

Welcome to the Maigue Rivers Trust's 3rd annual newsletter. Year 3 has seen the culmination of projects on the biodiversity signage, riparian and habitat quality and the commencement of new projects on recreation and citizen science. The Crayfish plague in the catchment is continuing to curtail several activities and biosecurity is more important than ever. **Covid-19 lockdown**

Maigue Rivers Trust Directors

Maigue Rivers Trust Project Officer

The Maigue Rivers Trust (MRT) is delighted to welcome the appointment of **Liz Gabbett** as Project Officer. This is a new post funded via the Irish River Trust's Resilience Pilot Project and supported by the Department for Housing, Planning and Local Government, the UK Rivers Trust and the Water and Communities Office LAWPRO. This three-year post is intended to assist with the establishment phase of the Maigue Rivers Trust to enable financial self-sufficiency. Liz's key roles are managing conservation projects, community networking, developing funding opportunities, and communications.



New Trust Directors

Following a sectoral rotation of directors & canvassing of businesses in the catchment, the MRT is happy to announce the appointment of two new Trust directors.

Aidan Gleeson has joined the MRT board of Directors representing the farming sector. Aidan is a member of the Local Community Development Committee, is a former chair of the IFA and the Limerick Volunteer Centre, and was on the Board of Ballyhoura Development.

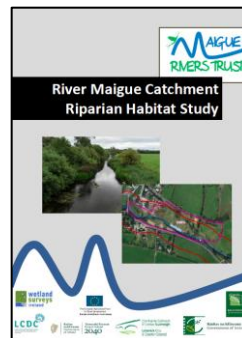
Veronica Santorum has joined the Trust representing the business sector. Veronica is an ecologist and an artist (with interests in traditional crafts, storytelling, communication & production enterprises).

We currently have a vacancy for **Community Director** and **Finance** by rotation. If you would like any further information please email info@maugueriverstrust.ie.

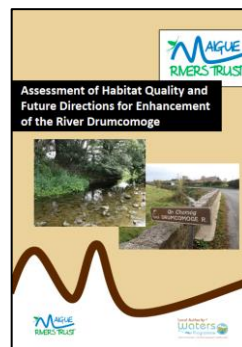
Maigue Rivers Trust Reports

Two reports have been published by the Maigue Rivers Trust in 2019. The first is a Riparian Habitat examination produced by Wetland Surveys Ireland for the Trust. The second report is also a habitat study focussing on the Drumcomoge river and future directions for enhancement. The reports are available for download at:

<https://maugueriverstrust.ie/biodiversity/scientific-reports-and-studies-on-the-river-maigue/>



Wetland Surveys Ireland (2019) **River Maigue Catchment Riparian Habitat Study**. Maigue Rivers Trust, Ireland



Maigue Rivers Trust (2019) **Assessment of Habitat Quality and Future Directions for Enhancement of the River Drumcomoge**. Maigue Rivers Trust, Ireland.

Amenity and Recreation in the Maigue Rivers

One of the objectives of the Maigue Rivers Trust is to encourage public appreciation of the natural river environment by promoting the value



of the river and tributaries for recreation and amenity purposes. To help achieve this objective, the Trust will examine the current provision and future potential for developing recreation and amenity activities in the Maigue Rivers catchment area in a new LEADER funded project. The fundamental idea is that experiences of nature via **walking, cycling, boating, angling and wildlife observation** will boost river engagement, appreciation and expectations of healthy waters and promote enhanced environmental stewardship by local people, communities and visitors. These activities will be environmentally sustainable and fit with the mission and objectives of the Trust. The Trust plans to conduct a recreation and amenity survey to document river focused facilities and services, address information gaps, and prescribe a range of potential developments that are likely to be effective.

Maigue Riparian Habitats

Natural riverside riparian habitats of trees, scrub, rushes and reeds are very important as they form a buffer between the land and the river, protecting the river from human activities on the land. A habitat survey was undertaken along the main tributaries of the River Maigue during summer 2019 to obtain baseline information on the extent and condition of riverside riparian habitats. River condition assessments conducted at 58 sites confirm that a large amount of the natural riverside habitats that would have once occurred in the Maigue catchment are no longer present, with farmland generally extending right up to the river edge. When rivers in the catchment were drained, a lot of the bankside vegetation was removed while the channels were deepened and widened. This drainage led to an increase in agricultural productivity in the catchment, with 89% of the catchment now covered by farmland. Invasive species, in particular Giant Hogweed, have become established along some rivers posing a threat to human health and native species.



Absent riparian vegetation along the river Loobagh

The report recommends two main actions to restore riparian zones and create buffer zones in the Maigue catchment

- Fencing or hedgerow establishment in areas where the land use is very intensive,
- Catchment-wide control of invasive Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam

The restoration of riparian habitats within the catchment will require the collaboration of various stakeholders, including landowners, local groups such as the Maigue Rivers Trust, and relevant state agencies.

Citizen Scientists CSI-River

Funding was obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency and Mary Immaculate College for a 4-year co-funded doctoral project on the Maigue. The project is titled **Citizen Science Investigations – river environmental stewardship (CSI-River)**. **Donna Weiner**



commenced work on this interdisciplinary science-society project in January 2019. The project is based on the fundamental concept that that our relationship to nature is ultimately shaped locally. The project will address the need to ensure the promotion, involvement, cooperation and co-ownership of water (and biodiversity) management by local people and communities living and working within their local catchments.

Donna looks forward to meeting with individuals and communities of the Maigue over the coming months as the project progresses.

Drumcomoge Project

The Drumcomoge River is a headwater of the Camoge River, a sub-catchment of the river Maigue, and one of eleven sub-catchments that form the Maigue catchment. The aim of the project **Assessment of Habitat Quality and Future Directions for Enhancement of the River Drumcomoge** was to help improve the environmental quality of the river to the benefit of biodiversity, salmonid populations and the local community. The project reviewed the current environmental status of the Drumcomoge sub-catchment in relation to biodiversity, water quality, hydromorphology and environmental pressures. Community engagement, focusing on Atlantic salmon, was a key part of the project to promote awareness about the importance of the river catchment as an important natural resource, and foster a feeling of

"environmental ownership" in relation to the catchment. A public meeting was held in the Community Hall in Knocklong on October 1st 2019. The results of the project identified an 8km stretch of the Drumcomoge that has the potential to be a productive spawning and nursery area for Atlantic salmon and trout. The report recommends the following measures to improve environmental quality:

- Conduct additional surveys on water quality, aquatic ecology and juvenile salmonids.
- Request Irish Water provide updated Annual Environmental Reports for the Knocklong and Emly wastewater treatment plants
- Ask the EPA to include at least one biological monitoring sites from the Drumcomoge in their roll-over national survey
- Information to be provided to farmers also regarding protecting water quality

Giant Hogweed Project

The Giant Hogweed plant can grow up to five metres in height. It is one of the most unwanted invasive species in Ireland. It is a public health hazard due to its toxic sap, which causes severe dermatitis. It also threatens native biodiversity along riverbanks and wet ground.

Limerick City & Co. Council have embarked on a three-year project to control the spread of Giant Hogweed on the River Loobagh near Kilmallock. This project aims to include members of the public in identifying areas where this species is present and helping to eradicate it. As the eradication of this invasive species will require multiple years of effort. As of June 2020, some 30,000 plants have been removed.

If you are interested in undertaking invasive species identification training, please email info@Maugueriverstrust.ie



Giant Hogweed

Crayfish Plague

The Mauge received its first outbreak of the Crayfish plague at Castleroberts Bridge in April 2019. It spread to Bruree by May and Cahercass near Croom by July. The plague is genotype D the most infectious strain and is the same type as outbreaks the Deel and Barrow.

May of this year (2020) saw a big crayfish kill on the Comoge. Hundreds of the protected crayfish were reported dead. The Crayfish plague is the likely cause of death.



White-clawed crayfish

Please help stop the spread of Crayfish plague and other aquatic alien invasive species by keeping activities to the same waterbody when possible and follow [#CheckCleanDryIrl](#) guidelines wherever you are.

- Checking
- Cleaning
- Drying and/or
- Disinfecting

These actions will help protect the river, lakes and wildlife that we love. For more information on the Crayfish Plague see the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) web site

<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/invasive-species/crayfish-plague/>

Successful Funding Applications

- Irish River Trust's Resilience Pilot Project. Department for Housing, Planning and Local Government (DEHLG).
- Small Streams Characterisation Citizen Science. Seed funding from the Community Water Fund. Local Authorities Water & Communities (LAWPRO)
- An exploration of recreation and amenity potential of the Mauge rivers. Application to LEADER.

River Restoration Conference

The Mauge Rivers Trust are planning a conference in 2021 in conjunction with Limerick City & County Council, The Rivers Trust, the Local Authority Water & Communities Office and Mary Immaculate College. The Limerick-based event aims to bring together community groups, rivers trusts, government agencies and academics to explore a range of successful national and international partnerships, and explore challenges and barriers to revitalising rivers.

River Conference
22nd & 23rd March 2021

Social Media

The MRT website can be found at www.maugueriverstrust.ie where the trust vision, mission, aims and objectives can be found. Additionally, a gallery of photographs and news items as well as a range of reports produced by the Trust can be found. The MRT is also active on Facebook @maugueriverstrust and Twitter @mauguerivers.

Please follow us on Social media!

Public Meetings and Trust Presentations

- Carmel Fox. Mague Rivers Trust. Rivers Trust Conference. Athlone, 30th Nov. T2019
- information-sharing public meeting on water quality in the Drumcomoge. Community Hall, Knocklong October 1st 2019.
- Tom Harrington. Working with Local Communities to Protect the Mague. EPA National Water Event 2020 Online Conference Restoring Our Waters 17-18 June 2020.

Celebration Days

March 3 [World Wildlife Day](#)
 March 22 [World Wetland Day](#)/ [World Day for Water](#)
 March 22 [World Water Monitoring](#)

April 22 [International Mother Earth Day](#)

May 9 [World Migratory Bird Day](#)

May 20 [World Bee Day](#)

May 22 [International Day for Biological Diversity](#)

June 5 [World Environment Day](#)

August 15 [Heritage Week](#)

October 10 [World Migratory Bird Day](#)

October 5 [World Habitat Day](#)

October 24 [Fish Migration Day](#)

John Tierney RIP

Mague Rivers Trust Director **John Tierney** died suddenly on the 30th October 2019. John was one of nature's gentlemen, self-effacing, passionate, full of great ideas, contagious enthusiasm and good humour. He is sorely missed by all, not least the Trust to which he unstintingly gave so much in hard work. It was a privilege to have known and worked with him. He will remain in our fondest of memories always.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis
 Tom Harrington (MRT Chairperson)



Current Mague Rivers Trust Directors

Conservation & Wildlife (Chair) TOM HARRINGTON : Retired lecturer in Biology UL		Elected Representative EDDIE RYAN : LCCC and farmer.	
Research & Education (Vice Chair) CATHERINE DALTON Lecturer in Geography MIC-UL		Local Development RHIANNON LAUBACH Ballyhoura Dev. CLG	
Business VERONICA SANTORUM : Director of communication production enterprises.		Outdoor Leisure & Tourism SYBREN OGDEL Croom Development Ass.	
Finance CARMEL FOX : Director of multiple social enterprises.		Education VACANT	
Farming AIDAN GLEESON : Cattle farmer and IFA nominee		Community VACANT	
Angling DAVE BUSTEN : Bleach Lough Anglers		Finance ROTATING 2020	
			 Local Authority Liaison ANNE GOGGIN LCCC

Reports on the Mague Rivers and Catchment

