



# Zoobytes



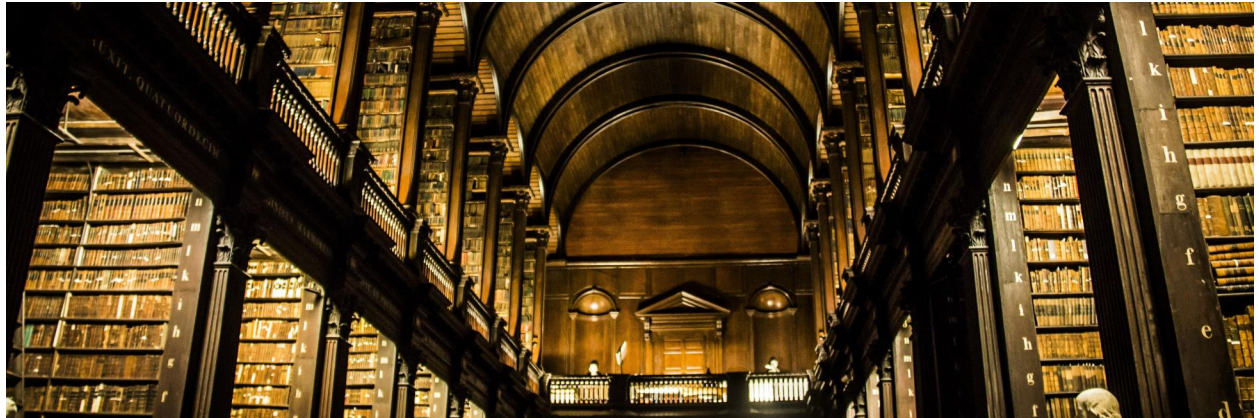
**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

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*Newsletter of the Discipline of Zoology Spring 2025*

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## RETIREMENTS



## Prof. Nicola Marples



Nicola retired at the end of September 2024 following 28 years researching and teaching Animal Behaviour in Zoology. Over the 28 years she and her team have made important discoveries; from new bird species on the islands of Indonesia, to work on feeding ecology and reproductive biology of badger populations here in Ireland, to bird predatory behaviour studies, in particular the responses of birds to novel prey and the evolution of aposematic colour patterns. In each of these research areas she has trained excellent young scientists, who have gone on to great careers.

Nicola is a gifted teacher, recipient of a Provost's Teaching award and was responsible for a great deal of the popularity of Zoology as a choice for specialisation in the sophomore years.

At an event held in Zoology to mark Nicola's retirement in October, many colleagues and former students gathered to thank her and wish her and Dave well. There were video messages from several who could not be there in person.

The evening also marked farewell to Dave Kelly and an opportunity to thank him for all his valued work in Zoology over many years, and to wish Nicola and Dave well in the next phase of their careers and future biodiversity support work in the UK.

### Dr. Martyn Linnie



After a phenomenal 55 years service to Zoology and Trinity, as Chief Technical Officer (CTO), Curator of the Zoological Museum and many other roles, Martyn's retirement was marked at a reception in the Zoology building on November 1st 2024. Colleagues past and present, friends and Martyn's family gathered to wish him well. It was a celebration of the many ways Martyn enriched Zoology and an opportunity to thank him.

As curator of the museum Martyn oversaw its development from a semi-derelict collection to a vibrant, interactive space encompassing the wide-ranging learning needs of both formal and informal audiences, with a very popular outreach program. He completed over 25 specialist training courses in all aspects of museum care, management and development, while also carrying out the research for his Doctoral Thesis on museum specimens. A funding drive ensured the future for the collection and facilitated Martyn obtaining full museum accreditation from the Heritage Council in 2015, renewed in 2019.

As we prepare to temporarily leave the Zoology building to make way for refurbishment work we are reminded of Martyn's massive planning and preparatory work toward this day over the preceding eight years. This is just the latest step in his excellent management of the building, refurbishment and improvement works over his time as CTO. Martyn continues to help preserve the museum collection during the refurbishment works as visiting research Fellow in Zoology.



## NEW PEOPLE



## Dr. Greg Albery



Dia dhaoibh! My name is Greg, and I'm the new Assistant Professor of Animal Behaviour, specialising in infectious disease dynamics in wild animals. My research revolves around using data-intensive methods to understand how animals move, meet, and spread disease. By combining diverse tools from spatial and social network analysis in complex ways, I use biological systems as a substrate for doing cool and interesting things with data, which I use to inform dimensions of conservation, public health, and global change. Outside of zoology, I am trying to develop some hobbies.

**Dr. Thomas Connor**



Hi everyone, I go by Thomas and am a wildlife ecologist who recently joined Trinity in the Zoology Discipline as an Assistant Professor. Prior to Trinity I received my PhD from Michigan State University, spent a few years as a postdoc at the University of California, Berkeley, and worked as a quantitative ecologist at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. I am interested in developing and employing quantitative methods to understand and predict wildlife distributions and population dynamics within socio-ecological systems. In the application of these methods to conservation challenges I am open to broad collaborations and interdisciplinary research that incorporates indigenous ways of knowing and traditional ecological knowledge, social science, environmental history, genetics, and other fields - so please reach out if you are interested in potential collaborations.

## Dr. Mariana Cerca



Dr. Mariana Cerca is a new postdoc fellow working on the C-FAARER project: Community-driven Farming for the Atlantic and Arctic sea basins through REgeneRative aquaculture. With a background in natural resource management, she completed a PhD in Biosystems and Food Engineering from University College Dublin as part of the Horizon 2020 MSCA ITN AgRefine project. Her research explored the social dimensions of emerging technologies in the circular bioeconomy, with a particular focus on seaweed supply systems. *“I’m particularly interested in the connections between society, technology and ecosystems, as well as inter- and transdisciplinary research – and of course, all things seaweed!”*

## Dr. Marjolein Toorians



Hi, my name is Marjolein Toorians and as of last June I have joined the Discipline of Zoology as a Postdoc with Pepijn Luijckx. Originally from the Netherlands, I moved here last summer from Vancouver, Canada, where I did my PhD at the University of British Columbia. I am interested in disease-ecology, biodiversity and ecological modelling. In particular, my PhD work focused on the effect of biodiversity decline and the increase of epidemics. I studied bovine tuberculosis in South Africa, investigating environmental spread of this mycobacterial pathogen using eDNA and camera traps. I am very happy to have been able to join the Luijckx lab to further develop research to unravel the effects of climate change on disease outbreaks. Other than disease-ecology, I love the outdoors and am very excited to exchange the mountains of British Columbia for the mountains of Ireland! I have already had the fortune to meet most of you and am looking forward to spend the rest of the semester with you all!

## Mark Gilligan



Hi everyone

I'm Mark, I've been here in Trinity as a staff member since 2013 and I've recently joined the Zoology technical team as a new Senior Technical Officer.

My background includes over 20 years' experience in coach building, fabrication and alarm installation. As an STO my role is providing support for technical services in the School of Natural Sciences. This can include installations, technical repairs, maintenance, lab duties and field work.

Outside of college life, I enjoy family time, being a member of my local GAA club, dog walking and the cinema.

At weekends, if I'm not polishing my car, my time is taking up with the maintaining of my two Jewel aquariums which are the homes to my fresh water South American Cichlids (Tropical fish). I've been a keen hobbyist for over 30 years.

## Joseph Strawbridge



Hi, I'm Joe, and I am a research assistant with Professor Pepijn Luijckx. I graduated from the Zoology moderatorship last year, and have had the pleasure of working with Pepijn and his students since then. I have a wide range of interests, but, after working with *Daphnia magna* and some of its microparasites over the last few months, I am looking forward to continuing to focus on interactions between parasites and their hosts by starting a taught master's in parasitology later this year. As I am mostly in Tilda, I've met many of you only a couple of times, but I'm immensely glad to be a part of the Discipline and looking forward to getting to know you guys better over the remainder of my time here!

## Sorcha Hennigan



Hello, my name is Sorcha and I am a research masters student working in Rebecca Rolfe's lab. I graduated from the zoology course here last year. My capstone project was a histological investigation into vertebral ligaments in the developing chick. I have since expanded on this work and am now histologically and molecularly investigating the effects of immobilisation on developing vertebral ligaments, in both chicks and mice. I am from coastal Donegal and I enjoy knitting and listening to podcasts.

Ailis Wynne



Hi, my name is Ailis and I started my research masters in Zoology back in September of 2024. I come from Texas but did my undergraduate degree here at Trinity in Biological and Biomedical sciences with a moderatorship specialization in Botany. I'm working under the supervision of Dr. Jim Barnett as well as Professor Jane Stout to understand how artificial light at night impacts the behaviour of nocturnal pollinators. I am looking forward to working on this project between both Zoology and Botany, and look forward to meeting everyone in the Department (if I haven't already)!

Andrea Tonelli



Hi, my name is Andrea and I'm a PhD student in Environmental and Evolutionary Biology at Sapienza University of Rome, with a wide interest in One Health, disease ecology, and global change. My PhD research focuses on assessing the hazard posed by zoonotic viruses, exploring their connection with global change drivers, and identifying priorities for zoonotic risk surveillance. I'm spending three months at the Zoology department in Trinity, working with Prof. Greg Albery on modelling the potential sharing of pathogens between alien and native mammals. This work will provide an assessment on the potential spread of pathogens linked to alien mammals and help identify potential hotposts of disease introduction at the global scale. I'm more than happy to chat if anyone has overlapping interests and/or ideas for collaboration!

## NEWS IN ZOOLOGY



## Promotions

*Congratulations to Nick Payne and Nessa O'Connor on promotion to Associate Professor and Professor in, respectively!*



## Congratulations to our Zoology graduates 2024!



*1 - Back row: Faye Maguire, Leah Quinn, Shane Mahon, Caelainn McGowran, Joe Strawbridge, Jiawei Xu (Yoshi), Niall Moore, Alec Lea, Roisin Ni Dhonabhain, Zoe Whelan, Kolo Letowska*

*Front row: Aoibhinn Browne, Lucia Jamison, Megan Bulbulia, Ciara O'Connor, Lisa Cully, Sorcha Hennigan, Grace Hayden, Eva Beedall*



*2 - Caelainn McGowran, Ciaran Flynn, Ciara O'Connor, Megan Bulbulia, Sophie Gray, Aoibhinn Browne, Soneva Scott, Gabriella Beaddie, Shane Mahon*



3 - Ciaran Flynn



### **Gold medalists**

*Special congratulations to two gold medalists among the class of 2024: Ciaran Flynn and Niall Moore!*

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### **AIB Trinity Climate Hub**



5 - Provost Linda Doyle, Professor Mary Robinson, Colin Hunt (CEO AIB) and Professor Yvonne Buckley at the announcement of the AIB Trinity Climate Hub at the AIB Sustainability Conference, RDS.

**Director: Professor Yvonne Buckley** (School of Natural Sciences, Trinity College Dublin)

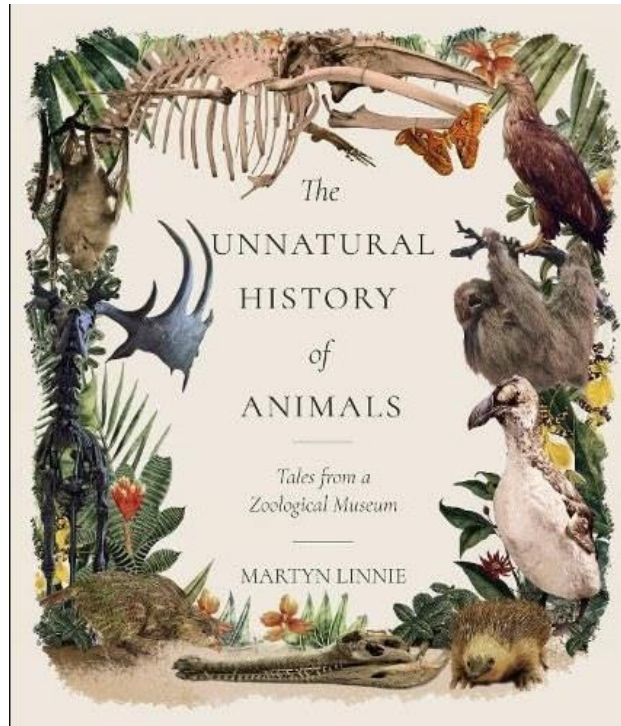
AIB is the lead sponsor of the AIB Trinity Climate Hub and the associated education and public engagement activities. The AIB Trinity Climate Hub commenced on 1st December 2024 and will run to December 2029 (5 years). The support from AIB was secured as part of the ongoing relationship between Trinity and AIB over several years, led by Trinity Development & Alumni.

Trinity has demonstrated research excellence and public engagement in the areas of sustainability, climate, biodiversity and water. Under the direction of Professor Yvonne Buckley, at the School of Natural Sciences, the **AIB Trinity Climate Hub** will strengthen and expand this world class research environment for the benefit of society and the planet.

The AIB Trinity Climate Hub will focus on academic research and education and researchers shall always maintain their academic freedom with respect to their research and publications relating to research and shall have the freedom to pursue and publish research without any interference or restriction.

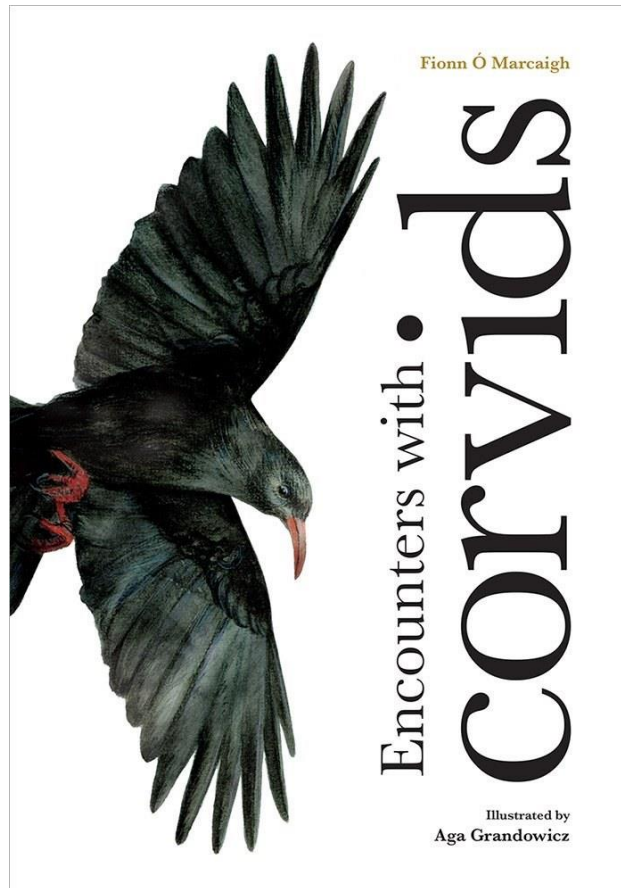
Increased capacity for impactful research on climate, biodiversity and water is urgently needed to keep up with societal, economic and government demands for new technologies and expert advice on interventions for sustainability and just societal transition.

## Books



**Congratulations to Martyn Linnie on the publication of *The Unnatural History of Animals: Tales from a Zoological Museum*!**

The book has recently been published by Red Stripe Press and is a fantastic chronicle of interesting histories and links to favourite residents of our own Zoological Museum. To cite the Foreword written by Trinity's Luke O'Neill, it is a remarkable, erudite and beautifully illustrated book full of exciting stories.... His stories abound with colourful insights into the museum's residents.



***Encounters With Corvids*: a new book contributed to by former Zoology colleague Nicola Marples and Fionn Ó Marcaigh** The book is due to be published on the 27th of April by Natural World Publishing. Nicola wrote the Foreword, Fionn wrote the main text, and wildlife artist Aga Grandowicz illustrated the book. The book comprises a series of non-technical natural history musings, with each chapter focusing on one of Ireland's native corvid species. A number of the chapters are based on work done for the Discipline, like watching jackdaws on the roof of the hostel while teaching on the Glendalough field course and listening to jays during the Áras Biodiversity Audit. The book is being launched in the Gutter Bookshop in Dublin on the 7th of May.<sup>1</sup> More information on the Gutter Bookshop site.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/encounters-with-corvids-book-launch-tickets-1261288490829?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=ebdsshcopyurlthe>

<sup>2</sup><https://gutterbookshop.com/product/encounters-with-corvids-by-dr-fionn-o-marcaigh-aga-grandowicz/>

### New Biodiversity Officer in Trinity



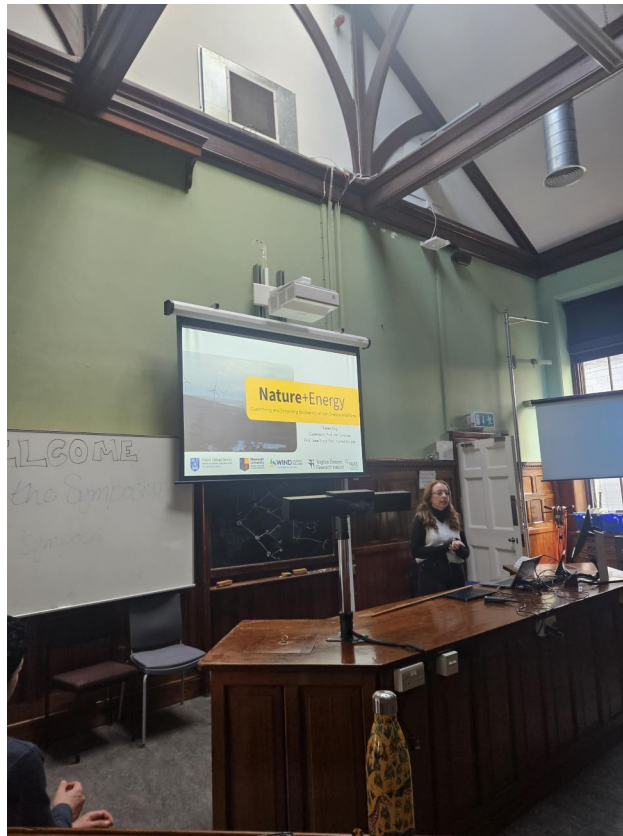
**Congratulations to Collie Ennis on taking up a new role as Biodiversity Officer in Trinity!** Collie started this role at the beginning of March and is working towards making Trinity a more nature positive university, incorporating everything from practical biodiversity friendly grounds keeping, public engagement and assistance with biodiversity to nature positive procurement goods and services for the campus. He looks forward to working with Zoology colleagues towards these goals

### Johnson and Johnson WiSTEM2D scholars award



Congratulations to Senior Sophister Zoology student Elinore Katus on being awarded the Johnson and Johnson WiSTEM2D scholars award for Trinity College 2024. The program aims to fuel development of female STEM talent at all stages.

## The 14th annual Botany-Zoology Postgraduate Symposium



*6 - Emma King in full presentation mode at the PG symposium 2024/25*

The Symposium occurred on the 6th of March this year. This event gave all postgraduate students from the two departments the opportunity to showcase their research and gain experience in communicating their work. There were a diverse range of topics from paleobotany to plant pathogens and from moths to mice. It was fascinating to get an update on all the research students' work. We also heard from our keynote speaker, Dr Zoë Popper from the University of Galway, who gave a fascinating talk about cell walls as well as giving career advice to early career researchers.

Grace McNicholas won the prize for the best 10-minute talk, Gayathri Girish Nair won the best 5-minute talk and Simon Benson won the crowd favourite prize. Congratulations to the prize winners and to all the speakers who contributed to a very successful symposium. Thanks to the organisers this year for a great meeting with a relaxed atmosphere that encouraged open exchange: Ailis Wynne, Emily Symington and MacDara Allison.



*7 - Grace McNicholas, winner of the best 10-minute presentation*



*8 - The organisers this year: MacDara, Ailis and Emily*

## OPEN POSITIONS



We will shortly be recruiting **three postdocs** (based in UCD and ATU) and **two PhD students** (based in Trinity and Queen's University Belfast) as part of the new *Building Resilient Irish Coasts through Oyster Restoration: A Nature-Based Solution for Enhancing Marine Biodiversity and Ecosystems (BRICONS)* project. Contact Nessa O'Connor for more information ([n.oconnor@tcd.ie](mailto:n.oconnor@tcd.ie)).

## ZOOLOGY IN THE NEWS



### Dublin Parks Identified as Hotspots for Dog-Related Parasitic Contamination

New research from zoologists at Trinity College Dublin, led by **Dr. Jason Keegan** and **Dr. Celia Holland**, has identified park entrances and playgrounds in Dublin as hotspots for *Toxocara* roundworm eggs, primarily originating from dog faeces. Published in *PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases*<sup>3</sup>, the study found that 75% of sampled parks contained roundworm eggs, with many in potentially infective stages. These parasites can cause serious but hard-to-diagnose health issues in humans, including respiratory problems and even vision loss. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions, such as improved waste disposal facilities and public awareness campaigns. The research has gained significant media attention, emphasizing the importance of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of dog-fouling reduction measures. Read more here.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup><https://journals.plos.org/plosntds/article?id=10.1371/journal.pntd.0012917>

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.tcd.ie/news\\_events/top-stories/featured/an-unsavoury-problem--dog-faeces-parasite-most-commonly-found-at-park-entrances-and-playgrounds/](https://www.tcd.ie/news_events/top-stories/featured/an-unsavoury-problem--dog-faeces-parasite-most-commonly-found-at-park-entrances-and-playgrounds/)



### **Irish Seaweed Association Launched to Advance a Sustainable Blue Economy**

The new Irish Seaweed Association, a spin out from the C-FAARER<sup>5</sup> project, was launched on campus on February 28th 2025 and garnered a lot of attention in the news. The event, *Towards a More Sustainable Blue Economy*, brought together ocean farmers, researchers, innovators and policy makers and included a special pairing with the Norwegian Seaweed Association, hosted by Ambassador Aslak Brun at the Norwegian Embassy. Prof. Jane Stout, VP for Biodiversity and Climate Action welcomed nearly 100 delegates to Trinity that included Maris Stulgis, Policy Officer at DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries at the EU Commission, who emphasised the importance of moving towards a regenerative blue economy before Dr Prannie Rhattigan (Irish Seaweed Kitchen) declared the Irish Seaweed Association officially launched.

<https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2025/0228/1499515-ireland-seaweed-association/>

<https://www.rte.ie/video/id/23452>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@rtenews/video/7476459415202172182>

<https://www.rte.ie/player/series/nuacht/SI0000001235?epguid=IH10008771-25-0059>

<https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/drivetime/2025/0228/1499565-drivetime-friday-28-february-2025/>

<https://www.rte.ie/radio/rnag/clips/22492174/>

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.c-faarer.eu/>



## PROJECT UPDATES & FUNDING



### Cotrel Foundation Research Award

Dr. Rebecca Rolfe (Asst Prof in Zoology) recently attended the Cotrel Foundation Annual meeting in Paris (Nov 2024) and was awarded a Cotrel Foundation Research Award for research in spinal pathology (Fondation Yves Cotrel pour la Recherche en Pathologie Rachidienne de

l'Institut de France). The project: Stability in the spine, an investigation into vertebral ligaments, how they develop, grow, and change during scoliosis, will investigate spinal ligaments in the embryo, how they change during adolescence and in a model of scoliosis, to further understand if and how they contribute to disease progression.



### New Funding from the Marine Institute

Three new marine ecology projects have been funded in Zoology: *Building Resilient Irish Coasts through Oyster Restoration: A Nature-Based Solution for Enhancing Marine Biodiversity and Ecosystems (BRICONS)*, funded by the Marine Institute under the Changing Use of Ireland's Ocean: Measuring and monitoring the impacts on our marine biodiversity and ecosystems programme (PI Nessa O'Connor). *Unlocking the potential of coastal ecosystems for the sustainable development of marine bioresources, habitat protection and climate change mitigation* funded by Research Ireland and BiOrbic II – Bioeconomy Research Centre (PI Nessa O'Connor). *Reef Revival: Harnessing biogenic reefs as nature-based solutions for global change mitigation* funded by Research Ireland (Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship) awarded to Grace Aspell (PI Nessa O'Connor).





Congratulations to the C-FAARER<sup>6</sup> (Community-driven Farming for the Atlantic and Arctic basins through Regenerative aquaculture) team who recently won the ***Atlantic Project Award (Healthy Oceans and Resilient Coasts)*** from the European Commission. This international multidisciplinary project is led by Dr Dharmendra Kapletia (Trinity Business School) and Prof. Nessa O'Connor (Zoology) who received the award at the Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference in Bordeaux, France.

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.c-faarer.eu/>

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS



**Rolfe, RA., Talak Basturkmen E., Sliney L., Hayden, G.,** Dunne, N., Buckley, N., McCarthy, H., Szczesny, SE., **Murphy, P.** Embryo movement is required for limb tendon maturation. *Front Cell Dev Biol* 2024. 12: 1466872

Peterson B, Castro ML, McCarthy H, Buckley N, Dunne N, **Rolfe R, Murphy P, Szczesny SE** (2024) Structural Determinants of Tendon Multiscale Mechanics and Their Sensitivity to Mechanical Stimulation During Development in an Embryonic Chick Model. *Acta Biomaterialia*. 2024 190: 303-316

Canvin, M., **O'Connor, N. E.** et al. (2025). Can the emerging European seaweed industry contribute to climate change mitigation by enhancing carbon sequestration? *Reviews in Aquaculture*. DOI: 10.1111/raq.70004.

Schenck, F. R., **O'Connor, N. E.** et al. (2025). Host traits and temperature predict biogeographical variation in seagrass disease prevalence. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2024.3055>.

Gross, C., **O'Connor, N. E.** et al. (2024). A latitudinal cline in the taxonomic structure of eelgrass epifaunal communities is associated with plant genetic diversity. *Global Ecology and Biogeography*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/geb.13918>.

**Schertenleib, K.H., Davey, T., Taylor, D. O'Connor, N. E.** (2024). Key benthic species are affected by predicted warming in winter but show resistance to ocean acidification. *Ecology and Evolution*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.70308>.

**Schertenleib, K.H., Fitzpatrick, R. & O'Connor, N. E.** (2024). Quantifying the Impacts of Multiple Stressors' (QIMS) – a new experimental platform for multifactorial experiments with high replication in marine benthic ecosystems. *Limnology and Oceanography: Methods*. doi.org/10.1002/lom3.10633<sup>7</sup>.

White, L. J., **O'Connor, N. E., Gilson, A. R. and Donohue, I.** (2024). Species contributions to ecosystem stability change with disturbance type. *Oikos*. doi.org/10.1111/oik.10077<sup>8</sup>.

**McCartan, N., Piggott, J., DiCarlo, S. & Luijckx, P.** Cold snaps lead to a 5-fold increase or a 3-fold decrease in disease proliferation depending on the baseline temperature. *BMC Biol* **22**, 250 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12915-024-02041-6> **Keegan JD**, **Airs PM**, **Brown C**, **Dingley AR**, **Courtney C**, **Morgan ER**, et al. (2025) Park entrances, commonly contaminated with infective *Toxocara canis* eggs, present a risk of zoonotic infection and an opportunity for focused intervention. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis* 19(3): e0012917. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0012917>

## OUTREACH & ACTIVITIES



**Dr. Abby Gilson** and **Prof. Nessa O'Connor** presented key findings of the Research Ireland Beyond Biofuel project at the **57th European Marine Biology Symposium** in Naples, Italy. Abby's presentation was entitled '*Future ocean warming and acidification interact to reduce productivity of the habitat-forming kelp Laminaria digitata*' and Nessa's presentation was '*Harnessing ecological theory to enhance kelp cultivation*'.

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<sup>7</sup><https://aslopubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/lom3.10633>

<sup>8</sup><https://doi.org/10.1111/oik.10077>

**Prof. O'Connor** also presented preliminary findings from the C-FAARER (Community driven Farming for the Atlantic and Arctic Sea basins through REgeneRative aquaculture) project at the **Seagriculture EU 2024 Conference** in Torshavn, Faro Islands.

**Prof. Nessa O'Connor** was an invited panelist for a Q & A session following a special screening of the new documentary, *Seaweed Stories*, at the **Dublin International Film Festival**. The film will soon be available to view in College.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?





Huge congratulations to Zoology alumnus **Dr. Patrick Kirwan** who was awarded the 2024 British Ecological Society Prize for Ecological Engagement Award. This Award recognises an ecologist who has bridged the gap between ecology and other groups. Patrick since then Patrick developed an award-winning nature curriculum in London before replicating this model at Ardscoil na Mara in Ireland, where he now also runs place-based teacher training. In 2021, he founded the Irish Schools Sustainability Network (ISSN) for teachers and students, to teach climate and ecological literacy in Irish schools. <https://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/bes-awards-2024-meet-the-winners/>

SHARE YOUR NEWS IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF ZOobyTES!



Have news to share for the next issue of *Zoobytes*? Whether you're a staff member or student, we'd love to hear from you—no matter how big or small the update! Email me at [rozmannv@tcd.ie](mailto:rozmannv@tcd.ie) with "Zoobytes" in the subject line.

Are you a Zoology alumnus up to something exciting? We'd love to feature you in our "*Where Are They Now?*" section—let us know what you've been doing!

Find Trinity Zoology elsewhere:

- Website<sup>9</sup>
- X (Twitter)<sup>10</sup>
- Facebook<sup>11</sup>
- EcoEvo@Trinity Blog<sup>12</sup>

*Edited by Viktoria Rozmann*

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.tcd.ie/zoology/>

<sup>10</sup><https://x.com/TCDZoology>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.facebook.com/trinitycollege.zoology>

<sup>12</sup><https://www.ecoevoblog.com/>