



Ulster Wildlife Trust



Small Tortoiseshell

**The Ulster Wildlife Trust** manages Slievenacloy for the benefit of biodiversity; it was the potential to restore this wonderful landscape to its former species-rich glory that attracted UWT to take it on as a nature reserve. Thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Environment and Heritage Service and Readymix through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme we have been able to carry out various projects to help improve biodiversity at Slievenacloy. These include: putting in place 18km of fencing to help manage grazing on the site, planting over 25,000 new trees to

re-establish the hedgerow habitat, restoring over 3km of the ditch drainage system, providing better access and visitor information materials, and funding the people to make all of this happen!

**If you would like to be involved in Slievenacloy's future, then the Ulster Wildlife Trust would like to hear from you. We offer opportunities for practical conservation work, surveying and monitoring, informative walks, educational activities and team building days. Contact our main office to find out more.**



Stonechat

*Courtesy of Dylan Mackey, Surrey Wildlife Trust*

The Ulster Wildlife Trust is a conservation charity working for a healthy environment for people & wildlife, across the country and in our seas. We manage many important nature reserves throughout Northern Ireland – our team of staff and volunteers currently carry out practical conservation work at 24 different sites, all of which support increasingly rare habitats. We also work across Northern Ireland making conservation relevant to people's everyday lives, campaigning for a healthy environment, and supporting community environmental action.

wildlife for everyone. The more members we have, the greater our influence is on government, both locally and nationally, as we campaign on behalf of wildlife. You can become a member for a small yearly subscription and in return, we will keep you up to date about local wildlife issues, give you access to our nature reserves and invite you to UWT events.

**Contact us at:**  
**info@ulsterwildlifetrust.org**  
**or Tel: 028 44830282**  
**for further information.**

**Supporting UWT through membership...**

Support from our membership allows us to continue working for an environment rich in



Early Purple Orchid

Cattle grazing at Slievenacloy

The Ulster Wildlife Trust is a charity recognised by the Inland Revenue No XN45269



**Common Spotted Orchid**



**The Ulster Wildlife Trust**

owns and manages Slievenacloy Nature Reserve -

*We hope you enjoy your visit!*



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# Unique...

Slievenacloy is special because of its biodiversity. This 125-hectare site is the core of the **Slievenacloy Area of Special Scientific Interest**, which means it is protected under law to ensure the habitats remain in good condition.



Viewpoint 1 - Fantastic views over South Antrim, South Down, Lough Neagh and the Sperrins!

The Slievenacloy site is described as a mosaic - a patchwork of different types of habitat all blending together. The three main habitats you will see are species-rich grassland, wet heathland and rush pasture, but there are also areas of fen, bog, and a stream system. Depending on what time you visit you will see the different wildlife supported by these habitats, most important being the ground nesting birds in the early spring, the orchids and wildflowers from May to July, the butterflies and moths in the summer and the conspicuous brightly coloured waxcap fungi in the autumn.

Without people shaping the landscape for centuries by grazing cattle and opening up the land for growing hay and crops, Slievenacloy would not be the diverse place it is today. Farming has been done here on a small scale,

mostly by hand and without heavy machines or chemicals. Today the Ulster Wildlife Trust continues to graze the site with low numbers of cattle, which creates the ideal conditions for many different types of wildlife and allows the animals and plants to flourish.

Intensive modern farming practices such as the use of heavy machinery, inorganic fertilisers and pesticides has led to a landscape in Northern Ireland dominated by green fields, but these have little value to wildlife in terms of food and shelter. NI has lost over 95% of its species-rich grassland in the last 50 years so wild places like Slievenacloy are exceptionally important strongholds for biodiversity.



Curlew

Courtesy of Scottish Wildlife Trust



Ulster Wildlife Trust

If you would like to get in touch with us, please phone **028 44830282** or email **info@ulsterwildlifetrust.org**

# Go & Explore!

To help protect the nature reserve and to help you find your way around, we have set up three waymarked trails. They each go off the beaten path for large stretches, so you are advised to wear suitable hill walking footwear and protective outdoor clothing.

## Where will you wander?



### The Priest's Hill walk (approx 1 hour)

will lead you around some of the highest points on the nature reserve, offering even more stunning views over the Northern Ireland landscape. From either direction follow the roads to one of the two viewpoints that show you the awesome panoramas. From either viewpoint, follow the fenceline onto the heath, where you will be able to find out more about what makes this one of Slievenacloy's most important habitats. This walk goes through some prime bird watching territory so keep your eyes and ears open!



Skylark

Courtesy of Dylan Mackey, Surrey Wildlife Trust



### The Stoneyford walk (approx 2 hours)

will lead you down the hill and across the Flowbog Road to discover one of Slievenacloy's sites of archaeological interest - the earth ring. Here you can read about some of the theories as to its previous use and also explore the rolling landscape around the Stoneyford river. This ramble will take you through rush pasture and species rich grassland, and in the summer months it is the perfect place to see the orchids and other wildflowers putting on their yearly show of colour!



Common Spotted Orchid



### The Ballycollin walk (approx 1 hour 15 mins)

heads off into the east of the nature reserve, into rush pasture and through some great examples of species-rich grassland. Here, depending upon the time of year, sweeps of primroses can be seen across the slopes, butterflies could be on the wing amongst the colourful blooms of orchids and other wildflowers, or you may find an unexpected blush of brightly coloured waxcap fungi in your path. Irish hares have been spotted down there on the other side of the river, and listen out for the squeaking and chattering sounds of pygmy shrews. The valley is steep in places so bear in mind that you have to come back up once you've gone down!

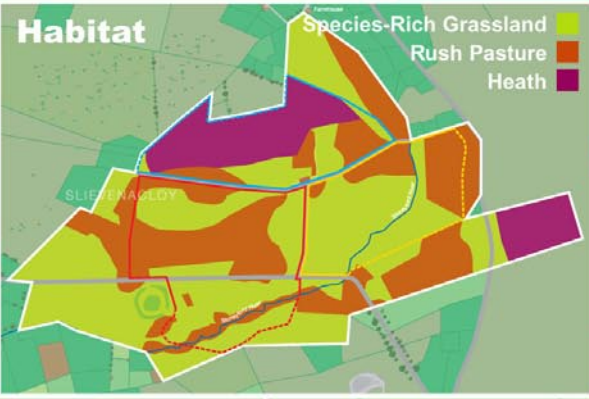


Orange Tip Butterfly



## Habitat

- Species-Rich Grassland
- Rush Pasture
- Heath



## Heath

The main areas of heathland on Slievenacloy are easy to recognise as the ground appears much darker due to the dense covering of *ling heather*. Growing amongst the heather is *purple moor-grass* and you will also be able to find *reindeer moss lichen* and lots of different *sphagnum mosses* nestled within the vegetation.

## Rush Pasture

It is easy to spot the areas of rush on Slievenacloy as the vegetation grows tall and is very conspicuous! These areas are typically wetter than the species-rich grassland and are covered in the *sharp flowered rush*. Between the clumps of rush grow many other wildflowers including *marsh marigold*, *water avens* and *cuckoo flower*. Care should be taken in these areas as the ground is often very wet and uneven.

## Species-Rich Grassland

About half of the area of Slievenacloy is covered by species-rich grassland. Here you will find wild *orchids*, *buttercups*, *primroses*, *vetches* and *devil's bit scabious*, food plant of the internationally rare *marsh fritillary* butterfly. Also in the autumn these areas are the ones where you are most likely to find the distinctive *waxcap fungi* growing.

## Map Key

- Priest's Hill walk surfaced
- Priest's Hill walk unsurfaced
- Ballycollin walk surfaced
- Ballycollin walk unsurfaced
- Stoneyford walk surfaced
- Stoneyford walk unsurfaced
- Slievenacloy Site boundary fence
- ASSI land boundary
- Location of farmstead remains on the site
- Viewpoints



## Caution!

Slievenacloy Nature Reserve is a wild and natural place. The ground is not always level and many areas are very wet and boggy. The site is grazed throughout the year by cattle who are free to roam within the open areas. Take good care when leaving the paths that the ground you are walking on is firm and safe, especially if accompanied by children.

[www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org](http://www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org)

### Point of Interest information signs

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1</b> Life In The Hills                   | <b>6</b> Cattle - <i>The Living Mowers!</i> |
| <b>2</b> Orchids - <i>Wildflower-tastic!</i> | <b>7</b> Belfast Hills & Quarrying          |
| <b>3</b> Butterflies & Biodiversity          | <b>8</b> Birdlife at Slievenacloy           |
| <b>4</b> Fungi - <i>Nature's Composters</i>  | <b>9</b> Heathland Biodiversity             |
| <b>5</b> Landscape Detectives                |   |

### As you venture around Slievenacloy:

- Beware of cattle - for your own protection and theirs
- Please use only the pedestrian gates and stiles to enter fields; do not climb on fences
- Leave the farm gates as you find them
- Keep dogs under close control - we ask you keep your dog on a lead at all times
- Avoid disturbing nesting birds and other wildlife - Keep Your Distance

- Children should be closely supervised as many of the routes cover very rough ground and cattle roam freely on the site
- Be prepared for changeable weather and lower temperatures - it is cooler in the hills and the winds are stronger!

*Leave only footprints, take only memories, and come back soon!*



Image credits: Oily Waxcap - David Mitchell; Common Blue Butterfly - David McClean; Water Avens - David Fenwick