



JUNE

# SUMMER on the farm

NATURE'S CALENDAR & PRACTICAL ACTIONS



**As the farming year unfolds, are you keeping an eye out for what wildlife appears on your farm?**

**What flower or bird brings you joy as the seasons change? What can you look forward to appearing this month? What wildlife might be on your land? What more can you do to encourage it and enhance it?**

**HERE IS A MONTH BY MONTH GUIDE TO HELP YOU FARM FOR NATURE!**

This is just a start – please help us create a rich calendar to celebrate and support farming for nature! What have we forgotten? Do you have any useful ‘nature hacks’ to share? Let us know on [info@farmingfornature.ie](mailto:info@farmingfornature.ie)

Generally, there is lots of good information available for farmers who want to help wildlife. We have many resources available on [www.farmingfornature.ie](http://www.farmingfornature.ie)

If you have any queries why not submit them to our **Farming for Nature Forum** on the website and allow other farmers to answer.

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### NOTICING NATURE - AND SOME WAYS TO HELP IT!



Pond

June is a lively time around ponds with frogs, damselflies and dragonflies emerging, in turn attracting other animals to predate them.

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Any sign of pond skaters or water boatmen in your water bodies?



### PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

Keep an eye out for herons visiting your pond, one of their favourite foods is the frog! Bats are also on the wing, with hedgerows and ponds favourite feeding areas.

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Pond skaters 'skate' around on the surface of the water in ponds, lakes, ditches and slow-flowing rivers, feeding on smaller insects which they stab with their sharp mouthparts or 'beaks'.



Bog and blanket bog

Look out for the pin-points of colour that appear in our bogs around now – the beautiful bogbean, the fascinating sundew, the ragged robin.

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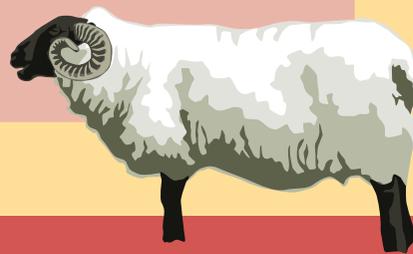
Our uplands are popular with walkers this time of year but suitable grazing regimes are key to their health. Too much and you expose the peat and lose carbon, too little and the risk of fire increases greatly.



Bogbean leaves resemble those of the broad bean. It has stunning star-shaped, pink/white flowers fringed inside with long white hairs. It was used to flavour beer, known by some as the 'bog hop'!

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Overgrazing, poaching and erosion can reduce the ability of the hill or peatland to support wildlife - and livestock. Stocking levels may be as low as one sheep per hectare but the farmer is often the best judge, based on his/her experience. If feeding rings are present, move often to prevent poaching and nutrient enrichment.



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Garden

Leave a sunlit patch of nettles for bees, butterflies and hoverflies.



Nettles are a food plant for lots of butterfly larvae [e.g. Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma and more]. On farmland they provide important early cover for birds like the corncrake. Great for making soup and fertiliser too!



Hedges

The honeysuckle or 'woodbine' begins to flower. You'll often smell it before you see it!

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As the summer rolls on, can you see foxgloves in your hedgerows?



Honeysuckle is a rich source of nectar for many insects, which will keep the bird populations healthy. The elephant hawkmoth loves its nectar. Just before flowering is a good time to take cuttings and try to propagate new plants for transplanting around the farm.

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Foxgloves – also known as ladies' fingers – only flower every other year [biennial]. Although poisonous, foxglove is important in the treatment of heart conditions.



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### NOTICING NATURE - AND SOME WAYS TO HELP IT!



Pastures and meadows

The meadow thistle – or bog thistle - will begin flowering now in wetter grasslands.

This is a great month for flowering grasses and herbs in our pastures and meadows.



### PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

Ireland hosts 25% of the world's population of this elegant, non-prickly thistle which is a favourite of the larvae of the painted lady butterfly. Light grazing in early summer followed by heavier grazing in late summer will help this plant.

Depending on your perspective, flowers in the grassland can be viewed as weeds or as welcome displays of biodiversity. Yellow rattle is one such plant – a semi-parasite, it weakens grasses and thus allows more space for less-competitive herbs to take hold. Less grass more flowers anyone?



Hill

The skylark is best heard in early summer making its distinctive call lasting up to half an hour.



The song is usually given while the bird is flying 50 to 100 metres overhead. Although hill ground is a favourite, the skylark also likes tillage fields and pastures. The nest can be destroyed by topping or mowing if not careful.



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### NOTICING NATURE - AND SOME WAYS TO HELP IT!

When we hear the term invasive species we tend to think of Japanese knotweed, Rhododendron and Himalayan balsam, in flower now. But there are many others...

Care for your soil. It is the basis of everything for your farming produce and productivity. Among the many benefits of healthy soils are:

- Improved soil aggregate stability
- Better infiltration
- Crop and grassland resilience [to drought/flood]
- Reduced weed pressure
- Adherence to Statutory Management Requirements
- Avoidance of pollution issues



Everywhere

### PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

Established alien invasive species also include cotoneaster, buddleia [butterfly bush], clematis, montbretia and snowberry – find out more at [www.invasivespeciesireland.ie](http://www.invasivespeciesireland.ie)



- Do not leave soil exposed or susceptible to erosion.
- Avoid poaching, pinch-points, trafficking and rutting.
- Nurture the soil and build humus – give back [healthy] nutrients.
- Minimise tillage.
- Add species diversity to your sward.



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**Farming For Nature offers best practice Guidelines and Actions for different land types.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE GO TO  
[www.farmingfornature.ie](http://www.farmingfornature.ie)**

To investigate what native species you have or could encourage on your land there are plenty of sources to help:

FOR NATIVE FLOWERS - YOU CAN SEARCH BY FLOWERING MONTH, COLOUR OR HABITAT  
**[www.irishwildflowers.ie](http://www.irishwildflowers.ie)**

FOR NATIVE TREES SEE HERE - IT WILL GIVE YOU ADVICE ON DIFFERENT TREES  
**[www.treecouncil.ie](http://www.treecouncil.ie)**

FOR NATIVE BIRDS SEE HERE  
**[www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie)**

FOR NATIVE BUTTERFLIES SEE HERE  
**[www.irishbutterflies.com](http://www.irishbutterflies.com)**

FOR A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF ALL IRISH SPECIES,  
THE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DATA CENTRE IS THE KEY SOURCE  
**[www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie)**



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