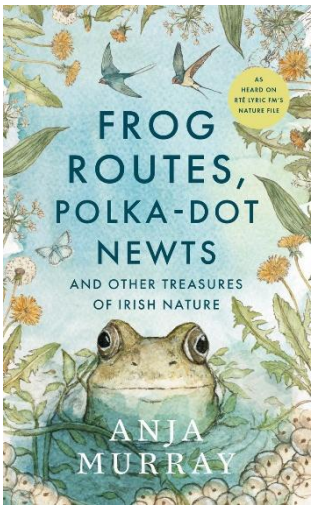
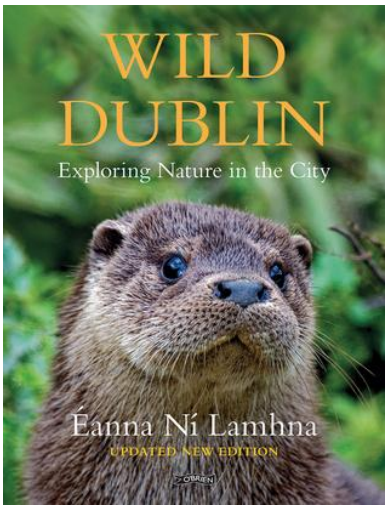
REPORT

Green Foundation Ireland, in partnership with the Dublin Book Festival and TU Dublin, invite you to an in-person CONVERSATION with Anja Murray and Éanna Ní Lamhna

Eyes Open to Ireland's Natural World



"Frog Routes, Polka-Dot Newts and Other Treasures of Irish Nature"
by **Anja Murray**



"Wild Dublin"
by **Éanna Ní Lamhna**

Venue: **Room EQ-002, East Quad, TU Dublin, Grangegorman, Dublin, D07 XFF2**

Wednesday 5 November 2025 – 14:00 to 15:00

Eyes Open to Ireland's Natural World

THEME

In her new book ***Frog Routes, Polka-Dot Newts and Other Treasures of Irish Nature*** *(Gill Books, 2025),* ecologist and environmental broadcaster **Anja Murray** led us through Ireland's hedgerows, understoreys, shorelines and sodden hollows, revealing the hidden marvels and complex communities of beings that often go unheard and unseen by us humans.

In a new edition of her book ***Wild Dublin*** *(O'Brien Press, 2008; updated edition 2025),* wildlife expert **Éanna Ní Lamhna** looked to the skies, parks, gardens, wetlands, rivers, canals and coastline to showcase Dublin's biodiversity in all its glory, inviting us to see our busy capital city in a whole new light.

This conversation was chaired by **John Gormley** of Green Foundation Ireland.

This event was part of the Dublin Book Festival Sustainability Here and Now

As sustainability remains one of the most pressing issues of our time, staff, students and the public are invited to join us for a day of stimulating, thought-provoking and inspiring events at TU Dublin's Grangegorman campus.

Featuring authors whose writing explores sustainable development themes with depth, clarity and actionable insight, discussions will cover everything from agriculture in the age of climate change and the rich world of urban wildlife, to the value of rewilding, and how the oppression of a people cannot go unchallenged.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKERS

Anja Murray

Anja is an ecologist, environmental broadcaster and writer who has devoted her career to the protection and restoration of nature. She is known for her clear, research-based approach to explaining complex ecological challenges, including as an expert presenter on ***Eco Eye*** on RTÉ, in the many radio documentaries she makes, and in her weekly ***Nature File*** on Lyric FM. Her critically acclaimed first book ***Wild Embrace*** *(Hachette Books Ireland, 2023)* was a bestseller.

Éanna Ní Lamhna

Éanna is a biologist, environmental and wildlife consultant, radio and television presenter, author and educator. Éanna has one of the most recognisable voices on Irish radio and has been an expert on RTÉ's wildlife programme ***Mooney Goes Wild*** since it began in 1995. She has an honorary Doctorate in Science from the University of Galway and has served as president of both the national environmental charity **An Taisce** and the **Tree Council of Ireland**. Originally from Louth, she lives in Dublin. Éanna is the author of several popular wildlife books for readers young and not so young.

ABOUT OUR EVENT

John Gormley, Green Foundation Ireland's Communication Manager and who chaired our discussion, began by welcoming everyone to our discussion and introducing **Anja Murray** and **Éanna Ní Lamhna**.

A full house was treated to a sparky and wide-ranging conversation with these two well-known authors. On being questioned around how they got started, while becoming so passionate about biodiversity, Éanna enjoyed turning the question on its head. She believes it is 'natural' for everyone to love nature. Nature is all around us. She was curious, as are all children – we need to notice things and ask questions. Recalling being left outside to play as a child, her mother and father never came out to play with her or her friends. Meanwhile, Anja also came from scientific background, while reaffirming that children have innate interest in nature. She has had rows with MEPs around the 'Water Framework Directive', but often this is not a motivation factor for most people. So, she has embarked on a new approach to be a facilitator and media educator with regards to our challenging biodiversity loss.

Éanna affirmed that wildlife is not the enemy any longer, recalling RTÉ's radio series ***Mooney Goes Wild*** *(*which has been around now since 1995), and how this concept has changed amongst most people. Nature is not far away, as it is in all our lives.

Anja especially loves radio, as it allows you to make your own pictures in your mind. Also recalling ***Eco Eye*** – which unfortunately has run its course – where she presented television programmes, but radio can often be more in-depth and provoke longer discussions.

Again, apparently courting controversy, on being asked about new media like using TikTok to address younger audiences, Éanna responded by stating "absolutely no way". There is no peer control on quality or accuracy in such a medium, she continued. Maybe it's fine for getting people to come to meetings, but not for content. She felt that people have suspended their critical facilities with their constant scrolling on their phones. Adding with some mischief, she said: "it's great being old, you don't give a hoot what you say".

Some great discussion followed about the flora and fauna that is coming back to Ireland, while also affirming the radical effects of climate change. Chair of the session, John noted how it was 17^{o} Celsius outside here in Dublin in November and how climate change is already having a major impact.

With regards to farming practices and the EU's Nitrates Directive, John asked the authors what they would do if they had a magic wand. Affirming how over half of our rivers and lakes are badly polluted, as reported by research from the EPA and unfortunately the main driver and culprit remain intensive agriculture. Éanna tried to be sensitive to the plight of farmers who have been told to move into dairying and how the EU calls the tune. Basically, farmers need to be compensated to change their ways. While Anja was less conciliatory, since the Irish agricultural sector is massive in determining values across the board. Mention was made of the biggest pollution incident on the River Blackwater – however, a report seems to suggest that nobody was responsible. This incident produced the largest fish kill ever, such a report is not good enough, since nobody has been assigned overall accountability. Meanwhile, Éanna though that we have enough policy and regulation, our problem is implementation. This needs to be done properly and effectively.

On a lighter note, the authors were asked about their pet hates: feeding wild animals, perhaps, noting for instance that Dublin has more foxes than any city in Europe. Apparently, we were told, foxes are 'getting their own back', by eating 'flavoursome' wires under cars. But with regards to seagulls, Éanna quipped 'don't get me going on them'. And as for wild deer, she suggests bringing back wolves, referring to the 'Bambi' factor with deer in the Phoenix Park.

In the Q and A session, both authors riffed off each other, answering numerous questions about the necessity or not of sheep on Irish uplands, while they seem to be fine on the Curragh. Not forgetting, of course, the urgent need for communicating environmental messages with new generations. The wide-ranging audience present, from a contingent of school-going children to environmentalists and others, certainly had much to digest and take on board.

*You can **see photos of our event here**.*

Pat Brereton, Chair
Green Foundation Ireland ***25 November 2025***