

Bird & Bat boxes for local Primary Schools County Galway, Ireland

Roadbridge Ltd.

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Community Engagement

Project overview

This project's goal was to increase biodiversity awareness at a local level by creating and installing bird and bat boxes within the grounds of local primary schools with the help of the Moycullen Men's Sheds community group (www.menssheds.ie).

Four different primary schools in two towns within a 10km radius of the Galway Wind Park (GWP) development participated in this project:

- Scoil Mhuire Primary school, Moycullen;
- St Annins Primary school, Rosscahill;
- Newtown Primary school, Moycullen;
- Tullykyne Primary school, Rosscahill.

The Moycullen Branch of the Men's Shed Community Group also engaged with this project. A consultant ornithologist and bat specialist from Ecology Ireland also contributed on a pro bono basis.

These boxes were then presented to the schools by the Roadbridge environmental

team as well as members of Men's Shed community group. Roadbridge operatives then fixed these boxes on various mature trees within the grounds of each of the schools.

The total cost to Roadbridge for this project was €580 which covers the supply of two ground operatives for one day's work. There were no material costs as the timber materials used to construct the boxes were taken from waste site materials.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

There were no planning conditions or contractual agreements that obliged Roadbridge to carry out this community engagement work. However, in all the construction projects that Roadbridge undertake there is a company CSR commitment to protect and where possible enhance the local environment.



Presentation to Men's Shed group by a consultant ornithologist and bat specialist

Roadbridge strive to leave a positive impact on local communities post construction. The idea for this project arose by contacting the four local schools enquiring if they were interested in receiving these bird and bat boxes. .

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

All of the four schools are actively involved in the Green Schools Ireland scheme (www.greenschoolsireland.org) which requires schools to enhance the biodiversity of their schools and grounds. Dove tailing with this scheme Roadbridge were able to supply and install bird and bat boxes on mature trees to provide more suitable habitats for native birds and bats.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Multiple bird and bat boxes were constructed by the local **Men's** Shed group using various waste materials such as timber off-cuts, wooden pallets and sheets of used plywood taken from waste skips at the GWP site compound. By placing these boxes in suitable trees within the grounds of the participating schools it is hoped that a wide variety of native bird and bat species will be encouraged to shelter, nest and breed in these areas.

Prior to building these bird and bat boxes, Roadbridge organized for an ornithologist and a bat specialist to visit the **Men's** Shed workshop to give a presentation on the different designs of wooden boxes that are suitable for specific bird and bat species. The consultant ecologist advised the **Men's** shed group on what species of bird and bat were common to the locality and what design of box would best suit the different species. He also advised on how best to position the boxes and what height and direction to face them so as to optimise the potential for the boxes to be inhabited.

As native bird species are attracted into these hand built shelters, it is hoped they will have a mutualistic relationship with the surrounding flora. While the bird receives nectar or fruit from the tree it visits, the tree will benefit by having another mechanism to disperse its seed. The bat boxes will also provide sufficient protection for bat offspring as well as play a part in growing the bat population in Ireland.



Bird and bat boxes in place

The donation of these bird and bat boxes is greatly appreciated by all four schools. This biodiversity enhancement project is easily replicable in the future. It is hoped that this project will increase the biodiversity of the areas around the school while also raise an awareness and interest in local biodiversity among the local school children and other community groups.

How would you best describe the project?

An enhancement

Further information

This project kicked off by Roadbridge organising an ornithologist and bat specialist to deliver a presentation to the **Men's Shed** group at their workshop. Based on advice and designs given to them by the specialist consultant the **Men's Shed** group then began constructing these bird and bat boxes from timber waste given to them from the GWP construction site. The bird and bat boxes were then installed in suitable trees within the grounds of the four schools by Roadbridge operatives. As these boxes were presented and installed the Roadbridge Site Environmental Manager gave a short presentation to the junior pupils and staff of each school on the importance of constructing the boxes, the species of bird to be expected to inhabit these boxes and how the boxes will help to increase the local biodiversity. The children were also encouraged to ask questions which they did so with great enthusiasm!

These bird and bat boxes will require visits throughout the year (for cleaning and general maintenance) which will be carried out by the school children and teachers. Since erecting these bird and bat boxes in May 2016 there have been multiple sightings of a variety of birdlife on the school grounds, notably; meadow pipit, skylark and swallow.

We at Roadbridge believe we have successfully met our objectives in helping to establish new areas of biodiversity at each of the four primary schools. These bird and bat boxes will hopefully raise awareness and increase knowledge of biodiversity, ecology and conservation amongst the local community.



Presentation by Roadbridge Environmental Manager to junior pupils and staff.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

The Roadbridge environmental team at GWP is passionate about safeguarding and enhancing the natural environment. Increasing the biodiversity of an area and protecting wildlife is an important goal for us. The donation and installation of bird and bat boxes to schools will help to enable this message to be spread at a local community level.