

FASCINATION OF PLANTS DAY - BIOBLITZ 2012



Hornwort – *Anthoceros* sp.
www.anbg.gov.au/bryophyte

Ireland's Lilliputian Flora **Mosses and liverworts of the Phoenix Park** ***Caonacha agus Aelusa Pháirc an Fhionnuisce***

Visitor Centre (Ashtown Castle), Phoenix Park, 18 -19 May

Botany Department, Trinity College Dublin
& National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin



Bryophytes – mosses, liverworts and hornworts –

form a major component of Ireland's flora. We have some 595 species, subspecies and varieties of mosses, 236 liverworts and 4 hornworts - almost half of the total European bryophyte flora.

Mosses and liverworts form important elements in the Irish landscape. The many-hued species of *Sphagnum* (bog-mosses, *Súsán*) form a living sponge that helps to create our peat bogs. Many bryophytes are pioneers in colonizing bare surfaces: a skin of mosses helps to bind bare soil (and thus hinder erosion), also to stabilize sand dunes. Other species find niches on stone, concrete, and the trunks and branches of trees.

The bryophyte flora of Ireland has been relatively neglected. Recent surveys have added new rarities to the list. However, many species have declined and some have vanished as a result of changes to the environment such as pollution, the drainage of wetlands, and over- or under-grazing.

Flora of the Phoenix Park: change or continuity?

'Wild Plants of the Phoenix Park' was published in 1993 by the National Botanic Gardens. This included '**Bryophytes of the Phoenix Park, Dublin**', by Daniel Kelly and Donal Synnott. With the assistance of the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club, we listed 11 liverworts and 87 mosses. (No hornworts though! Perhaps in 2012?) Fascination of Plants Day/Bioblitz is an occasion to investigate how the wild plants of the Park have fared over the intervening two decades.

Material on mosses and liverworts will be on display at the Visitor Centre. This will include birds' nests with mosses forming part of the fabric. A centre-piece will be two **specially-commissioned botanical sculptures by Niamh Synnott**.

Compound and stereo-microscopes will be available for examination of specimens. Workshop activities will focus on how to identify different species, and – **commencing at 5.00 p.m. on Friday 18 May** – a tally will be kept of all plant species recorded from the Park within the following 24 hours.

Uachtarán na hÉireann Michael D. Higgins
will launch Bioblitz 2012 at the Visitor Centre on Friday 18 May at 4.45 p.m.

Guided walks will start from the Visitor Centre on Friday at 7.00 p.m. (leader Daniel Kelly) and on Saturday at 2.00 p.m. (leader Noeleen Smyth).

ALL WELCOME!