



Welcome to Trailhead — Summer 2011 Issue

One of the most encouraging developments relating to the work of the Dublin Mountains Partnership over the last few years has been the establishment of a strong volunteering community of people willing to assist in the management and protection of our forests and mountains.

Volunteering in the outdoors is an activity that contributes in many ways, not only to the environment, but also benefiting the volunteer, who gives of their time freely because of a love of the outdoors. Volunteers speak enthusiastically about the days they spend in the outdoors as rangers, working on trails, leading walks and events or doing other conservation work.

In the Dublin mountains, our volunteer ranger service have given over 5,552 hours since their formation, much of this time at weekends when we have the most usage of our forests, mountains and trails. Volunteers from Mountain Meitheal have constructed over 1.2km of new and sustainable trails on the Cruagh Mountain Access Route, Fairy Castle Trail and the Cruagh Link Trail. Volunteers from the Irish Orienteering Association have

helped develop and put in place our very popular permanent orienteering courses, while members of the Irish Mountain Running Association have helped run the ever growing Dublin Mountain Plod.

Research has shown that volunteering in the outdoors makes a positive contribution to peoples health, both physical and mental. Volunteers report feeling a sense of achievement and accomplishment which improves self esteem and worth, while working outside is shown to lessen anxiety and stress. Volunteering is also just fun!

With decreasing resources available from national and local government funds, volunteering for the outdoors makes a positive contribution to managing recreation. Volunteering builds connections between recreation users and the local community and with the recreation resource encouraging a greater sense of ownership, involvement and participation in managing and protecting the hills. The DMP will shortly be announcing an adopt a trail programme and adopt a forest scheme. If you thought about volunteering maybe now is a good time to get involved!



Dublin Mountains
Partnership

Ticknock Mountain Bike Trail Opening - 8th May



Pictured above: An Cathaoirleach, DLRCC, Cllr. Lettie McCarthy, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar T.D., and Bill Murphy, DMP/Coillte.

On the 8th May 2011, Minister Leo Varadkar TD, Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport opened the first 8km section of purpose built mountain bike trail at Ticknock Forest Recreation Area near Sandyford.

It is the first official, purpose built mountain bike trail in the Dublin Mountains. The trails are designated for use by mountain bikes on a waymarked circular route. The trails take the rider through beautiful forest and heathland with fantastic views over Dublin City and Bay, and the Wicklow Mountains beyond. Forest road

climbs lead the rider into twisty singletrack with big grade reversals, technical rocky bits and loads of ups and downs.

The project has been hailed as a welcome development by the mountain bike community and other recreation users. The trails were designed by the Coillte Recreation Team on behalf of the partnership, and are getting rave reviews by the biking community. The new trails are a very exciting and important addition to the outdoor recreation infrastructure in the Dublin Mountains and will provide a wonderful resource for the citizens of Dublin and tourists alike.

Speaking at the event, Minister Varadkar said: "Activity tourism and outdoor recreation play a vital role in attracting visitors from abroad, and from across Ireland. Along with the other trails and facilities already developed in the forests of the Dublin mountains, this new trail is a major boost to Dublin as a destination. Hiking and biking trails bring economic benefits to an area, but there are also considerable health benefits. This is a fantastic new recreational and tourism resource on the doorstep of our capital city."

The programme of events lined up on the day, included a number of races along the trail for children and adults, the fourth event of the very successful Biking Blitz series. Over 50 children

and 170 adults took part in the racing which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. Well done and thanks to biking.ie for organising such a superb event on behalf of the DMP.

The trails, are proving very popular with cyclists, with an average of 495 visits per week. One enthusiast wrote: "I don't often bother sending emails like this, but I thought I would congratulate DMP and Coillte on the Ticknock mountain bike trail. I used to ride the trails up there before the track was built, and I was worried about what sort of track would be built. But with the ample car parking and excellent track, I think you did a great job."

For more information and a map of the trail see www.dublinmountains.ie – Recreation sites – Ticknock MTB trails.



Bouldering



Bouldering is a style of rock climbing without a rope on large rock outcrops or boulders. It is normally limited to short climbs, with climbers rarely going above 3-5metres. A crash mat or bouldering mat is typically placed on the ground so that a fall will not result in a serious injury. There are two good locations in the Dublin Mountains for bouldering at the tors on Three Rock and the Scalp. Three Rock is good for those just starting out in bouldering, while the Scalp offers more testing challenges. All you need are climbing shoes, chalk bag and bouldering mat. Thanks to David Flanagan, author of **the Short Span** for allowing us to post the bouldering problems at the Dublin sites on the DMP website (www.dublinmountains.ie/activities/)

Trail News Update

TWO NEW LOOPED WALKS:

The DMP has erected two new trailhead information boards and signage waymarking two new looped walks. The Rathmichael Walk is a 1.7km looped walk around the lovely mixed woodland of Rathmichael rewarding the walker with stunning views along the Dublin/Wicklow coastline. This looped walk is easily accessible from Shankill by following the Dublin Mountains Way markers until you reach Rathmichael Wood, a distance of 1.3km.

The longer Upper Reservoir Loop around the Bohernabreena Reservoir is an 8.7km loop with lovely views over the Glenasmole valley. This walk also provides an insight into the fascinating history of water provision for Dublin city. More and more people are venturing out to the Glenasmole Valley

with the new link from Tallaght through Kiltipper Park which makes it very accessible (again follow the Dublin Mountains Way markers). The maps can be downloaded from the website www.dublinmountains.ie – Recreation Sites.

DUBLIN MOUNTAINS WAY—FEATHERBEDS:

Work will commence shortly on building a new section of trail for the Dublin Mountains Way through the Featherbeds Forest near Killakee. The forest was felled earlier in the summer along this section of the route and the old track is no longer visible. A sustainable, low maintenance turnpike trail will be constructed through here and should be complete before the end of the year. Please follow the diversion signs until this work is completed. The Dublin Mountains Way hit

our TV screens again, being featured on RTE1 Nationwide. The series interviewed some walkers from the local Shanganagh Ramblers hiking along the Dublin Mountains Way in Carrickgollogan where they also met DMP manager, Karen Woods, and two of the volunteer rangers.

MASSY'S ESTATE NATURE TRAIL:

The nature trail will be reinstated in Massy's Estate wood very shortly. This is a lovely wood with a wealth of interesting tree species and historical features which will be described along the nature trail route. The tree identification plaques will also be repaired. The information booklet will be available to download from the website. prior to your visit.

dlr Red Squirrel Conservation Project



There are two species of squirrel in Ireland, the red squirrel and the grey squirrel. The red is native, but is undergoing a steady decline across the country.

This is largely due to the introduction of the grey squirrel, which came to Ireland from North America in 1911. Grey squirrels do not injure or kill red squirrels, but their larger size, more prolific breeding and more varied diet allow them to out-compete red squirrels in broadleaved woodland. Grey squirrels can also carry the squirrel poxvirus, which does not harm them, but causes a high rate of deaths in reds. Since its introduction, the grey squirrel has caused considerable damage to trees and woodlands with its persistent bark stripping.

Small populations of red squirrels are living in the woodlands in Killiney Hill Park, and the forests in the Dublin Mountains. As part of the red squirrel conservation project, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council's Parks Service is working with Coillte, DMP, NPWS and public and private landowners in the surrounding areas to protect these habitats from the grey squirrel.

What can you do? If you have seen a red or grey squirrel in your garden, local park or forest or in the general area, please log onto www.dlrco.ie/parks to register your sighting. For further information please contact Joann Breen, jbreen@dlrcoco.ie.

Some DMP Events held so far....



DUBLIN MOUNTAIN PLOD

17th July, Dublin Mountains

Over 200 runners took part in the 2nd Dublin Mountain Plod half marathon, which started in Marlay Park and looped up Tibbradden Lane, through Massy's Wood, Cruagh forest, across Tibbradden Mountain before heading down the Wicklow Way to Kilmashogue and back to Marlay Park. The distance of 21km included 820m of climb! This year's winner was Aengus Burke who completed the race in a time of 1hr 28min 41sec. Well done to all who finished the race. A big thank you to IMRA, the DMP volunteer rangers and Gardai for all their help in organising and marshalling the event. Thanks to Basecamp for sponsoring the prizes. All money raised during this event will be used to continue upgrading sections of trail in the Dublin Mountains.

53DEGREES NORTH WALKING FESTIVAL

11th-17th April

Sunday 17th April saw the first 53 degrees North Walking Festival in the Dublin Mountains. This week-long festival included a number of events in the two stores such as an expo night with information on a range of walking based activities (at which the DMP had an information stand), Adventure Cinema evening, and a lecture by Sir Chris Bonnington.

The week culminated with a range of themed walks on the Sunday, many of which were led by the DMP volunteer rangers and Mountaineering Ireland leaders. Over 200 people took part in these guided walks which included navigation skills, beginner, intermediate and advanced hikes and a family walk.

DMP GUIDED WALKS

The DMP volunteer ranger guided walks are proving as popular as ever, and, to date in 2011, 12 walks have been held with over 200 participants. Many see them as a good introduction to hiking and the variety of routes available in the Dublin Mountains. The volunteer rangers try to give as much information as possible about hiking and the features you might encounter along the route. Booking is essential on these hikes which are advertised on the website. Why not come out and give it a try!

A quote from one happy walker: "I just wanted to pass on my thanks to Bill and Evin for yesterday's guided walk. It was really enjoyable. Lovely group of people too. I hope to be able to make another walk in October."

VOLUNTEER RANGER SERVICE

As part of its programme to provide an enhanced recreation experience for the users of the Dublin Mountains, the DMP operates a Volunteer Ranger Service. At present, there is a team of 20 enthusiastic and committed volunteers, who do excellent work in the Dublin Mountains. Recruitment of additional volunteers to the current team is underway.

The duties undertaken by volunteer rangers include assisting visitors to the DMP area, leading and helping with DMP organised events, promoting responsible use through the Leave No Trace Programme within the DMP area and providing support to the DMP full-time staff. Volunteer rangers are expected to commit to at least two days a month.

The role will be of interest to people who are attracted to working in the outdoors and who enjoy dealing with the public and being of service in a recreation type environment. Full training will be provided.



If you think you might be interested in such a role, all you need to do is to log on to the DMP website, and click on the link 'Volunteer Ranger Service', where you can download an application form. The closing date for applications is the 30th September. www.dublinmountains.ie

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

Upcoming DMP Events

Forestry Family Fun Day - Sunday 18th September

An action packed fun day in the forest for all the family. There will be a range of different activities to try out such as den building, mountain biking, orienteering, string trail, field archery, slack-lining, cross-cutting, giant wooden puzzles, tree identification. Be prepared to get dirty and have lots of fun! Raingear and wellies recommended!!

National Trails Day - Sunday 2nd October

The DMP will be hosting some events for National Trails Day. Check out the huge range of events taking place all over the country to celebrate our walking, cycling & water trails. See www.nationaltrailsday.ie for more information.



VISITOR DATA INFORMATION

Word of mouth reports would suggest that visitor numbers and usage of the recreation trails in the Dublin Mountains is increasing year on year. Especially as the facilities improve, and with increasing recognition of the health benefits of walking and exercise and the valuable resource on Dublin's doorstep. Visitor counters have been erected at a number of sites across the Dublin Mountains to give some idea of the number of visits to the trails. At present there are 3 counters in place, one on the mountain bike trail and two on walking trails in Cruagh and Kilmashogue. A quick summary of the data shows that, on average, there are 34 visits to Cruagh per weekday reaching a peak of 131 visits on Sundays, and 59 visits per weekday and 145 visits on a Sunday at Kilmashogue. The mountain bike trail shows an average of 44 visits on a weekday and over 100 visits at the weekends. We will continue to collect the data over the coming months.

Dublin Mountaineer Bus Service



The **Dublin Mountaineer bus service** was in operation once again from the end April to the end of June. There were 3 services from Sandyford Luas (10:00, 12:30, 15:45) and 3 services from Sean Walsh Park, Tallaght (11:00, 13:15, 16:55) at weekends and bank holidays, servicing 9 stops across the Dublin Mountains. A hop on hop off daily ticket cost €5 or a family ticket was €12. Despite the change in months of operation (following a user survey) visitor usage numbers were low. The service will be reviewed and a decision will be made before the end of the year as to whether it will operate again in 2012.

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Volunteer work with the DMP

The DMP hosted two corporate volunteer days in the Dublin Mountains.



The DMP is keen to build meaningful partnerships with a range of key stakeholders. It also highlights the contribution we make to local communities and how we can facilitate others in making that contribution across the country.

For the third year running, a team of 12 volunteers from **Google Serve** put on their outdoor clothing and boots, and headed up to the mountains to help with some trail maintenance.

The project involved installing water bars along a section of the Dublin Mountains Way/Wicklow Way.



Another team of 14 volunteers from the **Ritz Carlton Powerscourt Hotel** joined the DMP to help improve the trails in Barnaslingan Wood. The crew helped cut back vegetation along the trails, install some more waymarker posts and tidy up around the car park area. Thanks to all the volunteers who came out and helped.