

C5 Newsletter No.5

FFINEWS NO. 5 SEPT. 2003

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I have followed the debate on certification and would like to make the following points.

As is known by some of you, I urged Irish environmentalists not to get involved in the FSC certification process when it became known that

certain key "ngos" with pro-Coillte /Irish Exotic Species Forest Service attitudes were receiving (secretly at the time tens of thousands of pounds in funding from the Irish Forest Service. This funding took place, in my opinion, with a view to ensuring the cooperation of these "environmentalists" with the ridiculous notion of FSC Certification of over 90% exotic species annual planting, which is still the aim of Coillte/the Forest Service and those who support them.

On the other hand, people who sought to create an Irish Forestry using predominantly native species had to try to function on a pittance. At the same time we have had, and have, the constant ballet of countless Coillte employees being Coillte employee one moment, then Tree council president the next, or Social Chamber representative, or NGO somebody or other. It was simply no contest and the next thing Ireland had two not one Economic Chambers, and these Forest Service funded NGO's firmly imbedded in the Environmental Chamber as well and agreeing to just about any important demand of the Commercial Forest Establishment. And of course, a Forest Standard put into practice (unlike in the UK) the like of which is practically unparalleled in the western world for environmental destructiveness. Whatever the UK Standard reads, the UK plants predominantly native broadleaves in their annual plantings.

When I queried the international officers of the FSC as to what the hell they were playing at certifying this outrageous exotic species policy I was politely but firmly told that if Irish stakeholders will wear it, the FSC will certify it, and don't mind the 10 Principals and Criteria, which are only guidelines.

It took me a long time to realize that there are environmentalists in Ireland who act like perfect poodles but do so for eminently genuine reasons. These people easily put up with Ireland having the worst record on biodiversity in the OECD according to the IUCN - World Conservation Union, and the most environmentally destructive, non native forestry in the Western world providing that the 'Coilltes' of this island will agree to get a little bit better. On the other hand, those like Brendan, who find it all outrageous, would, if they were living in any other country, be in the majority. Here they have to put up with those who timidly ask Coillte or Duchas to please just destroy a little bit less, and protect a little bit more, and we will be satisfied. We will even ballyhoo the "tremendous" environmental progress Ireland is making, which incidentally they do regularly ad nausea.

Ray Monahan, Stakeholder,
Castlegregory, Co. Kerry.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ray Monahan strikes a chord with me in his latest email (where has he been all this time?). I guess I must be amongst those he considers to have been 'over blunt' (though not without cause, I might add).

And while it seems contradictory, I am probably also amongst those he considers being 'poodles' in regard to state policy on forestry - those who would ask Coillte to 'destroy a little bit less and protect a little bit more, please.'

Certainly, when I worked for Crann on their magazine that was the overall impression I gave, because that was the overall thrust of Crann policy in regard to the national afforestation programme.

I would like to say, however, that I was, and am, very unhappy with Forest Service policy on afforestation and Coillte's execution of it within their remit.

I am most unhappy with the ongoing emphasis on Sitka as the primary commercial species, and believe that a shift to 50% native hardwood planting is urgently required. I would hope that the percentage of native species planted would rise much further than that, and the sooner the better.

I cannot go into the problems with Sitka in this message, though I would say that its planting has sterilized vast areas of upland heath and bog and endangered bird species such as red grouse.

The longer the switch to native hardwoods is put off, the longer we'll have to wait to see its commercial and ecological vindication.

I believe the switch must be made now, irregardless of any short-term slide in marketable timber output and with an eye to sustainable, more beneficial and more profitable forestry. I believe it can be phased in.

General de Gaulle is said to have made a similar point when he asked his gardener to plant an orchard. The gardener said, "but it will take years to produce an apple." De Gaulle responded: "Ok, so plant it today."

Cóilín MacLochlainn

Hi Ray,

What is it with all these compliments? I am nowhere near as good as you make out, so maybe you are hoping all the flattery will encourage me to respond with a damning exposé (of Crann, I guess; not that I have one) and get the rumour mill going. I do try to reflect the ethos of the groups I work for, and sometimes I might not agree totally with their policies, but I cannot discuss this as it could be taken up wrong.

Crann currently has no paid staff and has not put out a summer 2003 issue of their mag (their last was in the spring), so things are really going pear-shaped for them at the moment, which is sad, because we need as many environmental NGOs as possible.

> In any case, over the last year or so you have obviously completely shaken off Crann's "commercial foresters know best" mentality?

I've never had that mentality, Ray, and I hope I didn't give that Impression. I've been around for as long as you, give or take, and similarly despair at the ongoing emphasis on Sitka (and Crann's benign attitude to it). Closely followed by motorway madness.

> ... of course there has been progress made. But the progress in no way comes close to the continued environmental destruction of habitat and species, woods and bogs, rivers and groundwater, unspoiled landscapes, our beaches turned into parking lots, and race courses, a Rally of the Lakes every year in Killarney National Park, the lakes of Killarney polluted to death and motorboats roaring away ... on balance things are much worst than before.

I agree, things have disimproved on many fronts, mostly in relation to

protection of species and habitats. We are in a major period of species

Extinction brought on by human activity. In my part of the world (south Dublin) by far the most depressing thing is watching countryside with farms, hedgerows, woodlands, thickets, heaths, ponds and streams being turned into gigantic motorways, interchanges, link roads, apartment blocks and housing developments. The scale of things is unbelievable and quite unsettling. It is not a case of "Oh, so you plan to build a road through this field?" No, it's a case of "Oh, so this stretch of

motorway and interchanges will wipe entire townlands off the map?"

Most

people are resigned to it because the scale of these projects, their Prioritization as national rather than local plans, and the financial clout of the developers, leaves them feeling unable to respond. They are devastated, and, with comparatively limited resources, have little ability to protect their own local patch. We have seen that it is only when national monuments of major importance are threatened that the voluntary lobby can make an effective stand. But how effective that is still remains to be seen.

Regards

Cóilín MacLochlainn

Letters to the Editor

Selective weed killers have long removed wild flowers from Irish pastures. Now we see the determined effort to remove them from their surviving refuges on roadside and hedgerow.

I believe that hedge cutting was banned in summer, but here in West cork, hedges and verges have been cut since mid-July. Our lovely, varied, hedgerow trees and bushes are long gone; now the verge-cutters scrape all growth down to soil level, leaving bare banks brown with dying grass and roadside flowers.

Once one could pick blueberries off these banks, and the cuckoo called in spring. Now nests and birds are gone. Their winter feed of seeds and berries no longer exists, nor cover for any sort of wildlife.

The object seems to be to make the Irish countryside look like the manicured grass of municipal parks; the hedge and verge cutters have turned a thing of beauty into an ugly desert, through which it is a misery to walk or drive.

Can nothing be done to halt this official vandalism of a once very beautiful and varied landscape, the Irish hedge and roadside?

Daphne D.C.

Pochlin Mould

Aherla

Co. Cork.

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SEEING THE WOOD AND THE TREES

This publication is designed to heighten awareness about the real value of trees, (whether in our own country or in the rainforests of the world), in our heritage as part of our past present or future. Editor Rosemary Rowley in the foreword says, “I was struck just how little had changed in the Irish love of trees, a feature of Irish nature poetry in Old Irish.

It was this magical relationship, this intimate communion, which had all but disappeared from English poetry since the time of Hopkins and Wordsworth but which we find today in the work of our Nobel laureate, Seamus Heaney. I would particularly like to thank Seamus, who declared himself a 'cara na coille', and whose popularity at the height of our machine age shows us what it means still to be in accord with nature and what is integral to our humanity.”

“Even though it is hundreds of years since our forests were cut down – as exemplified in Eilean Ni Chuilleanain’s fine translation of Kilcass – it is clear that the loss is still felt and undiminished. Brendan Kennelly, whose poem ‘The Cherry Trees’ made such an impression on me when it was first published in the seventies, shows that we need to educate those who feel alienated from nature and who destroy, which would illustrate Oliver Goldsmith’s idea that to be removed from the countryside is to be removed from virtue.

A section on young, almost unknown poets should restore your faith that the link between Irish people and Nature has remained unbroken, and that the deprivation of our forests have been felt in an aching loss and a deep desire to restore that relationship”. (Seeing the Wood and the Trees pp. 8-9)

THE CHERRY TREES by Brendan Kennelly (extract)

“Three fingers point at you, at me.

A costly failure.

It will be long

Before the garden is restored

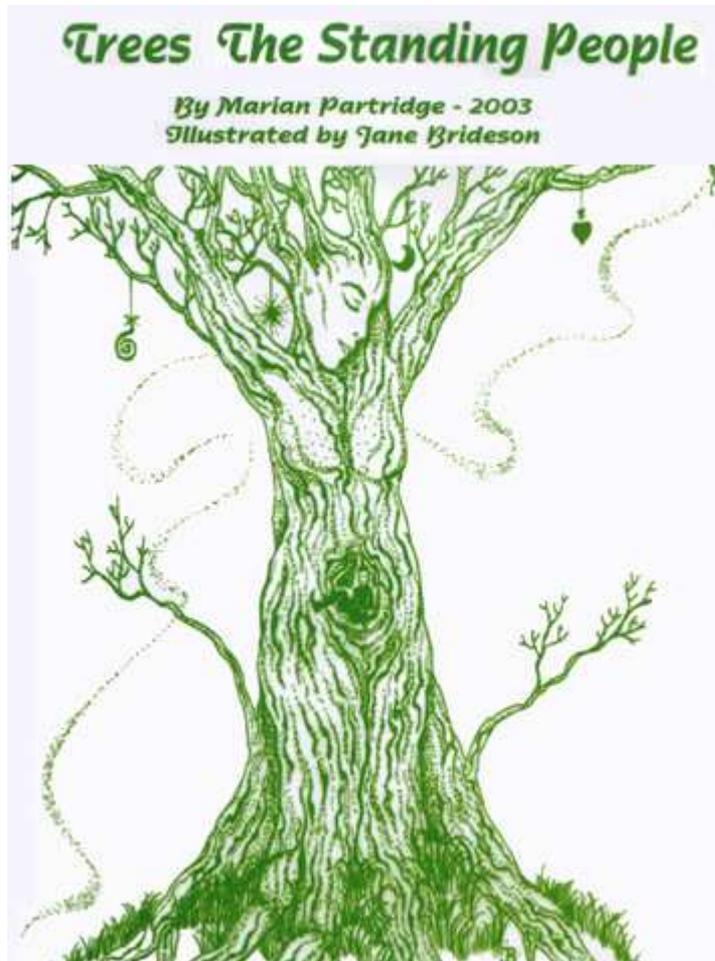
There will be pain

Until the violated earth

Is confident again”

TREES THE STANDING PEOPLE by Marian Partridge

Illustrated by Jane Brideson



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“Trees the Standing People”, (a term used for trees by native American Indians), is an excellent booklet about our native trees, their mythology and healing properties.

Marian Partridge is an East/West herbalist and can be contacted at ‘Healing Herbals, 41 Ballyclander Road, Downpatrick, BT30 7DE. 028 4484 2271

Marian says in her introduction

“It is the aim of this booklet to present a glimmer of the treasures of past tree lore – to whet your appetite, to encourage you to go out and plant trees wherever you are and to look after the ones which grace our gardens and local landscape. It is hopefully a gem which you can use to regain an understanding and love of these huge plants which clothe our earth, give us oxygen to breathe, form rich soil, shelter us from wind and storm, shade us in hot sunlight and reclaim our wetlands. Where would we be without them?”

<http://thestandingpeople.tripod.com>

BIODIVERSITY/CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The two most valuable things we have on this planet, both of which are equally under threat are biodiversity, which are the diversity of species and the diversity of cultures. With the move towards globalization and towards the so-called global village these two invaluable assets are being sacrificed in the interests of the profit motives of the superpowers and a relatively small number of transnationals or multinationals. Species and cultures are being systematically decimated or eliminated, by being forced into the so-called free trade, while the big players protect their economies by subsidies to the detriment of third world countries. The building of highways, dams, pipelines etc is devastating fragile ecosystems. Countries are being forced to grow crops including trees on a monoculture basis in order to pay back huge debts owed to the World Banks

The conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity are of critical importance to meet the food, health and other needs of man (UN Convention on Biological Diversity). Mankind depends on the variety and variability of genes, species, populations and eco-systems. Biological diversity is being continuously eroded by the utilization of land for different uses, habitat destruction, over-intensification in farming, the use of herbicides fertilizers and insecticides, pollution and the introduction of non-native plants and animals, (UN Conference on Biological Diversity). Many species, which are rare and unique, are being exterminated even before they are recorded. A good example of a species, which is unique to the rain forest of the island of Madagascar, is the 'rosy periwinkle.' Due to the discovery of this tropical forest plant, since 1960 a child suffering from leukemia has now four chances in five of survival as opposed to one in five before that time.

Each tree species has different dependent species. By planting many different species a maximum of diversity of tree species and related or dependent species, namely, birds, animals and epiphytes (plants growing on other plants), will be achieved. Native trees support a much wider range of species than non-native trees. For example native oak and native poplar (*populus tremula*) each support over 400 species in contrast to Sitka spruce (*picea sitchensis*) or sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) which support about 40 species. By allowing much more sunlight to penetrate to the forest floor a greater number and variety of ground flora co-exist in our native broadleaf forests. Mixed species gives variation to the leaf canopy allowing light to reach the forest floor. Economic and biodiversity requirements can be achieved by planting a range of densities, from dense blocks and clusters, to spacious planting, to clearings and glades. Non-tree crops such as berries, nuts and other foods can be grown and the leisure market and eco-tourism can provide further advantage.

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BIODIVERSITY/CULTURAL DIVERSITY (contd.)

by planting a range of densities, from dense blocks and clusters, to spacious planting, to clearings and glades. Non-tree crops such as berries, nuts and other foods can be grown and the leisure market and eco-tourism can provide further advantage.

Avoiding pesticide use. The use of pesticides seriously damages biodiversity. Their effects are cumulative to a greater or lesser effect. The predation patterns, which exist in nature, can themselves lead to the required balancing. Felling selectively. Selective felling can minimize disturbance in the forest. It can obviate the necessity to grade the timber because timber of the same grade is felled simultaneously. Although selective felling is normally carried out in forests following stage plantings, it can be initiated in older plantations because there is normally sufficient time between trees reaching maturity and over-maturity to make it possible. Spaciously planted blocks facilitate the process.

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Forest Friends Ireland Objectives

- Re-establish a culture of forests.
- Create a Great Irish Forest.
- Achieve a key stakeholder role for local communities.
- Use a Local Agenda 21 approach with; local authorities, educational and training agencies, communities, commerce and the marginalized, developing tree nurseries, woodlands and forests.
- Develop cross-border and cross-cultural projects.
- Promote the arts in the context of our environment.
- Use 100% native/near native, mainly broadleaf and native coniferous species from native seed stock.
- Promote ethical investment in forests including core funding.
- Protect Rainforests and other major centers of biodiversity and cultural diversity.
- Oppose monocultures and clear felling.

- Promote forest trusts.
- Promote sustainable economic systems inclusive of the economies of nature.

Events NNB This programme may be subject to change. Please check details of events well in advance of dates.

Date/Time	Venue/Location	Details	Contact
SUN OCT 5 2003 14.30	Hollywood, Co. Wicklow	Seed collection/ Nursery Development	087 649 0573 <u>NB If persistent rain frost/ice/snow is forecast the date will shift to the following Sunday etc.</u>
SAT NOV 8 11.00	Roundwood, Co. Wicklow.	Tree Planting followed by celebration of Samhain, with bonfire and feast. Bring food and refreshments. Numbers limited.	0404 42822
SUN NOV 9 2003 14.30	Visitor Center, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin.	Readings from the Forest Friends book of poems, "Seeing the Wood and the Trees" with Traditional Irish and World Music	01 8374388
WED NOV 12 2003 18.30	ILAC Central Library, ILAC Shopping Center, Henry Street, Dublin	Illustrated talk, "Selecting the Right Trees and Plants for your Garden"	01 8734333
WED NOV 26 2003 18.30	ILAC Central Library	Readings from the Forest Friends book of poems, "Seeing the Wood and the Trees" with Traditional Irish and World Music	01 8734333
WED NOV 19 2003 18.30	ILAC Central Library, ILAC Shopping Center, Henry Street, Dublin	Illustrated talk, "Preparing for the Tidy Towns- Tree Planting and Landscaping your Community".	01 8734333
SAT NOV 29 2003 14.30	An Oige Youth Hostel Mountjoy St., Dublin	Forest Friends AGM	046 9049021
SUN NOV 30 2003 14.30	Visitor Center, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin	"The Beauty of Trees"- An audio-visual presentation by Dr. Ann Beehan, Ecologist.	01 8374388
			01 8374388
SUN DEC 21 2003 14.30	Glenree Reconciliation Center, Glenree, Co. Wicklow.	Celebrating the Winter Solstice and Chico Mendes with tree-planting, light ceremony, poetry, storytelling, Traditional Irish and World Music.	01 8376402 Persons needing transport to the center from Dublin City Center and back should phone the above number well in advance.
THURS JAN 1 2004	Irish Diaspora Tree Planting Day- Locations throughout the world	All Irish people at home and abroad are encouraged to plant a tree or trees on this day or during that week.	Please log onto our web site, www.cairdenacolle.org hit "FORUM" and proceed to record details of trees planted, by whom and where.
FRI JAN 30 19.30-23.00	Venue to be decided	A Multi-Cultural Celebration of the Celtic Festival of "Imbolg", with 'Coel agus Craic', Irish and World Traditional Music, Storytelling, Poetry, Song and Dance.	01 8376402

TREE PLANTING AND NURSERY WORK PROGRAMME

SUN NOV 16 2003 11.00	Hollywood Co. Wicklow		087 49 0573
SUN DEC 7 2003 11.00	Roundwood, Co. Wicklow		0404 42822
SUN JAN 4 2004 11.00	Roundwood, Co. Wicklow		0404 42822

SUN	FEB	8	2004	11.00	Hollywood, Co. Wicklow	087 649 0573
SUN	FEB	22	2004	11.00	Hollywood, Co. Wicklow	087 649 0573
SUN	MAR	7	2004	11.00	Hollywood, Co. Wicklow	087 649 0573
NB If persistent rain is forecast the date will shift to the following Sunday etc.						

Conservation and the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh by Liz Cowap

Conservation is integral to the work of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. For over 300 years the Botanic Garden has carried out investigations into plant life, which has helped to lay the foundations for conservation today, involving describing species and their uses, habitats and ecology. However since the 1970's concern about the destruction of habitats and loss of species has grown to such an extent that conservation is now one of the stated objectives of the Botanic Garden's work. This concern stemmed partly from interest in the tropics, which included vegetation research in South East Asia and Brazil. Although the tropics remain high on the list of priorities, the Garden has an enormous challenge on the home front, as many of Scotland's natural ecosystems have been lost in the past few hundred years.

From Scotland to Brazil

While floras and monographs deal with plants in taxonomic groups, vegetation surveys provide details of the communities in which plants live. Along with an analysis of the geology, climate, fauna and human activity within an area, these surveys are a prerequisite for efficient resource management. They play a key role in designating areas for conservation, notably Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and such developments as road routes, agriculture and forestry developments. Flora and monographs are essential tools for this kind of work. Conversely, vegetation studies frequently turn up new records of plant distribution and on occasions, new species.

As Scotland's national botanic garden, the Royal Botanic Garden plays a major role in surveys of Scottish vegetation. Of particular interest are the types of vegetation unique to Scotland; the native pinewoods, western hazel oak woodlands, mountain top heath and grassland, machair, grasslands of the Hebrides and the flow country of Caithness and Sutherland, which is the world's largest area of blanket bog. To this end RBGE has collaborated with various Universities in Scotland to establish research into the ecology of Scotland's bog lands.

Also of particular interest, in a very different part of the world, are the savannahs and tropical forests of Brazil. The plight of the rainforest has received a great deal of attention, but little has been made of the cerrados (savannah) – regions of grassland or deciduous or semi deciduous woodland which makes up 22% of Brazil. Though on poor soils, they are easier to clear than tall forest. To give an idea of the extent of the problem, about 50% of cerrado vegetation has been destroyed, as compared to 12% of Amazonian forest. Rich in endemic species and almost as ancient as the rainforest, surveys have helped to draw attention to their importance. Research is aimed at identifying key areas for conservation and developing sustainable systems of land management on land that has already been cleared. Herbarium specimens from various expeditions number about 15,000. However there are few examples of cerrados vegetation in cultivation, as their demands for light and high aluminium soil are too difficult to recreate in cultivation.

Collaboration takes the form of direct arrangements with other botanic gardens. The Royal Botanic Garden supports the Lipizuga Botanic Garden in Papua New Guinea,

enabling staff there to keep in touch with developments world wide via Botanic Garden Conservation International.

Conservation and the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh by Liz Cowap

(contd.)

From Ferns to conifers

Practical efforts are being taken involving cultivation, propagation and, in some cases, reintroduction of endangered plants. More than 500 rare or threatened plants are grown in the four gardens. Projects include establishing breeding colonies of endangered conifers from wild collected seed (Conifer Conservation Programme) and cultivating *Woodsia alpina*, a native fern. It is Britain's rarest fern and RBGE is at the forefront of a project to rescue it from the brink of extinction. Similar to the Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*) it was over collected during the Victorian Fern Craze and has shown little evidence of recovery since. There are fewer than 100 plants in the wild. As part of a larger investigation into the reproductive biology of rare ferns, a team at RBGE has perfected a method of propagating *Woodsia* from wild collected spores. To date, almost 200 plants have been reintroduced to the Moffat Hills in southern Scotland and to Upper Teesdale in England.

RBGE is a major world center for research into the taxonomy and conservation of conifers. This has arisen partly from Scotland's location where it is possible to grow most temperate species and also because of the extensive Living and Herbarium collections. Conifer research at Edinburgh aims to produce monographs on conifers worldwide, study their evolution, distribution, biology and ecology and to maintain the Living Collection.

Unlike tropical rainforests, which in many cases only thrive as a community, conifers perform well in cultivation. This makes possible the establishment of *ex situ* conservation breeding populations, with parents collected as seeds or cuttings from as many localities as possible. RBGE has already collections of young *Sciadopitys vetricillata* and *Thuijopsis dolobrata* from various sources in Japan.

A major challenge for conifer conservation concerns the young trees from New Caledonia off the east coast of Australia. They are not hardy and must be kept under glass. Four fifths of the island's plants are endemic including all of its 40 different species of conifers. The ecological disaster now happening to many of the conifer rich areas of New Caledonia can be accounted for by its underlying geology. Though partly covered by tropical forest, the southeast consists of mineral soils too toxic for most other trees. Many of these areas are subject to strip mining for nickel, which includes complete removal of the vegetation cover.

Certain conifer species which are quite common in cultivation are now threatened in the wild, for example the Monkey Puzzle more common in British gardens than in Chile; Monterey Pines, more common in Cornwall and south west Ireland than California and the Cedar of Lebanon where in 1907 there was as few as 50 left.

Certain conifer species which are quite common in cultivation are now threatened in the wild, for example the Monkey Puzzle more common in British gardens than in Chile; Monterey Pines, more common in Cornwall and south west Ireland than California and the Cedar of Lebanon where in 1907 there was as few as 50 left.

Seed and cuttings are being sought from cultivated plants in an attempt to harness and perpetuate genetic resources that are probably no longer available in the wild.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Forest Friends Ireland, P.O. Box 7814, Dublin 1. Ireland

FEES: Individual...€ 30 Family...€ 60 Schools...€60 Student /Unwaged/Senior Citizen...€ 15

(Please Tick)

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE:

EMAIL:

METHODS OF PAYMENT

CHEQUE/POSTAL ORDER

For the appropriate amount made payable to “**Forest Friends Ireland**” at the above address

OR

BANKER’S ORDER

I/We authorize you to payannual payments of €,commencing on the Day.....Month.....Year.....

To the account of :

Forest Friends Ireland Ltd.

Bank of Ireland

2 College Green

Dublin 2

Account no: 33721955

Sort Code : 900017

To the Manager (your bank)

Bank’s Postal Address

.....
Name of Account

.....
Account Number

.....
Date

Signature(s)
.....

Please return to: Forest Friends Ireland, P.O. Box 7814, Dublin 1. Ireland

Further information at www.cairdenacoille.org

Telephone: 353 01 8325415

jjhaughton@hotmail.com or wjmaher@iol.ie

Forest Friends Ireland, P.O. Box 7814, Dublin 1. Ireland

Letter to Dermot Ahern

To Minister Dermot Aherns.
Minister for Communications, the Marine and Natural Resources.
Dáil Éireann, Kildare St., Dublin.

Dear Minister,

I wish to support the following campaigns of Forest Friends/Cáirde na Coille:

1. To reverse the present Irish Government's forestry policy of planting mainly a monoculture of Sitka Spruce in favour of planting Irish native trees. This is justifiable on economic, environmental and social equity bases. It is the only forestry strategy which is sustainable in the context of a national biodiversity approach based on the principles enunciated at the Earth Summit Conference in Rio in 1992:
2. To ensure that the forests of the Irish People, (at present managed by Coillte) are not privatized. This would be contrary to the national interest, to the principles of conservation and would create serious problems of public assess, such as are at present enjoyed by the people of Ireland.

Name.....

Signature.....

Address.....

Phone no.....

NB Please cut out and send the above request to Minister Dermot Ahern