

Greenwave Crossing Ireland

Greenwave 2008 was launched on the 29th January by Discover Science and Engineering in anticipation of the phenomenon of Spring in Ireland. Every year a green wave, which is caused by the opening of buds on trees and hedges, can be seen moving across Europe from outer space in springtime. The Greenwave initiative involves primary school children stepping into nature and tracking the phenomenon in a bid to find out if Spring moves from south to north across Ireland or inland from coast to the centre of the country.

School children will be asked to register on the **Greenwave** website when certain species of trees and wildlife begin to bud and appear. In addition to the species examined in 2007 (which were ash, horse chestnut and hawthorn trees, the primrose and the swallow), participants are now being asked to look out for frogs and to document their first sighting of frogspawn, which is a very early indicator of the arrival of spring.

Each of the first 3,000 primary school teachers to register for **Greenwave 2008** will also be sent a **Greenwave** thermometer for their class. Participating teachers and students are encouraged to record the mid-day temperature each day. These daily temperatures will then be recorded on a special wall chart provided, making it easy for school children to recognise patterns.

The information gathered will act as nature's clock and will illustrate whether climate change is causing flowers to bloom even earlier this year and how Irish wildlife is affected.

The data will be plotted on the Greenwave website where visitors will be able to view the findings and track nature's progress over time.

www.greenwave.ie

Commenting about the project, **Eanna Ni Lamhna**, panellist on the Mooney Show, RTE Radio 1, said, *"The Greenwave project is an excellent scientific opportunity for primary schools. It helps students to learn about species of Irish wildlife such as the frog and the hawthorn tree to see how they react to the arrival of spring. Schools are working together as a source of scientific data and children are able to see first hand the effects that climate change has."*

Gerald Fleming, meteorologist and RTE weather broadcaster, offered his insight on the project, *"Last year was exceptional in that we had an unusual spring season with all that fine, sunny weather from the end of March right through April, followed by a cool and wet month of May. So it will be interesting to see how things differ this coming spring and how this will affect the natural world. Will some of the earliest sightings once again be in parts of the Midlands, or even around Sligo like we discovered last year? Or will they be in the southwest as we would expect?"*

Stephanie O' Neill, Project Manager of Greenwave, added, "We are looking forward to building on the massive success of Greenwave 2007. Between the start of February and the end of May last year 1172 records were received from all over the country. Taking part in the Greenwave project is a practical way for primary schools to develop their science skills by studying how plants and animals react to warming and lengthening days in Spring. Students will also be able to investigate whether global warming is one of the reasons for Spring arriving earlier in Ireland."

The web site, www.greenwave.ie is easily accessed and instructions on how to take part are very clear and readily followed. Feedback from the results will bring home to participating pupils the importance of the data supplied by each and every school. The project will cater for *Gaelscoileanna*, as Greenwave materials will also be published in the Irish language.

This year, schoolchildren who take part in the experiment can also win some great prizes by sending in photos of their sightings. To get involved in this year's Greenwave project, simply log onto the website <http://www.greenwave.ie> and download one of the spotter's guides.

For more information on Ireland's landscape, habitats and biodiversity, please visit www.biology.ie.

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About Discover Science & Engineering:

Discover Science & Engineering is the national integrated awareness programme, managed by Forfás on behalf of the Office of Science and Technology.

Its objectives are to increase the numbers of students studying the physical sciences, to promote a positive attitude to careers in science, engineering and technology and to foster a greater understanding of science and its value to Irish society.

Learn more about Discover Science & Engineering on the programme website www.Discover-Science.ie