



AUTUMN 2023 NEWSLETTER

Autumn is a lovely time to visit the Burren National Park. There are still some flora blooming and the trees and hedgerows are rich with fruit like haws, hips and sloes. It is also a good time to spot a variety of fungi and lichens in the hazel woods.

In this Newsletter, we will look at some weird and wonderful fungi you may encounter during a stroll through the Burren this Autumn. This issue will also look back at some of the park's highlights of the Summer season just gone.

The geology of the Burren can be appreciated all year round and in this issue we will identify some Carboniferous fossils commonly encountered in the Burren limestone.

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Summer Review

BURREN
NATIONAL
PARK



BURREN NATIONAL PARK STAFF
ON A GEOLOGY TRAINING TOUR WITH
GEOPARK GEOLOGIST, EAMONN DOYLE



A NEST CREATED
BY ONE OF OUR FOX CUBS



FOX
CUBS
ART

It has been another wonderful Summer season in the Burren National Park. Our staff received excellent training from Geopark geologist, Dr. Eamonn Doyle, who went through some of the processes responsible for creating the unique Burren landscape from the Carboniferous era 330 million yrs ago, through the last ice-age in Ireland, up to the arrival of the first farmers in the area.

The warmest June on record meant that Knockaunroe turlough dried out enough for us to get a closer look at some of the flora and fauna living there. The swallow holes remained somewhat damp and so acted as a refuge in the dry weather for huge numbers of tiny froglets! We found some turlough flora species such as Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Marsh Speedwell *Veronica scutellata*,

Common Water Plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica* and the rare Fen Violet *Viola persicifolia*.

A wet July on resulted in lush vegetation towards the end of the Summer and and meant a lot of tours that month were spent sheltering in the Hazel wood! Nearly 500 visitors joined our free guided tours, helping them to appreciate the habitats, wildlife, geology and history of the Burren. Some of the highlights during tours included two sightings of the usually elusive Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*, rare Brown Hairstreak butterflies *Thecla betulae* and recently, a Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*. The free shuttle bus service, which runs May through August, was a great success as

always with nearly 6000 passengers opting for this convenient transport to the park. Our first Art in the Park events were hampered by wet weather but some hardy artists braved the elements! The first Fox Cubs Kid's Club was also a great success with children joining guides in the park every Monday to discover a different aspect of Burren ecology such as flora, insects, birds and mammals.



BROWN
HAIRSTREAK



FEN VIOLET



SLOW WORM



Páirceanna Náisiúnta
National Parks



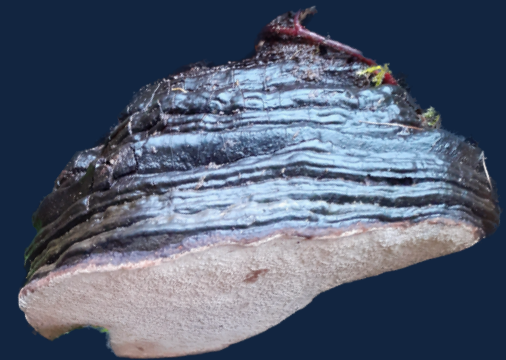
Fascinating Fungi

BURREN
NATIONAL
PARK



Fungi are an organism in a kingdom of their own, neither plant nor animal, but with characteristics of both. The mushrooms or toadstools we are familiar with are only the fruiting bodies of the fungi, which exist most of the time out of sight underground or within trees. Different fungi species specialise in what they consume whether it be dead wood, living trees, leaves, other fungi and even living insects! They are also adapted to different pH levels in the soil, specific species of trees and types of woodland or grassland. Fungi are an important part of our ecosystems, breaking down organic matter and recycling nutrients back into the soil.

Hoof fungus *Fomes fomentarius* grows on the bark of various tree species causing rot and then remaining on the dead tree as a decomposer. It is also known as tinder fungus as it was traditionally used to start fires. Otzi the Iceman was found to be carrying pieces of this hard fungus and it is thought he was using it as tinder on his journey 5,000 years ago!



Lurid Bolete *Suillellus luridus* has gills arranged vertically inside the cap of the mushroom which appear as pores when viewed from beneath. They are found in broadleaved woodland, usually on calcareous (alkaline) soil so are commonly found in the Burren where the limestone results in such conditions. Lurid Boletes will quickly turn blue when cut or bruised. This is one of many mycorrhizal fungi, forming a symbiotic relationship with trees such as oak and birch.

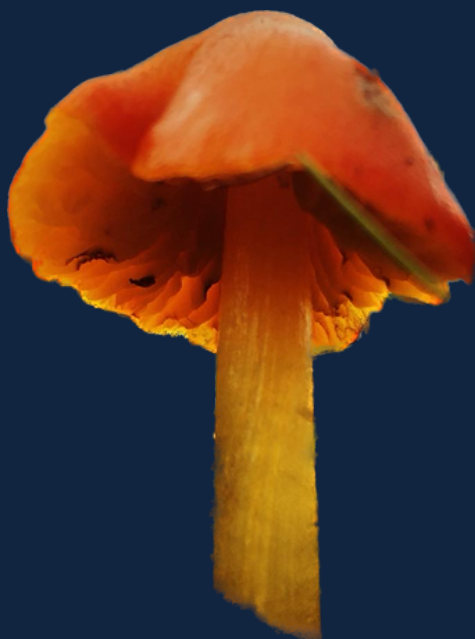
Elfin Saddle *Helvella lacunosa* is a strangely shaped mushroom found among leaf litter in mixed woodland. It belongs to a group of fungi known as ascomycetes or 'spore shooters' as they release spores from folds in the structure rather than dropping them from gills, which are absent.





Glue Crust fungus *Hymenochaete corrugata* is particularly associated with Hazel woods although will also use Holly or Willow as a host. This fungi has evolved an amazing trick to outcompete other saprophytic (dead wood consuming) fungi in the soil. It sticks itself onto nearby branches and consumes them before they fall to the forest floor.

Like gloved fingers gripping a branch, **Hazel Gloves** *Hypocreopsis rhododendri* is globally rare and only found in temperate rainforest along the Atlantic coast of Ireland and the UK. Found almost exclusively on Hazel, it is a flagship species for lush, Atlantic temperate rainforest and an indicator of clean air. Hazel Gloves does not consume the Hazel's wood but is parasitic on the Glue Crust fungus seen above.

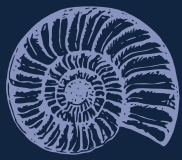


Waxcaps, or *Hygrocybes* (from the Greek for 'moist head'), are a genus of gilled fungi with fruiting bodies that appear shiny or waxy. Their bright colours are often reflected in the names of the various species such as Scarlet, Golden, Parrot, Crimson and Vermillion. Waxcaps are usually found in unimproved (nutrient-poor) grassland such as the meadows of the Burren National Park

Earth Tongue *Geoglossum*

Like the Waxcap fungi, the strange tongue-shaped fruiting bodies of Earth Tongue fungi are found in nutrient poor grassland which has not been intensively farmed. This one was spotted in short grass near Lough Gealain.





Burren Fossils

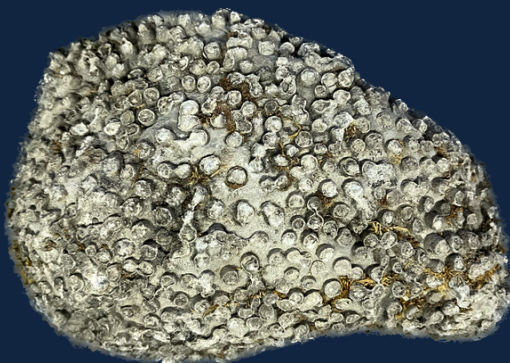
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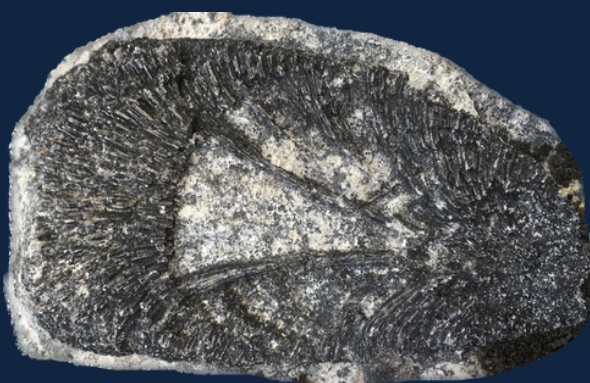
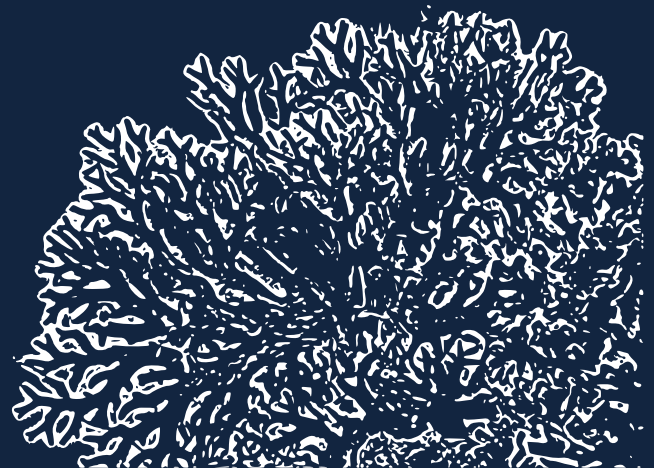
About 330 million years ago, during the Carboniferous period, Ireland was part of a larger landmass and the Burren area was submerged under a shallow tropical sea. The limestone we find in the Burren today formed from calcium carbonate in the sea water and the hard remains of sea creatures living at that time. So when we find fossils in the Burren, we are looking ancient biodiversity! Keep an eye out beneath your feet next time you visit and see how many you can find.

Feel free to send us a photo of any you cannot identify but please remember that no stones or fossils should be removed from the park.

Here are some of the fossils most commonly encountered in the Burren National Park. The illustrations on the right show what the fossils on the left might have looked like as living organisms.

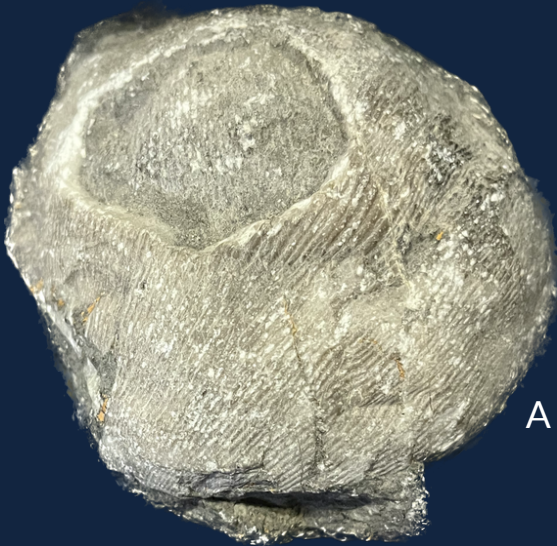


Colonial Coral



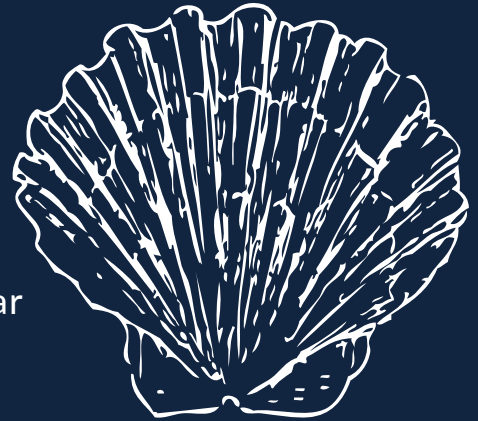
Solitary or
Rugose Coral





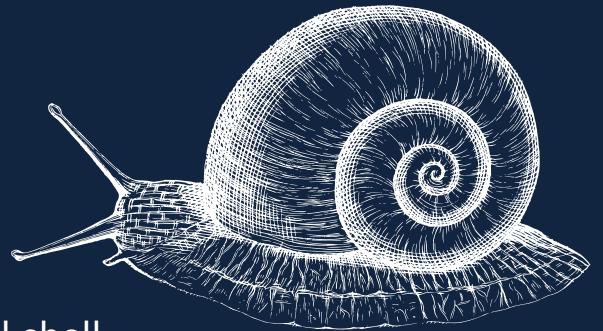
Brachiopod

A hinged mollusc similar to a modern Oyster



Gastropod

Usually with a spiral shell like a snail



Pieces of Crinoid Stem

Crinoids or Sea Lillies look like plants but are filter feeding animals related to starfish, that still exist today




HALLOWEEN

BURREN
NATIONAL
PARK




JOIN US THIS HALLOWEEN FOR SOME
CRAFTY FUN AND SPOOKY TALES IN THE
BURREN NATIONAL PARK
MONDAY 30TH & TUESDAY 31ST OCTOBER

Events in
the Park



Monday 30th October 10.30am - Join our guides on a walk in the woods and hear Spooky Stories along the way. Meeting at Gortlecka Cross in the Burren National Park. All ages welcome.



Tuesday 31st October 2pm - Have your little goblins and ghouls try their hand at some Halloween themed Arts and Crafts at our kids art event at the Burren Information Point in Corofin.

Guided walk will take place weather permitting

All events are free. Monday's walk must be booked in advance as spaces are limited

Please contact us at 065 6827693 or
burrennationalpark@npws.gov.ie
for more details and to book



Páirceanna Náisiúnta
National Parks



Wildlife Week at Banner Books, Kilrush will take place 18th to 26th November.

Burren National Park Head guide, Phoebe Larkin, will be in Banner Books, Kilrush from 11am on Sat 25th Nov for a bird themed event for children. Come along for storytelling and to learn all about Irish Birds.



Guided walks available year round on request.



Please note that the Burren National Park Information Point in Corofin will close for lunch from 1pm to 2pm during Winter

Burren National Park:

Information Point: Clare Heritage Centre,
2 Church Street, Corofin, Co. Clare V95 T9V6

Website: <https://www.burrennationalpark.ie>

Email: burrennationalpark@npws.gov.ie

Phone: 065 6827693

