



## **Over 200,000 acres (20%) of the nation's forests devoted to biodiversity but vast majority of adults don't know this**

**Almost half the population is aware the previously endangered red squirrel has made a comeback in the past two decades**

**4 in 5 adults don't know woodpeckers have been living in Irish forests for over a decade**

**18 October, 2021**

A Coillte commissioned RED C poll\* reveals that 87% of Irish adults don't know that 1 in 5 of the nation's forests (c90,000~ ha or 219,000 acres) managed and cared for by Coillte are dedicated to biodiversity purposes.

- Biodiversity is about the variety of nature's plants, insects and animals that exist in our world.
- High levels of biodiversity are desirable and are broadly agreed to be indicators of healthy ecosystems leading to a healthier planet and people.

"Ninety thousand hectares or over 200,000 acres of the nation's forests and lands is an area the size of Co. Dublin - or larger than all of the six national parks# in Ireland combined," said Mark Carlin, managing director, Coillte Forest.

The Cop 26, UN Climate Change 2021 Glasgow conference beginning at the end of October will undoubtedly include the importance of biodiversity within the climate change agenda.

All of Coillte's forests are managed sustainably, to the exacting standards set by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certificate (PEFC). FSC and PEFC are internationally recognised benchmarks for certifying high quality sustainable forest management and include biodiversity in their remits.

"It's important to know that Coillte has high biodiversity values right across its forests and lands said Carlin. "We even have our own classification system that categorises the nation's forests and lands by their biodiversity value. "This allows us to enhance and restore the most important biodiversity areas nationally," he said.

### **Other research highlights include:**

- 47% of people know the Irish red squirrel - an endangered species in the late 1990's has made a comeback in the past 10-20 years. 53% don't know.
- Four in five adults or 82% don't know that woodpeckers have lived in Irish forests for the past 10-20 years. 18% of Irish adults do know
- 95% of respondents believe biodiversity is important or very important for Ireland's future. 5% don't.

“The red squirrel is a great comeback story,” said Carlin. “When I was growing up, there was serious concern about their numbers declining sharply. They are native to Irish forests and we’re delighted to see them thriving in their natural habitat again.”

One of the reasons for this comeback is the increase in forest cover in the past 20 years - squirrels need lots of coniferous seed cones to feed on and they make their homes in these trees, added Carlin.

**The Red C Poll asked: Which of the following animals do you think live in Irish forests?**

**Please select all those that apply:**

- Red Fox – 86%
- Badger – 78%
- Pine Marten – 56%
- Sika Deer – 50%
- Long eared Owl – 46%
- Red Kite – 26%
- None of these – 6%

All the above animals live in Irish forests

Ends

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**Notes for Editors**

- \*A RED C poll was conducted amongst 1,006 Irish adults, aged 18+ between 20-26/8/2021.
- ~ Approximately 88,477 ha (times 2.47 = 218,538 acres) of forests and lands on the Coillte estate are managed for biodiversity purposes as at 10 December, 2019.
- # Six national parks in Ireland include: Killarney National Park (105km<sup>2</sup>), Glenveagh, Co Donegal (170km<sup>2</sup>), Wicklow Mountains (205km<sup>2</sup>), Connemara National Park (20km<sup>2</sup>), Wild Nephin, Co Mayo (110km<sup>2</sup>: ) The Burren National Park, (15km<sup>2</sup>). The total land area = 625km<sup>2</sup> square kilometres. One square kilometre = 100 hectares. 625 km<sup>2</sup> = 62,500 hectares, which is less than Coillte’s forests and lands of 88,477hectares. Source for national parks: [List of national parks of the Republic of Ireland - Wikipedia](#)
- Coillte is the nation’s largest forest and land owner - with over 440,000 hectares or over 1 million acres, it is also one of the country’s largest carbon sinks.