



'Go Wild in Galway 2017' took place on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st May, to celebrate National Biodiversity Week, which is organised by the Irish Environmental Network and supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. 'Go Wild' was chosen as one of the two national flagship events for Biodiversity week and would not have been possible without the support and funding of the Irish Environmental Network and NEAR Health. Go Wild was organised by The Vincent Wildlife Trust in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland and NEAR Health.

'Go Wild' recognises the connection between biodiversity and all aspects of our lives, from our mental and physical well being to our economic prosperity. There are significant benefits from increasing our awareness and engagement with the environment around us, however there is often a disconnect with the natural world, and this can be particularly the case in urban areas. In 2016, we launched 'Go Wild' to celebrate the natural wonders of Galway City by making nature accessible to all and providing an outlet for active engagement and participation with the local environment. 'Go Wild 2017' built on this success and expanded to engage and appeal to a wider audience and deliver significant benefits in recognising the value of our local environment. 'Go Wild' enables people to better understand how to conserve our wildlife, in particular species at risk. We brought together input and expertise from a wide range of local experts and organisations: The Vincent Wildlife Trust, BirdWatch Ireland, NEAR Health, Irish Wildlife Trust, Galway Bat Group, Irish Whale & Dolphin Group, Swift Conservation Ireland and ecologists Heather Lally and Martin Gammell from GMIT.

'Go Wild' highlighted the level of interest and enthusiasm which exists for our local wildlife within the local communities and was a celebration of our unique natural heritage in Galway.

'Go Wild in Galway 2017' brought together Galway's wildlife organisations to make nature accessible to people of all ages and interest levels with a series of indoor talks, outdoor walks and fieldtrips, wildlife documentary screenings, and practical sessions where participants learned about wildlife, their role in their local natural environment and its role in their health and wellbeing.



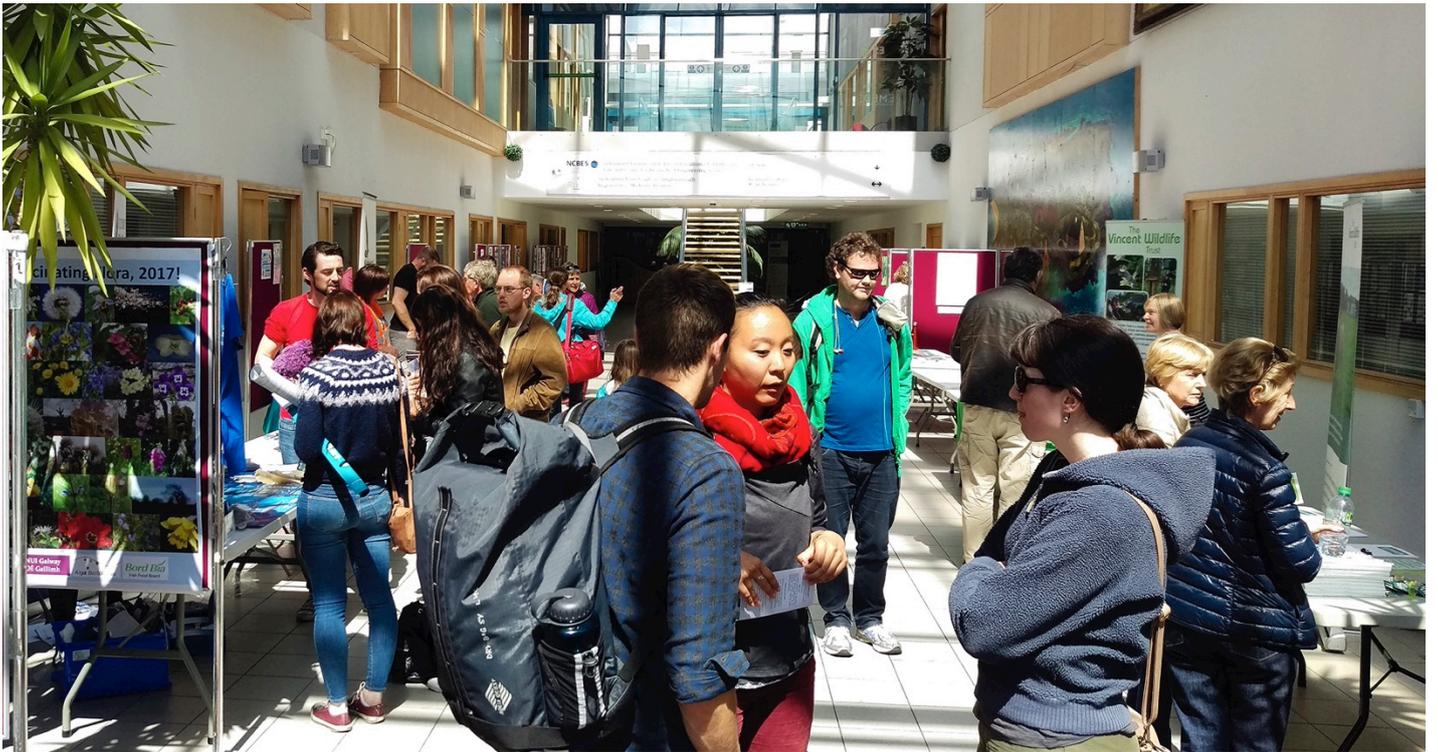
Dawn chorus on Silver Strand with John Lusby

The two-day event began at 4:30am on Saturday 20th May with a dawn chorus led by John Lusby from BirdWatch Ireland beginning at Silver Strand. John led the group through the nearby woodlands, between intertidal meadows and finally to Silver Strand beach and cliffs, recording 35 different bird species by sight and from their calls and describing their ecology and life cycle. The group heard heron chicks being fed on the nest, enjoyed the call of the willow warbler and witnessed aerial displays from sand martens flying to their tunnels in the cliffs overlooking Silver Strand. Many of the group of 12 people took part in a NEAR Health questionnaire about how they felt by spending this time

out in nature, and also completed the first part of our wildlife spotting competition. The bird walk was scheduled for 90 minutes but continued for two and a half hours and was a fantastic start to Go Wild 2017.

From 9:30am the main venue in the Orbsen foyer was open to the public with stands, displays, leaflets, wildlife guides and specimens. Experts from each organisation were available to talk through the species in question and how better to study and conserve them.

There were a number of items for sale including the children's book 'My First Book of Irish Animals' by Juanita Brown and commemorative 'Go Wild in Galway 2017' key rings.



From 10:00am a full schedule of wildlife walks and talks began, and continued to run throughout the day.

There were four talks in the morning:

NEAR Health by Cait Carlin and Gesche Kindermann, NEAR Health and NUIG.

Birds of Galway City by John Lusby, BirdWatch Ireland

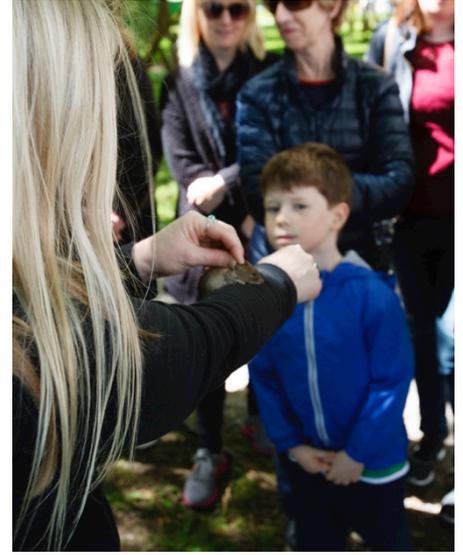
Irish Whales and Dolphins by Darren Craig, Irish Whale & Dolphin Group

The Secret World of Mammals by Ruth Hanniffy, The Vincent Wildlife Trust



Gesche Kindermann from NEAR Health

Following the talks John Lusby and Ruth Hanniffy led a walk through the grounds of NUIG and Galway city to look for birds nesting and flying along the rivers and canals of Galway city and to identify small mammals. Ruth demonstrated how to handle and identify bank voles which had been which had been live captured using Longworth traps and talked about the habitat needs of small mammals in the wild. John identified a further ten species bringing the total number of birds identified to 45 and outlined the value of Galway city's habitats for them.



Small mammal trapping at NUIG with Ruth Hanniffy



John Lusby leads a bird walk along the waterways of Galway city

At the Orbsen building the programme continued from 2pm where Tom Cuffe ran an interactive children's workshop with fascinating facts about wild creatures, and taught the children to create their own animals using origami.



Tom Cuffe conducting the Children's workshop

Gesche Kindermann and Caitriona Carlin led a workshop on restoring health and wellbeing through contact with nature, on behalf of NEAR Health, NUI Galway. The aim of the workshop was to envisage a nearby healthy future space for people and wildlife and then work out how to create it. The workshop started outdoors, with participants taking a moment to listen to the sounds around them, and connect with nature, no doubt aided by their location among willow trees alongside the river Corrib. In pairs, people talked about the places they spend time in, what nature is present, what they do there. As a group, they discussed features of these places, and who was using them. People were asked to imagine how that space could be improved for wildlife and for people, in 10 years' time, individually, and then as a group. Upon returning inside, the groups focused on enhancement features for nature,



Cait Carlin during the NEAR Health workshop

health and wellbeing that they liked the best. After a group discussion where a number of ideas were pitched, Cait and Gesche ended by having a group discussion on the actions we would need to take to create spaces for wildlife and where people could connect with nature to benefit their health and wellbeing. It was rewarding to see how much value people placed on wild spaces in urban environments.

The afternoon's events began at 3pm with the following talks:

The Irish Wildlife Trust & Otters of Galway by Tom Gorman, Irish Wildlife Trust – Galway branch
Water Plants and Insects by Heather Lally, Lecturer in Freshwater Biology and Ecology at GMIT
Galway's Bats, Making Headlines since the 1800's by Kate McAney, The Vincent Wildlife Trust



Kate McAney speaking about Galway's bats since the 1800's

Afterwards Tom Gorman, Heather Lally and John Lusby led a field trip along the banks of the River Corrib to look for and examine otter spraint and identify birds by their call and through sightings. Heather demonstrated how to undertake a kick sample on the river margins and showed how to identify aquatic invertebrates and discussed the various life stages.



Tom Gorman identifying possible otter spraint along the River Corrib



Heather Lally demonstrating how to identify aquatic invertebrates



Heather Lally demonstrating how to identify aquatic invertebrates from kick sampling

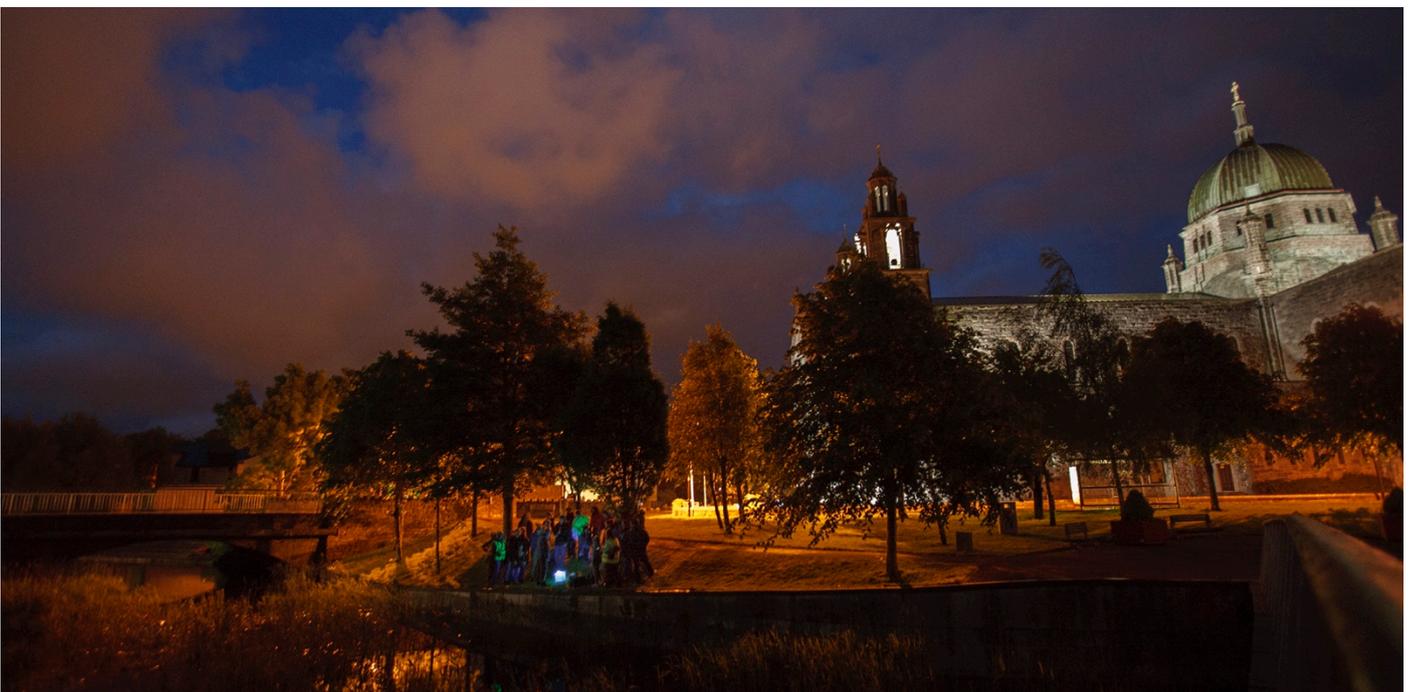


The 'Go Wild' team and participants at NUIG



At 10pm Cait Carlin from the Galway Bat Group, with Heather Lally and Ruth Hanniffy led a bat walk from Galway Cathedral along the River Corrib through Galway city. Cait spoke about bat ecology, Irish bat species, and participants were shown bat specimens and given bat detectors to pick up echolocation calls. A number of species were detected including soprano pipistrelles, Daubenton's and Leisler's bats (*left*)

Martin Gammell, Lecturer in Aquatic Science at GMIT carried out caddisfly trapping along the canal to bring the bat walk and Day 1 of Go Wild in Galway to a close (*below*)



Day 2 took place at the renowned Galway theatre, An Taibhdhearc, where Go Wild brought wildlife documentaries from Crossing the Line Films, an award-winning Irish production company specialising in wildlife, adventure, travel and historical documentaries, to the big screen.

At 5pm following a brief welcome and introduction by Ruth Hanniffy, Cait Carlin from NEAR Health distributed surveys to study further the effects of watching wildlife documentaries on a person's wellbeing, and how it can contribute to their experience of nature. The first documentary was Wild Cities – Galway, which is part of a fascinating series revealing Galway's wildest, yet most secretive, residents – the animals that live there. Galway native and bird expert, John Lusby, guided the audience through the wildlife of Galway City, from adorable cygnets taking to the water for the first time to stunning slow motion footage of lesser horseshoe bats, charismatic otters in the city's canals, and sleeping barn owl chicks.

Afterwards John joined Ruth Hanniffy and Cait Carlin to share his experiences about how the CLT team captured these unique moments on film and Cait discussed the effects on both watching and being in nature on health and wellbeing. The audience were invited to ask questions and interact with the panel.



The audience captivated by lesser horseshoe bats during 'Wild Cities'

After a short break and refreshments, the second screening of the night began. Also from Crossing the Line Films, Éire Fhiáin – An Cósta Thiar is a masterpiece in natural history filmmaking and takes the viewer on a mesmerising journey along the 1,600km of rock and ocean that make up Ireland's Atlantic edge. Featuring enchanting wildlife set against stunning land and seascapes this is a compelling portrait of the wild creatures that inhabit the west coast. Presented by Eoin Warner, Éire Fhiáin – An Cósta Thiar uses the very latest camera techniques – night-time, macro and slow motion with remarkable images and storytelling to two truly memorable hours of film.

Eoin joined the Cait, John and Ruth to describe further his incredible experience kayaking along Ireland's most dramatic coastline, and the panel and audience discussed wildlife conservation, the natural world from an Irish context, our health and how to reach a larger audience, including decision makers.

Technical expertise and support was provided by Gesche Kindermann, Heather Lally and Katie O' Dwyer (GMIT). Technical support was provided by John Nunan. Screenings were attended by a total of 153 people, which according to the theatre represents very good attendance for film screenings. Both events were free, however people were encouraged to book tickets online using Eventbrite at wildgalway.eventbrite.com.





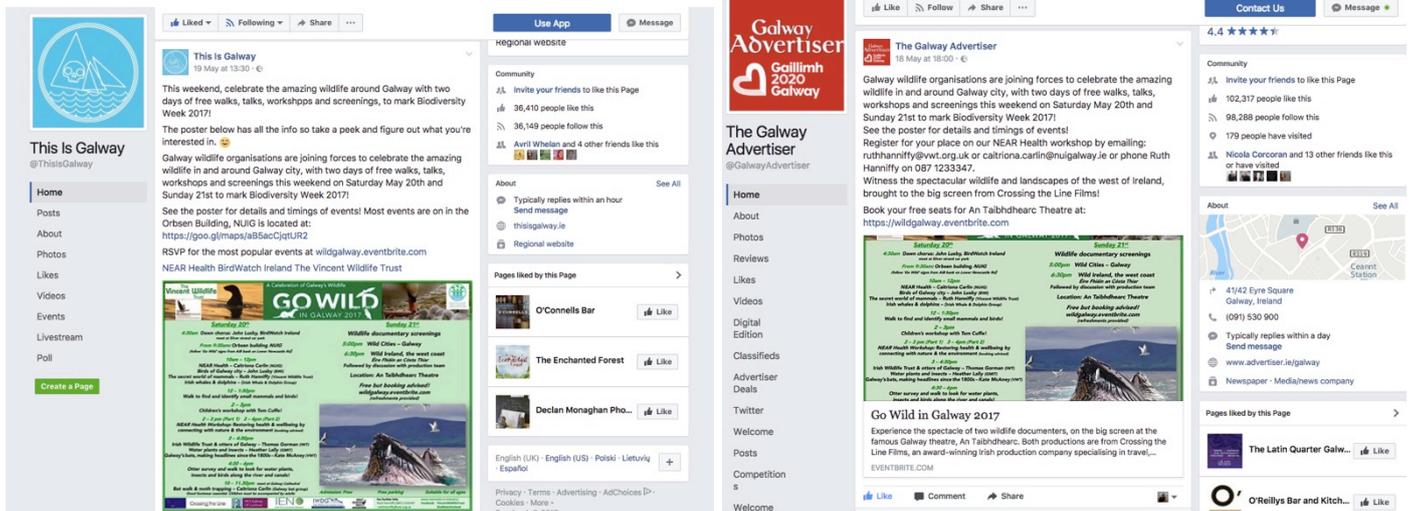
The audience were enchanted by red squirrels during Éire Fhiáin



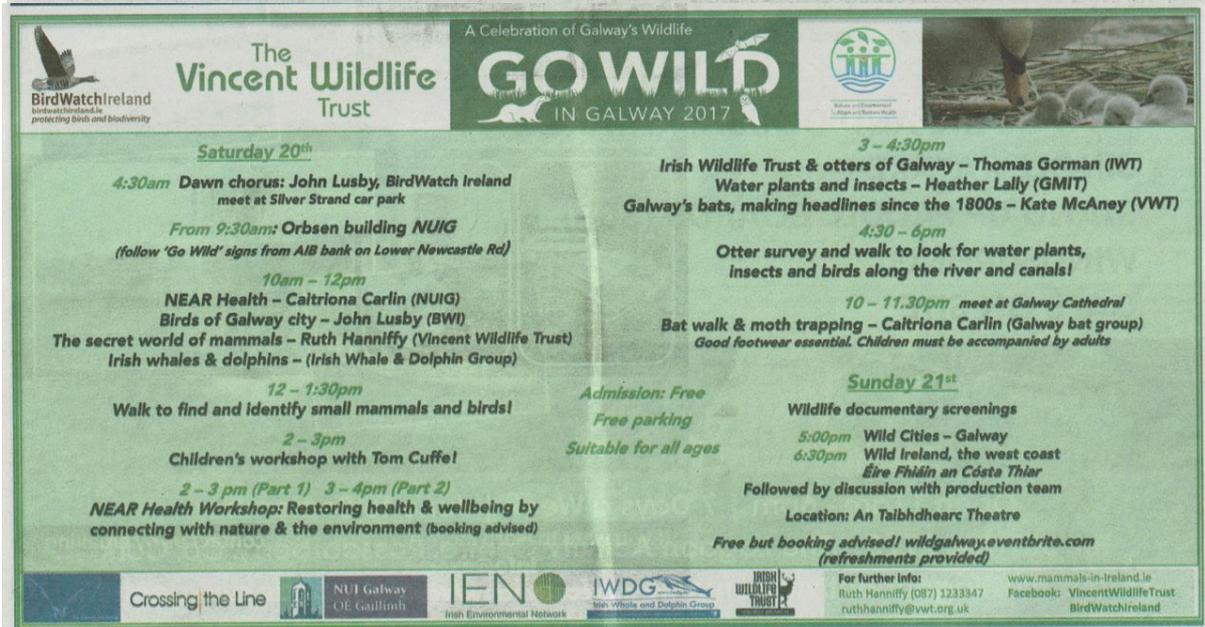
The 'Go Wild' team at An Taibhdhearc Theatre

Go Wild was advertised through campaigns in local newspapers: the Galway Advertiser and the Galway Independent - Wild Atlantic Way segment.

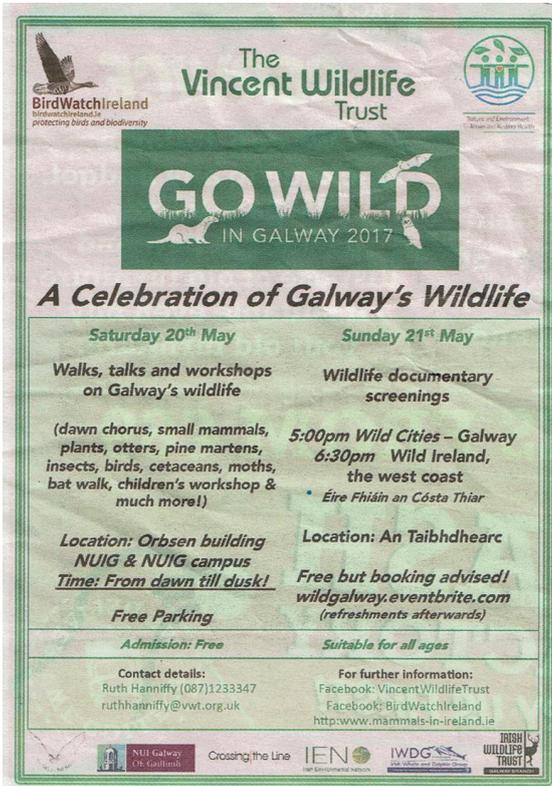
In addition we utilised social media undertaking a campaign with the Galway Advertiser. Tweets and Facebook posts were shared by the organisations involved and Facebook pages such as 'This is Galway' to reach the widest audience possible. We distributed a press release to 'Friends of' the organisations.



Facebook posts on 'This is Galway' and the 'Galway Advertiser' pages.



Galway Independent advert in the Wild Atlantic Way Section, Wednesday 17th May 2017



The Vincent Wildlife Trust

BirdWatchIreland
birdwatchireland.ie
protecting birds and biodiversity

GO WILD
IN GALWAY 2017

A Celebration of Galway's Wildlife

Saturday 20 th May	Sunday 21 st May
Walks, talks and workshops on Galway's wildlife	Wildlife documentary screenings
(dawn chorus, small mammals, plants, otters, pine martens, insects, birds, cetaceans, moths, bat walk, children's workshop & much more!)	5:00pm Wild Cities – Galway 6:30pm Wild Ireland, the west coast • Éire Fhiáin an Cósta Thiar
Location: Orbsen building NUIG & NUIG campus Time: From dawn till dusk!	Location: An Taibhdhearc Free but booking advised! wildgalway.eventbrite.com (refreshments afterwards)
Free Parking	Suitable for all ages
Admission: Free	
Contact details: Ruth Hanniffy (087)1233347 ruthhanniffy@vwt.org.uk	For further information: Facebook: VincentWildlifeTrust Facebook: BirdWatchIreland http://www.mammals-in-ireland.ie

Logos: NUI Galway, Crossing the Line, IEN, IWDG, Fresh Wildlife Trust

Galway Advertiser advert,
Wednesday 10th May 2017

In addition there were a number of radio interviews to promote our event.

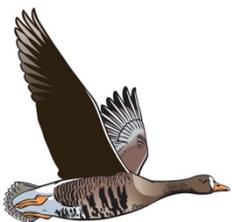
Ruth Hanniffy took part in a live interview for Community Radio for Castlebar on The Chatroom with Angela Faull on 17th May, to discuss National Biodiversity Week and Go Wild as one of its flagship events.



John Lusby and Ruth Hanniffy were interviewed for Galway Bay FM on 18th May to promote 'Go Wild' and talk about the unique wildlife of Galway city.

'Go Wild in Galway 2017' had a very positive impact. It was successful in bringing together the people and environmental organisations of Galway city to celebrate its wildlife. Events on Saturday were attended by up to 30 people of all ages, with a likely footfall a hundred over the course of the day. A few individuals took part from the dawn chorus right through out the day to the bat walk and documentary screenings! Events were met with enthusiasm, wonder and positivity towards our wildlife and wild spaces, and particularly how we can further enjoy and protect what is on our doorstep in urban environments like Galway city, for our own and future generations. One attendee said *'it was great to be there, so awesome and so well organised'*

NEAR Health generated important discussions on nature's fundamental relationship to our health and wellbeing, a theme we hope to continue. 'Go Wild' demonstrated and fostered the great enthusiasm amongst the public for the wildlife of Galway, which is unique both in the richness of its biodiversity and in the relative rarity of the species it supports. 'Go Wild' continues to forge strong partnerships between Galway's environmental organisations and those involved were delighted with the success of the two days and hope we can build on this for future events. We are grateful to the IEN for their support in making 'Go Wild in Galway 2017' possible.



BirdWatchIreland
birdwatchireland.ie
protecting birds and biodiversity



The Vincent Wildlife Trust



Nature and Environment
To Attain and Restore Health



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

Crossing the Line



The **Vincent Wildlife Trust**



A Celebration of Galway's Wildlife

GO WILD IN GALWAY 2017



Saturday 20th

4:30am Dawn chorus: John Lusby, BirdWatch Ireland

meet at Silver strand car park

From 9:30am: Orbsen building **NUIG**

(Follow 'Go Wild' signs from AIB bank on Lower Newcastle Rd)

10am – 12pm

NEAR Health – Caitriona Carlin (NUIG)

Birds of Galway city – John Lusby (BWI)

The secret world of mammals – Ruth Hanniffy (Vincent Wildlife Trust)

Irish whales & dolphins – (Irish Whale & Dolphin Group)

12 – 1:30pm

Walk to find and identify small mammals and birds!

2 – 3pm

Children's workshop with Tom Cuffe!

2 – 3 pm (Part 1) 3 – 4pm (Part 2)

NEAR Health Workshop: Restoring health & wellbeing by

connecting with nature & the environment (booking advised)

3 – 4:30pm

Irish Wildlife Trust & otters of Galway – Thomas Gorman (IWT)

Water plants and insects – Heather Lally (GMIT)

Galway's bats, making headlines since the 1800s – Kate McAney (WWT)

4:30 – 6pm

Otter survey and walk to look for water plants,

insects and birds along the river and canals!

10 – 11.30pm meet at Galway Cathedral

Bat walk & moth trapping – Caitriona Carlin (Galway bat group)

Good footwear essential. Children must be accompanied by adults

Wildlife documentary screenings

Sunday 21st

5:00pm Wild Cities – Galway

6:30pm Wild Ireland, the west coast

Éire Fhíain an Cósta Thiar

Followed by discussion with production team

Location: An Taibhdhearc Theatre

Free but booking advised!

wildgalway.eventbrite.com

(refreshments provided)



Admission: Free

Free parking

Suitable for all ages



Crossing the Line



NUI Galway
O'É Gaillimh



IEN
Irish Environmental Network



IWDG
Irish Whale and Dolphin Group



Irish
Wildlife
Trust

For further info:
Ruth Hanniffy (087) 1233347
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www.mammals-in-ireland.ie
Facebook: VincentWildlifeTrust
BirdWatchIreland