

# Woodland and Forest – biodiversity loss and recovery

**Richard Nairn**





- **My experience of woodlands**
- **Current state of native woodlands**
- **The key issues for woodland restoration**







**12 trees & shrubs**



**66 flowering  
plants & ferns**



**74 mosses and  
liverworts**



**34 large fungi**



**67 large moths**



**11 land molluscs**



**23 freshwater  
invertebrates**

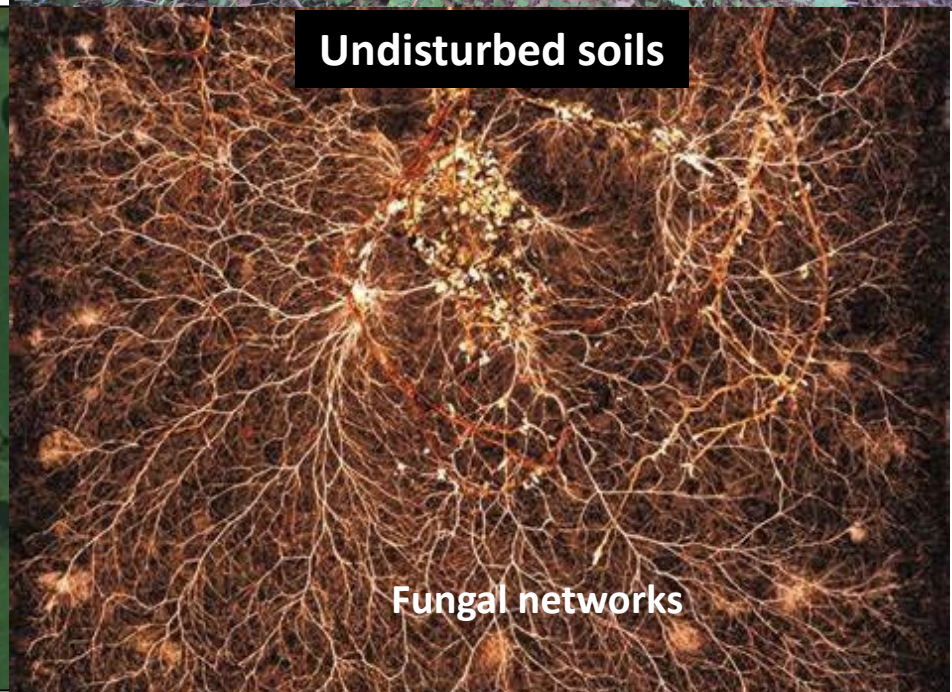
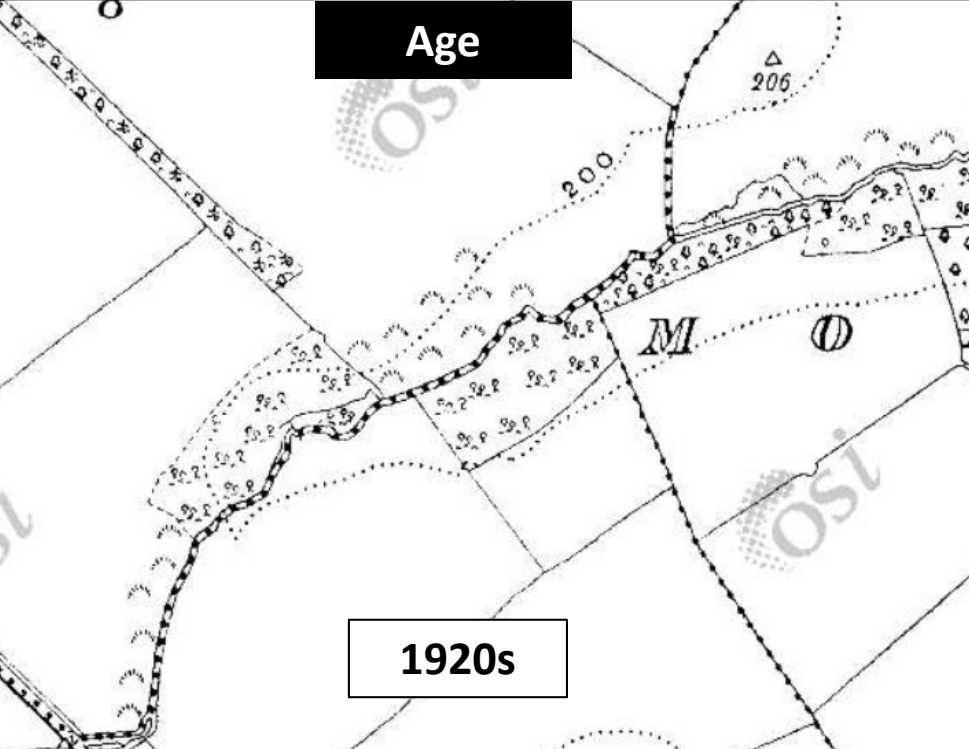


**15 breeding birds**



**7 of 9 bats in Ireland**







## Trees of mixed age and species



**Holly**



**Alder**



**Hazel**



**Rowan**



**Standing dead wood**



**Decaying wood**



**Fallen logs**



**Streams and pools**



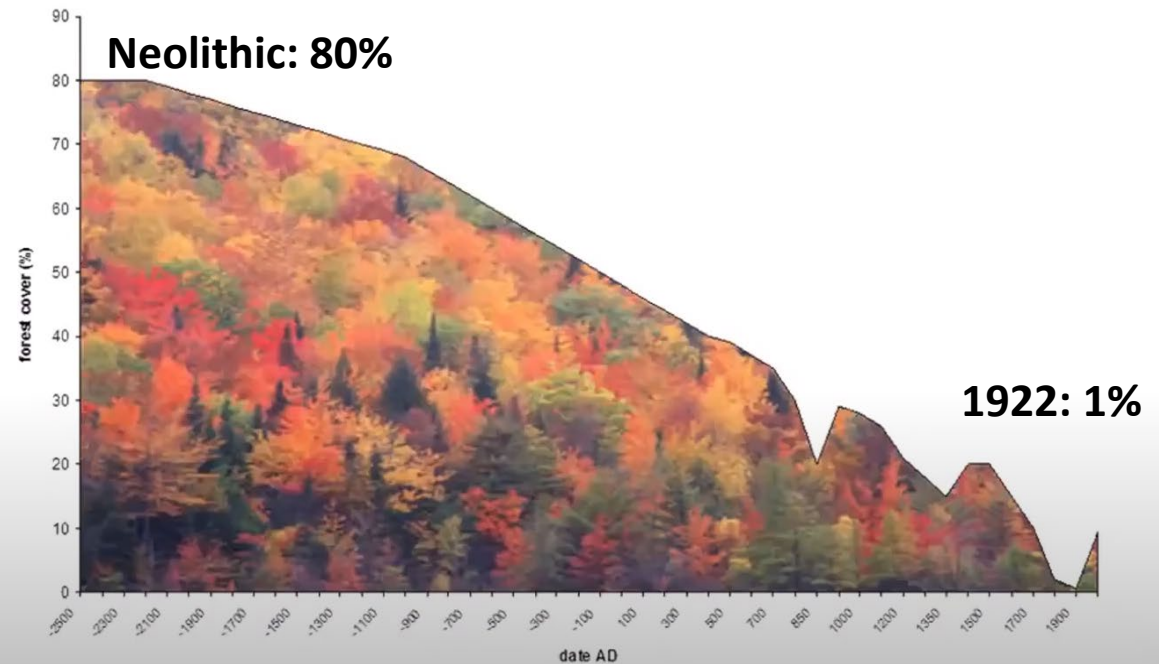
# Mesolithic period

8,000 years ago

First humans in Ireland

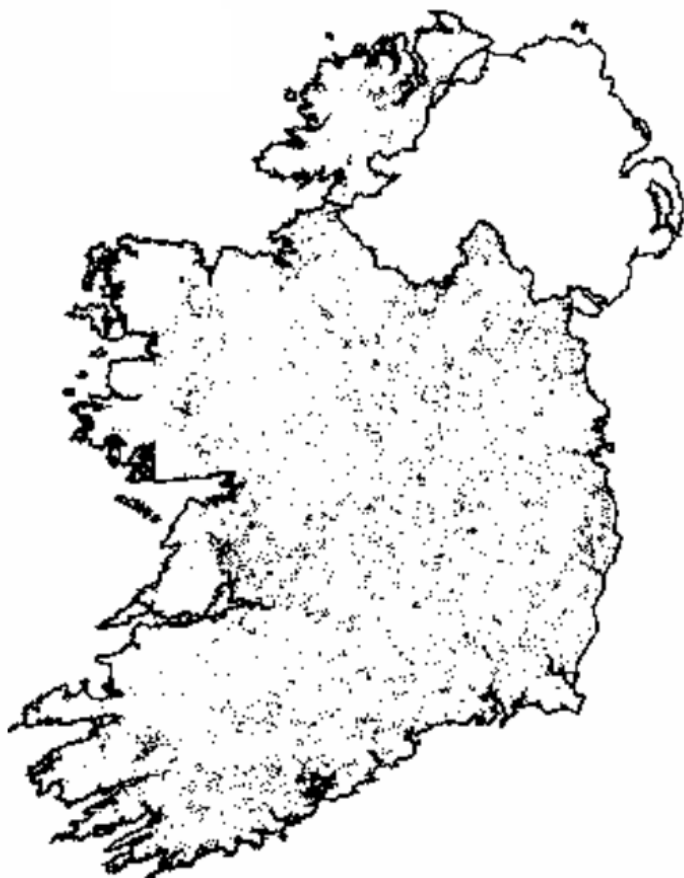
## Where have all the forests gone?

### Broadleaf forest development in Ireland



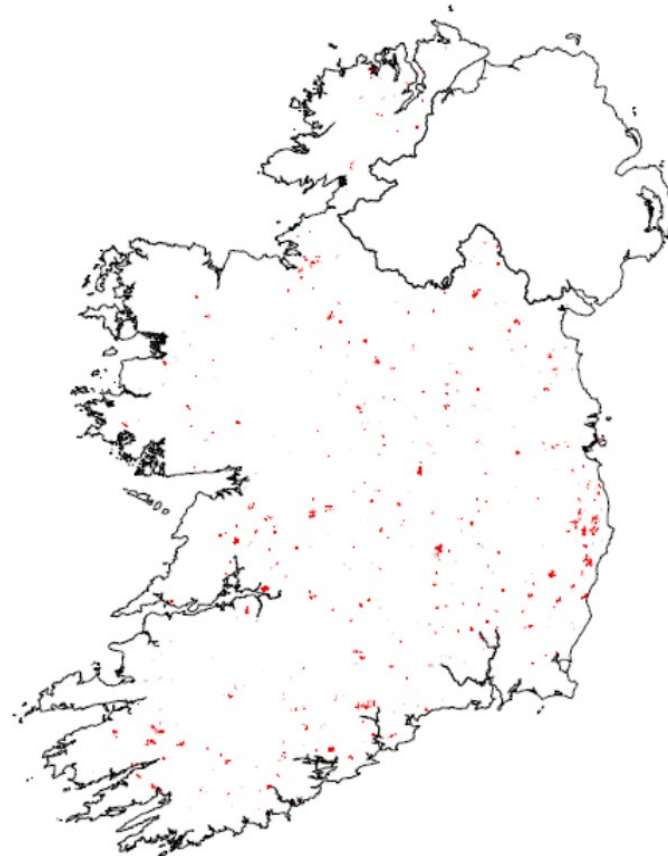


**Less than 2% cover of native woodland  
90% of woods are under 10 hectares**



**Native woodlands**

**National Survey of Native woodlands  
(2003-2008)**



**Ancient & long-established woodlands  
(areas slightly exaggerated)**

**Only 123 sites confirmed as ancient or  
long-established (Perrin & Daly 2000)**



**Many woods in poor condition**

**36% have planted non-native trees  
39% have livestock grazing  
20% have deer damage  
>23% have invasive plant species  
<20% have standing dead wood**

**Invasive Rhododendron**

**Invasive deer browsing  
prevents regeneration**



**Invasive Laurel**



**What are the main options for restoring woodland biodiversity?**





# Native Woodland Scheme

## Conservation:

- ❖ Fence out deer and livestock
- ❖ Remove non-native trees and plants
- ❖ Allow natural regeneration in clearings

### Native Woodland Conservation Scheme

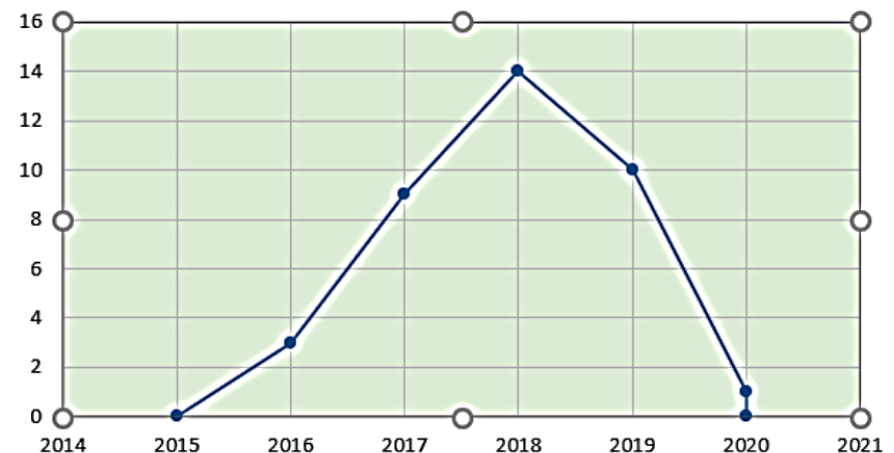
September 2015



## Forestry Programme 2014-2021

- ❑ Target for grant aid: **1,950ha.**
- ❑ Actual area funded: **253ha (14%)**
- ❑ **Premiums limited to €350/hectare per year for 7 years only!**

NWS Conservation approvals 2015 -2021



Graph 1 shows the no. of contracts approved since the NWS Conservation schemes' return in 2015

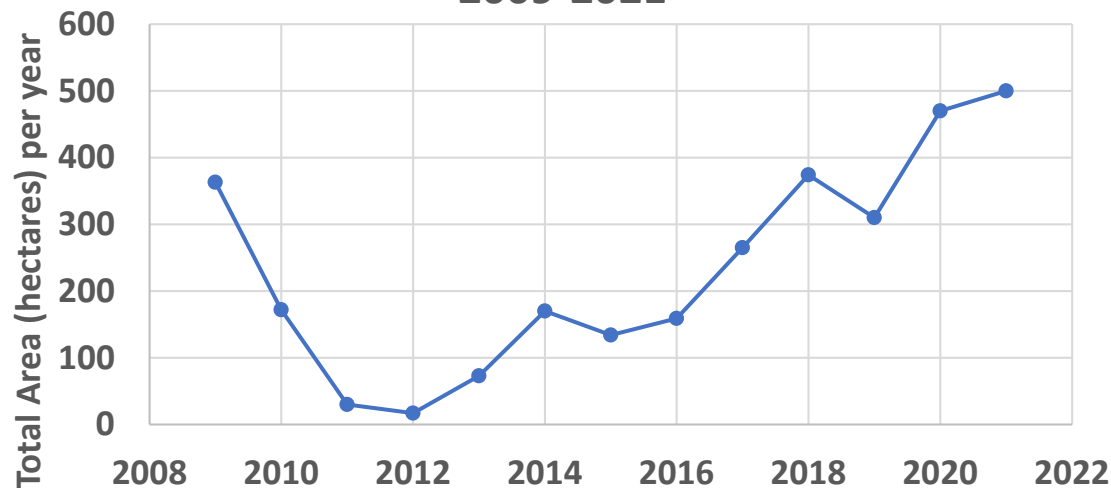


# Native Woodland Scheme

## Establishment:

- ❖ Planting of native trees
- ❖ Protection from grazing

Native Woodland Scheme Establishment  
2009-2021



## Forestry Programme 2014-2021

- ❑ Target for planting: **2,700ha.**
- ❑ Total area funded: **1,900ha (70%)**
- ❑ Premiums **€650/hectare per year for 15 years**



DEER AND FORESTRY IN IRELAND: A REVIEW OF CURRENT  
STATUS AND MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS



A report prepared for  
Woodlands of Ireland  
(Collearnacha Dúchasacha)



Deer damage

# Deer management programme needed

- Deer numbers impact woodland biodiversity and prevent regeneration
- No national deer management policy
- No dedicated deer control staff





# Other issues

**Current requirement for only 15% broadleaved trees in commercial plantations is not sufficient to restore woodland biodiversity**



**Scrub can be retained as emerging woodland**



**Continuous cover forestry helps maintain woodland habitat and soils**





The image shows a vibrant green woodland scene. In the foreground, there is a field of tall, green grass interspersed with numerous young, thin saplings. The middle ground is filled with a dense canopy of trees and shrubs, showing various shades of green. In the background, a line of darker, more mature trees is visible against a pale, overcast sky.

**“Forestry Programme 2023-2027 will  
go to public consultation next week”  
- Pippa Hackett, Minister of State  
for land use and biodiversity**

**Be patient! – It takes a long time to restore woodland biodiversity**