R E P O R T

Green Foundation Ireland

invites you to an evening online TALK
with Laura Griffin

Human Coexistence with Wildlife Across Spaces, Ecosystems and Sectors

Venue: **by Zoom** ***(details given after registration)***

Wednesday 7 August 2024 – 19:00 to 20:00

Human Coexistence with Wildlife Across Spaces, Ecosystems and Sectors

THEME

We, as humans, share our space with wildlife every single day. Typically, this occurs in ways that we are aware of, but it also often occurs in ways that we don't think about. Policies and frameworks have historically separated humans and wildlife, assigning space to each as though we do not (or cannot) coexist together. However, as pressures on ecosystems and wildlife populations multiply, it is important for us to acknowledge the ways in which we interact with and impact wildlife on a daily basis.

During this talk, we explored some of the ways in which humans and wildlife interact, ranging from the global to the local scale. We also touched upon how we can make choices to better facilitate coexistence.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Dr Laura Griffin

Laura is a wildlife ecologist currently working at the University of British Columbia (UBC) as a postdoctoral researcher. Her work focuses on promoting human-wildlife coexistence, specifically by exploring how different human activities impact on vulnerable wildlife species and using these findings to inform management practices.

Laura has worked on a variety of projects internationally, including ecotourism and biodiversity studies across Ireland, South Africa, and Greece. She completed her PhD with the Laboratory of Wildlife Ecology and Behaviour in University College Dublin (UCD), where she assessed the effects of recreational feeding on fallow deer in Phoenix Park, Dublin. Her current research in Canada focuses on how declining populations of caribou and moose are being impacted by forestry activities (that is, harvesting and burning) and insect outbreaks resulting from climate change. Laura believes that public engagement is key in the success of many wildlife coexistence projects and that sharing research findings enables people to create positive change.

ABOUT OUR FACILITATOR

Ciaran Monahan

Ciaran, who is part of our Management Team at Green Foundation Ireland, is a postdoctoral researcher in University College Dublin. His research interests include education, environmental risk assessment, and food safety. He has completed a number of works for GFI, including an analysis of sustainability topics in the Leaving Certificate, as well as event hosting.

ABOUT OUR TALK

Ciaran Monahan welcomed everyone and introduced **Laura Griffin**. Laura began by discussing the typical view of land use, and how we tend to view places as either being "wild" or "human", whereas the truth is that animals exist and live everywhere. Wild spaces are very important for humans to mental health, eco-tourism and escape. She also mentioned the wildlife population decline due to climate change, pollution, habitat loss, invasive species, and over-exploitation.

Laura focused on the things that ordinary people can do to make spaces more amenable to wildlife, and that recovery is possible if strong support is enacted from government, communities and individuals. She emphasised that actions can be taken on different scales, such as our own gardens, local parks, and when travelling.

She also drew attention to the importance of being conscientious in our purchasing habits. Consumerism must be considered, and the degradation enacted on habitats worldwide for mineral extraction. Similarly, we should be conscious of where food is being imported from.

Laura continued by emphasising actions that reduce carbon footprints, such as walking and taking the bus, or growing your own food at home.

Use of our spaces to make them more accommodating to animals, for example by creating ponds, by leaving gaps in fences to allow animals to travel, and by leaving certain areas unmowed were mentioned. Similarly, by planting native flower bombs, encouraging hedge growth, ponds can encourage native biodiversity and provide shelter for animals.

If you have more land or are a farmer, you can promote nature-based solutions; retaining winter stubble, hedgerows and allowing flowers to bloom, encouraging wild flowers and considering beekeeping. There are lots of grants from **Teagasc** including for barn owl nest boxes and waterways.

When visiting local and national parks, make sure to preserve local biodiversity. There are lots of volunteer programmes which carry out surveys such as citizen science projects with **BirdWatch Ireland**, amongst other organisations. Don't feed wildlife and stay on designated trails. With your smart phone you can track what you see which is good for data collection. Use the **Merlin Bird ID app** to recognise different bird species.

When travelling it's important to be aware in advance of unethical wild life tourism – so do some research about the area you are travelling to.

Laura emphasised the key point to remember is that all habitats are connected and we must conserve and preserve our local wildlife activities. Unfortunately policy is very slow to change. At all times a balance needs to be made, where we minimise our impacts on wildlife, while we are in their spaces. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is so important to control building and human encroachment on environments.

*You can **access our video of the talk here**.*

Ciaran Monahan
Green Foundation Ireland ***23 August 2024***