

the Church itself.

The mature trees here include lime and beech, another naturalised species which helps to protect the slopes from erosion.

The old stone walls of the churchyard have literally thousands of hiding places for over wintering or sheltering invertebrates. They also provide a habitat for mosses, ferns and ivy. Even the gravestones themselves provide a place for wildlife. Look closely at the stones here and you'll see dozens of lichens (organisms made up of both fungi and algae) spread over headstones of all ages. Often mistaken for dirt or a sign of neglect, these living things are also important to a healthy environment.

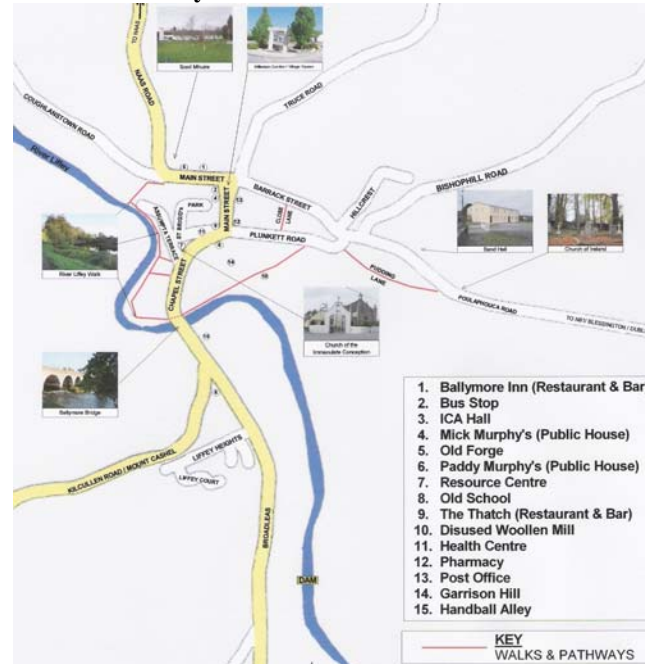


### Sousheen Common (Doran's Park)

This is one of the most extensive open areas in Ballymore Eustace. This grazed pasture, once common grazing land, is low-lying grassland that runs along the bank of the River Liffey just upstream of the proposed Natural Heritage Area (NHA), the Skaw Banks. From the stone walls and mature trees you can see that this area has existed mostly unchanged for many years. Grasslands such as these cover huge areas of Ireland and are important for many plants species apart from the dominant grasses. In spring you might see daisies, clovers, silverweed, cleavers, and knapweed. Many of these plants are important for butterflies and other insects.

The Common is also a valuable site for mammals including mice, rabbits, hares and foxes. The large mature trees provide nesting habitat for birds but are also valuable for bats which feed in abundance over the Liffey. While grasslands such as these may lack the visual impact of woodlands or rivers, they are extremely valuable to our wildlife and we should maintain as many of these areas unharmed as possible.

## Ballymore Eustace Nature Trail



This nature trail has been designed by the Tidy Towns Committee of Ballymore Eustace for the enjoyment of all. Please see the above map for some of the places and spaces that make this village so important for wildlife. We would ask that you stay on paths and of course take great care when going near water. Please take any litter home with you and if you see any litter 'hotspots' please report them to Kildare County Council on 1800 243 143. When you are finished with this trail guide why not return it or give it to someone else for use.

### Ragged Robin



## A Nature Trail Guide for Ballymore Eustace



Welcome to Ballymore Eustace and our first nature trail guide. This guide has been created to help you enjoy some of the best of the nature of Ballymore Eustace. Thanks to the enclosed setting of our village, its mature trees and its location on the Liffey, Ballymore Eustace is home to dozens of species of birds and mammals, hundreds of wild plants and countless invertebrates. All of these are essential in keeping a clean and natural environment for the place where we also live. The Tidy Towns Committee are proud of our common natural heritage and are working to conserve this area as a wild resource for all to enjoy. You can help by keeping Ballymore Eustace as you would wish to find it, for you and for all that call it home.

John Akeroyd's "A Beginners Guide to Ireland's Wild Flowers" published by Sherkin Island Marine Station is an excellent inexpensive pocket sized guide and can be purchased locally.

This nature trail was prepared by Ballymore Eustace Tidy Towns Committee with the help and expertise of Flynn, Furney, Environmental Consultants, Kildare County Council Heritage Department and Kelt.

## Birds of Ballymore Eustace



### Mute Swans & Cygnets

Because of its close proximity to the open countryside, its mature trees and large river and lakes, Ballymore Eustace has a great variety of interesting birdlike. In the village itself, rooks, jackdaws, starlings, blackbirds, thrushes, robins, finches, wrens are a familiar sight. In the summer the village plays host to swallows and swifts that come to breed in Ireland far from their African feeding grounds. A close relative of the swallow is the sand martin. This beautiful little bird also makes the incredible journey and is the first of such migrants to arrive in spring. The nearby Skaw Banks and quarries provides ample nesting grounds for this bird. Pheasants, woodpigeons, blue tits, coal tits and blackbirds are found throughout the mature woodland habitat around the old mill. By the river ducks, cormorants, herons, coot, can be seen and if your lucky you may even get a glimpse of a kingfisher. The mute swan, Ireland's biggest bird can also be seen, looking very placid in the summer by comparison with the swooping and darting swallows. Look out by the river for the dipper and the bright and very active grey wagtail; both lovers of insect larvae that the river provides in great numbers. Both can be seen darting over the water and perching on rocks.



Dipper



Grey Wagtail

## The Liffey Walk

This walk will bring you a little way along one of Ireland's most famous rivers. Although the Liffey is harnessed at Poulaphouca and Golden Falls, the river here is wide and fast flowing past banks that are rich in wild plants. Among the largest plants are the alder trees. These are common waterside trees and their wood is extremely hardy, even in very wet conditions. The alder is a broadleaved conifer, meaning it produces cones as well as having broad leaves. Look for these small dense cones from late summer on. Because this area is wet for a large part of the time due to power generation floods, there are many water-loving plant species to be seen. Look out for the pretty flowers of the yellow iris, ragged robin, water-forget-me-not, cuckoo-flower, meadowsweet and the 'cigar' top bulrush. In early summer, growing in the shallow riffles or fords of the Liffey can be seen the rafts of white flowers of the stream water-crowfoot or water buttercup. This area is managed by the anglers who treasure the Liffey for its trout and salmon. You will see these fish breaking the surface in pursuit of insects such as mayfly or caddis fly, which are well known to, and imitated by fly fishermen. Another insect-lover is the dipper, a small dark-brown and white bird that can be seen 'dipping' on rocks emerging from the river's surface.

In early morning or at dusk you may be lucky enough to see an otter, mink or deer.



Yellow Iris

## The Mill Walk

This is a rough woodland trail that leads past the old mill that was powered by the natural energy of the Liffey. The woodland here is over one hundred years old and may in fact have been a woodland for centuries before that. Some of the tallest trees of the wood are ash, which may commonly reach 20m in height. These trees gain their foliage late and even in full leaf they allow plenty of light to filter through to the woodland floor. There are many sycamores here, a non-native tree that has become naturalised in Ireland.

Among the lower trees look out for the unmistakable holly, bushy hawthorn and elm, a tree that is scarce throughout many parts of Ireland. Also found here is the elder tree, easily told by its white flowers in early summer and glossy black berries in the autumn.

Woodlands like these are extremely important for all sorts of creatures and plants. Even the smallest woodland animals play an important role. Turn over some leaf-litter or a piece of dead wood and you might see dozens of invertebrates such as woodlice, spring-tails or slugs; all of these are involved in 'recycling' the woodland's leftovers and creating soil.

### Pudding Lane

The shady aspect of the path allows for extensive moss growth under relatively thick leaf-litter. A shady and humid habitat is good for fungi and invertebrates such as beetles, woodlice and springtails.

### St. John's Churchyard

This churchyard occupies a very prominent place in the village of Ballymore Eustace. The present Church was erected in 1820 and the churchyard contains two 10th century High Crosses, numerous ancient tombstones and the remains of an older Church. As well as being an important site in the history of the village, this area provides a haven for many wildlife species. Like many churchyards, St. John's acts like a mini-nature reserve. There is usually no need for any chemicals or fertilisers in a place such as this and the low intensity of mowing and lack of grazing allows many wild plants to flourish. Some of these are very obvious, like the lush grasses and umbellifers in the summer months, but look around in the spring and you'll see dozens of flowers including lesser celandine, cowslip and primrose almost in the shadow of