



BRIDE Project

Newsletter March 2019



BRIDE Project
Farming with Nature

PROJECT UPDATE

The Project now begins in earnest! - as we have just received back 30 BMA maps of those interested farmers with the remainder due this week. These vary widely in their %BMA – from less than 5% to over 30% BMA. If your figure is low – don't despair as increasing your BMA% is the goal of the project. Be mindful also that the quality of the habitats is very important so although your BMA figure may be high the quality of it may not. While mapping habitats has been done before this is one of the first if not the first time it has been used in a results-based payment project in an intensive farming landscape.

The full list of BRIDE Measures and their associated capital costs will be sent to you in the coming week, your farm biodiversity improvements will be chosen from this list so please review and consider options that may suit you on your farm.

Some of you have contacted us with a view to incorporating some measures especially hedgerow and tree planting as this can only be done up to April – as maps come in we'll contact you immediately to discuss this. Due to time constraints hedgerow & tree planting will be deferred on some farms until September / October. Priority entry will be given to those farmers who are prepared to improve the **quality** and increase the **quantity** of their BMA (habitats).

For those of you have not yet had your farm surveyed by our ecologist can you contact us to arrange a farm visit. For those who were surveyed we are now ready to discuss your BMA Map and the options available to you – please contact us with a time that suits.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR...

Queen Bumble Bees - Queen bumble bees have recently begun to wake from their hibernation – keep an eye out as they are quite large and distinctive – they are one of the first of our pollinator arrivals. Ireland has 20 bumblebee species and if you want to make a start on identifying them – check the tail colour and the number of colour bands on their chest. As the spring warms up they will become more apparent.

Primrose (Irish =
sabhaircín) and
lesser
celandine
should be out or



nearly out at this stage –
keep an eye for small
yellow flowers with a
beautiful scent of
spring from the
primrose (don't pull
it!).



MONTHLY REMINDER

• March is always a hungry month for birds before spring starts in earnest. Consider a bird feeder in your garden.



Peanuts for siskins, sparrows, tits, greenfinches and chaffinches and nyger seed for goldfinches – can all be purchased at most hardware stores. You'll find it good therapy to look out at the birds!

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

If you've got green fingers, try to plant some **pollinator-friendly plants** for your garden this spring. Very often the large, more showy flowers are not suitable. Some suggestions would be :

- 🌸 Sweet William 🌸 English Lavender 🌸 Verbena
- 🌸 Butterfly Bush (Buddleja) 🌸 Catmint
- 🌸 Ceanothus (California Lilac)

If you can create a **wild flower patch** we suggest:

- ✳ Hedge Mustard, ✳ Birds Foot Trefoil, ✳ Red Clover, ✳ Oxeye Daisy, ✳ Wild Carrot, ✳ Field Scabious, ✳ Lesser Knapweed.

If you would like our full BRIDE Pollinator Mix drop us an email.

Try to refrain from cutting and spraying **dandelions** in the next month or so. They are a very valuable early flower to many insects including honey bees, providing an early source of pollen and nectar. Try to see it as a wild flower rather than a weed – it's almost certainly more valuable to wildlife than most other plants in the garden. If you were a bee, you'd spray the grass and leave the dandelions!

FEEDBACK

Thanks for the feedback from last month's issue. We've had several reports along with photos of frogspawn and frogs. Thanks to John Murphy, Kildinan for this photo of the Common Frog found in a water trough he was emptying.



BIRD FOCUS

Sand Martin

Not everyone may know that three species of Swallow nest in Ireland. The first of these to arrive back for the summer in March are Sand Martins. These small swallow-like brown birds nest in colonies where they dig burrows in sand

banks, hence the name. Favourite nest sites are sand quarries or tall river banks on the Bride though they also nest in man-made structures for example the bridge in Fermoy where they use holes between the bricks.



TREE FOCUS

Native Woodland

Once widespread throughout Ireland, centuries of harvesting, with few trees being replaced, means that truly native oak can be hard to find, though there are small woods in most counties.

One of our BRIDE measures is to plant 0.1 ha native woodland on your farm – this option will increase biodiversity as well as reduce your farm's carbon footprint and help flood control. Did you know the following are NOT native to Ireland? – beech, sycamore, horse chestnut and these trees do not have the same biodiversity value as native trees. The white blossom out now is blackthorn, and wild cherry (also white) is beginning to blossom also. Whitethorn (hawthorn) blossom won't be out until April/May. All of these are excellent sources of pollen and nectar.

Hope the spring is going well for everyone – best wishes in your lambing / calving / foaling / planting or tilling.

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