHA')
ACHADH – USED WIDELY FOR FIELD (OFTEN SEEN AS 'AGHA-', OR SIMILAR)

CREDIT MANCHÁN MAGAN (2020) 'THIRTY-TWO WORDS FOR FIELD' AND DEIRDRE FLANAGAN & LAURENCE FLANAGAN (1994) 'IRISH PLACE NAMES'

5. WATER

HEALTHY GRASSLANDS WITH HEALTHY SOILS FILTER WATER TO HELP ENSURE WE HAVE CLEAR RIVERS AND STREAMS. THEY ALSO STORE WATER IN TIMES OF HEAVY RAINFALL, HELPING TO OFFSET FLOODING.

6. SOILS

HEALTHY DIVERSE GRASSLANDS HAVE HEALTHY DIVERSE SOILS. THE BEST NATURE-RICH GRASSLANDS WILL BE UNPLOUGHED. WHEN SOILS FUNCTION WELL, THEY SUPPORT A MYRIAD OF SOIL MICRO-ORGANISMS, HELP PLANTS GROW, AND EVER MORE IMPORTANTLY, STORE MORE CARBON.

WHEN GRASSLANDS ARE DEGRADED FROM A NATURE POINT OF VIEW BY BEING FERTILISED OR RESEED, THEY MAY FUNCTION BETTER IN TERMS OF QUANTITY OF FOOD PRODUCED, BUT THEY FUNCTION MORE POORLY ACROSS OTHER AREAS, SUCH AS SUPPORTING NATURE AND STORING CARBON.



WWW.GREATIRISHGRASSLANDS.IE



NPWS

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