R E P O R T

Green Foundation Ireland

invites you to an evening online TALK
with Orla Ní Dhúill

Managing Common Invasive Species

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

Wednesday 19 March 2025 – 19:00 to 20:00

Managing Common Invasive Species

THEME

Our talk took a look at what is meant by invasive species, why it is a concern for Irish biodiversity and how action can be taken on a local and national level.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Orla Ní Dhúill

Orla is a writer and environmentalist from Dublin, based on Achill Island in County Mayo.

Her work focuses on biodiversity communications, public engagement with nature, in particular regarding pollinators, invasive species, and woodlands.

ABOUT OUR FACILITATOR

Ciaran Monahan

Ciaran, who is a member 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 **Orla Ní Dhúill**, who began the talk by defining terms such as invasive species:

- In botanical terms, "invasive species" may be native to an area, the term "invasive" merely refers to the growth rate of the organism.
- "Alien" species refers to organisms from other places, but the term "introduced species" may be more appropriate, as these organisms were introduced to an area by humans, either accidentally or purposefully.

Orla then went on to mention some commonly known invasive species, detailing their history and management status in Ireland:

- **Giant hogweed**, originally brought to Ireland for display in exotic gardens, has colonised large amounts of riverside areas throughout the country and creates problems such as blocking sunlight from other species as well as causing severe dermatitis and sun sensitivity in humans when touched.
- **Rhododendrons** produce huge amounts of windborne seeds and are highly competitive, out-competing native Irish species. They also create issues with flammability in Irish woodlands: whereas other plants are less flammable, large amounts of rhododendrons make the forest more susceptible to forest fires.
- **American mink**, released into the wild in Ireland after being freed from fur farms, are particularly aggressive when it comes to livestock such as chickens, and thus are well known as an invasive species in Ireland.
- **Spanish bluebells** are hybridising with native Irish bluebells, creating a risk of genetic extinction for the native species.
- **Grey squirrels** are another famous example of an invasive species out-competing the native Irish red squirrel. However, in recent years this issue has reduced due to pine martens selectively reducing grey squirrel population, allowing the red squirrel to coexist easily with pine martens.

Orla continued by discussing the difficulties and challenges in translating knowledge and motivation of invasive foreign species into action:

- Despite having information on invasive species, people may not have the information necessary to effectively manage them.
- Efforts to manage invasive species may be unpopular at first, because it removes a large amount of biomass, thus creating the appearance of destruction of the environment.
- In general people don't like being like being told what to do.
- Effective management of invasive species is a difficult and delicate process: mishandling may lead to spread of invasive spores or seeds.

Orla also shared general tips for dealing with invasive species in certain areas such as riversides where mismanagement can lead to the proliferation of seeds downstream. The question and answer session was lively and engaged, with many questions being asked about the status of specific species and relevant groups where people can get involved.

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

Ciaran Monahan
Green Foundation Ireland ***21 March 2025***