

THE MACREDDIN MILE

Our Wild Life along Our Macreddin Mile

In Ireland there are 203,200 miles of hedgerows, ditches and natural town land plantations, providing probably more public access per hectare to native wild life, than in any other country world-wide.

Wicklow's title as The Garden of Ireland is not by coincidence, for it is in Wicklow that the divergence of Ireland's wild plants and wild life is most recognisable.

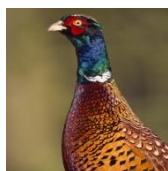
The Macreddin Mile is a prime example of this diversity that is unique to this County. Here we highlight just some of wild life that inhabits our Macreddin Mile!



The native Irish Red Squirrel is quite a small, slim animal, unlike the stockier grey imported squirrel, with which it is constantly fighting for territory. Average length is about 40cm from nose to tip of tail. The coat is usually red-brown, but may turn quite greyish in winter. On Macreddin Mile, the red squirrel can be seen occasionally crossing the road at Gallows Lane.



There seems to be two fox sets on The Macreddin Mile. One is close by to The Stable House (perhaps the free-range hens there, provide the best reason for this!) The other set is into the right hand side just before the corner at The Church.



Pheasant is a common sight in this part of Wicklow. Ballinacor Estate beside The Macreddin Mile is one of the oldest shoots in Europe. Through it's sustainable game management and conservation programme, 56,000 pheasants are released annually. The Macreddin Mile benefits hugely from this when the wiser pheasants seek refuge here!



The Jay is unmistakable. Probably one of the most colourful and striking birds breeding in Ireland. About the same size as a Jackdaw, the body is pale brown, with some dark streaking on the crown. The throat is white. In flight, it shows large patches of blue and white on the otherwise black wings. The Jay can be occasionally spotted in or around O'Hara's Inch on Macreddin Mile.



The Kingfisher is a group of small to medium sized brightly and brilliantly coloured river birds. The Irish Kingfisher lives only along our cleanest rivers. There are at least two sets along Ballycreen River, the main river that crosses through our Macreddin Mile. Macreddin Bridge in the early morning or late evening is a perfect spot to catch a glance of their metallic blue as they fly underneath the bridge.



The Fallow deer is now Ireland's most popular deer with over 60 herds in parks or enclosures. Introduced by the Norman's soon after their arrival in 1169, they are now the most widespread species of deer and are found in most woodlands countryside, both hill and lowland. On The Macreddin Mile, they cross the road at dusk and dawn just above Macreddin Bridge.



As the name suggests, American mink originated in North America. Renowned for their thick fur, large numbers of mink were bred, raised and killed on fur farms. Some animals escaped, and others were released on purpose. The mink readily adapted to their new environment and quickly spread, establishing themselves at the top of the food chain. Mink has been spotted on the river banks at Macreddin Bridge.



The grey plumage and stature of Grey Herons make them unmistakable. It is a very familiar species being widely distributed and a year-round resident in Ireland. The marshy land below O'Hara's Inch and The Ballycreen River itself have proved attractive hunting grounds to this bird.



The Common Frog is the only species of frog found in Ireland and is listed as an internationally important species. The damp vegetation, camouflaged ponds, streams and hedgerows at the lower part of The Macreddin Mile provide a perfect habitat and breeding location for this amphibian.



The Dipper is slightly smaller than a Blackbird, in all plumages it appears very compact and dumpy. It breeds along fast-flowing streams and rivers, with plenty of exposed rocks, it habitually bobs up and down when perched, again, Macreddin Bridge is a perfect place to spot it as it flies low over the water. Adults are reddish-brown with a large "bib" of white on the throat and breast.



The brown trout is a native Irish species, and the most widely distributed freshwater fish in Ireland. It thrives in rivers of all types, from small mountain streams to broad limestone rivers. Its main requirements are clean water and swift runs over gravel in which to spawn. Ballycreen River offers an ideal, clean habitat for this fish.



Despite its obvious song all along The Macreddin Mile, the Cuckoo is infrequently seen. In flight, it can be mistaken for a bird of prey such as a Sparrowhawk, but has more rapid wingbeats, all below the horizontal plane.



The Mallard is among the largest of our ducks. Males, with striking green head and yellow bill. Females brown in colour and whitish tail sides. Three ponds along The Macreddin Mile provide perfect habitat for the Mallard. One, below O'Hara's Inch, the other two being to the left and right after Macreddin Bridge. Although pairs settle here for numerous weeks every year, none have taken up permanent residence.



The Pine Marten is quite rare in Ireland, although their numbers are increasing. Its resemblance to the domestic cat led to it being named 'cat crainn' (tree cat) in Irish. It is chocolate-brown with a yellow bib, rounded ears and a long bushy tail. The Pine Marten has been praised recently for keeping the grey squirrel population at bay. It has been spotted twice in recent months along Macreddin Mile.



Rabbits have been resident in Ireland since the 12th century, rabbits now occupy a variety of habitats including open grassland, heath land, meadows, fringes of agricultural lands, grassy cliffs, sand dunes and light deciduous woodlands. Except for the sand dunes, The Macreddin Mile ticks all the boxes. Macreddin rabbits can easily be seen sunbathing on any hot summer's day.



The Red Kite is perhaps the most beautiful and graceful bird of prey in Europe. A master of the air, it glides effortlessly on its long finger-tipped wings, using its deeply forked tail as a rudder. Only recently re-introduced to Wicklow, the Red Kite has been spotted on numerous occasions along The Macreddin Mile.



Our Macreddin Mile is home to Ireland's two smallest bat species, and also the commonest, the Common and Soprano Pipistrelle. Both these bats can be seen flying around soon after dusk. Both have a rapid, twisting flight as they pursue tiny prey of midges, mosquitoes and small moths. Their high frequency notes are unmistakable.

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