Cookstown Wildlife Trust **Members Night** 10th December 2019

All contributions were from members, the show was varied and as good, if not better than, many of our shows during the year. As a club we are very lucky to have such a varied and talented group. Claire, Thomas ,Sebastian, Sophie and Pat all contributed immensely to a successful evening.

***Claire.***
Claire, Head of Biology in St.Pius’s College, Magherafelt gave an interesting and well illustrated presentation on biology projects she has organised within the school for a biodiversity club (ages 11 -14), which meets on Fridays at lunchtime. The club has speakers and trips, and projects carried out each term.
A few years ago a **Corncrake Project** was done along with BBC. A successful audiophile on the corncrake was produced.
Projects on **bats**, **hedgehogs** (including a hedgehog “bake off”), and **Pine Martens** have been carried out. In the Pine Marten project, a telephone interview with **Chris Packham** was included and public awareness was raised.
Work was done to help development of the **Henry Wildlife Reserve** near Magherafelt, especially the teaching area near the pond. These projects also involved cross curricular work with the Technology Department.
It is great to see interesting and useful environmental work carried out in our schools.

***Thomas.***Thomas gave a stunning slideshow of some of his bird photographs, many taken on the shores of Lough Neagh, others in the Antrim Hills and beaches of the North Coast.
He began with beautiful photographs of peregrines and merlins, many expertly taken in flight- not an easy task. These were followed by pin-sharp images of a range of seabirds-including ducks, gannets, skuas, sanderlings, godwits, and divers. The show finished with top class images of birds more likely to be seen by a normal bird spotter.
To say that these photographs were good, is an understatement, the quality was professional.

***Sebastian.***Sebastian is a young and very enthusiastic nature worker, he provided us with a well documented slideshow on wildlife projects carried out at home
He showed wildflower verges which he was improving on the roadside verges, close to home. Realizing, like most of us, that he couldn’t use a scythe very well, Sebastian went on a course, and then practiced on the family meadow at home.
He has saved this for hay over a number of years. . ( I well remember helping my uncle make hay on his farm near Ballynahinch, 10 shillings for a hard day’s work, 60 years ago and more, so it was nice to see Sebastian, all these years later, making hay in the old fashioned way again.)
Gradually the meadow has improved and Sebastian tried lots of experiments on drying hay, using a range of hay-ricking methods.
He also realized that although scything was slow, the method had lots of environmental benefits. Sebastian included one photograph of Sophie in the hay field, wasn’t he a lucky fellow to have such high grade assistance!
***Sophie.***We are all aware of the wonderful work and organization by Sophie to make sure that Springhill looks well at all times of the year. This is even more relevant as some of our members are honorary assistants at Springhill. Her presentation this year involved an interesting chronicle of work done during 2019 illustrated by a range of interesting photographs.

**January** Ho Ho Ho Ho Home Homes, of lough home show- Stormy with some snow. Trees fell, these had to be cleared and the wood stacked.
***February****-The months of snowdrops-dogwoods were cut, and a nest box week held.*
***March*** -10 years of the allotments were celebrated and improvements made to the walled garden walls. At Wellbrook work was done on improving the paths.
***April*** –Easter events were held including many craft activities. Efforts were made to improve the Woodlands for butterfly conservation, and the meadow is improving each year.
***June*** –Composting was carried out at Wellbrook and a Garden Fair held, a moth count was carried out at Wellbrook.
***August*** –Flax was harvested at Wellbrook, there was trouble with cows breaking out of fields. Springhill had flycatchers ringed.
***September***-The meadow at Springhill was cut and yellow Rattle seed sown, a deer were seen at Wellbrook.
***October***-The pond at Springhill was cleaned and improved. There was a Halloween event with witches.
***November***-The time for lifting leaves and composting .
***December***-Preparations for “The Argory” Christmas sale ( at which £1400 was made).

***Pat.***

Pat and Jim Rutherford have been members of the Wildlife Trust longer than anyone else. It was Jim who introduced me, almost 50 years ago.
Pat has kept slides taken on trips and outings from early days of the club (there were no digital files in those days), and they provide a wonderful record of people who were members, some sadly gone, and the interesting trips and enjoyable outings they shared.
Visits to Rathlin and the Copeland Islands were included in Pat’s slide show.
Some of us (the older ones) had an opportunity to see themselves as they once were, and enjoy recognizing other members from earlier days of the club many years ago,.
Sallie Marsh, Ian McNeill, Mrs Kells, Robert Stewart and a large number of other recognisable faces are included-I will borrow one of Pat’s slides and add to web for all to view.