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Sent: 09 January 2015 20:17

To: Nature Conservation

Subject: Information regarding hedge-cutting and burning of vegetation in the Wildlife Act, from the Curragh..

Hi there,

I'm writing to you about the proposed changes to the legislation regarding the open season for hedge-cutting and burning of vegetation in the Wildlife Act.

I know it is outside business hours, but I live a country life and business hours are when the job is done! Tonight, its windy and lots needed seeing to.

I have read the information outlined in the proposed changes/what need to be addressed regarding the Wildlife Act and feel it is not very well known and I wish it was.

An outright ban on burning is likely to result in a more severe wildland fire regime and destruction of wildlife in the future, if it is implemented. I feel an extended burning season is required to allow land managers more opportunities to do their work in a more responsible, effective and lawful manner. Over burning or over intensive fires damage soil. Prescribed fires as the rangers on the mountains implement them are designed specifically to avoid this. Controlled fires are important. Trying to manage areas that need it is just painful to see when done with cutting instead of burning, the growth is weak and unnatural. I have seen both methods first hand and without doubt (when done correctly) fire is so much better for the habitat. So much so when controlled burns are not done and a fire does start it is a very different and scary scenario. Did you ever see a furze fire lick the power lines to your homes whilst you and your neighborhood are out fighting it back... I did once and it was because heavy furze went on fire and out of control. It was ok because of community working together and people knowing how to control a big furze fire.

Controlled burning burns the vegetation, leaving space for, e.g, heather to grow back new and fresh and a nice layer of superb, natural ash fertiliser, when uncontrolled burning happens, the earth is scorched and it does huge damage to the underlying ground.

I live down near the Curragh Plains where controlled burns were small, frequent and well managed, they worked. Now it's not done and the gorse is thick and heavy, when it does burn it is fierce and much harder to get in control, also using up huge resources not to mention they are very dangerous! I would urge you to help giving the Curragh Rangers the approval to do controlled burns again, the lands were so much better back when it was done, and now that they have to remove over grown furze with machinery it uses huge resources, best spent elsewhere. Also, on long dead grasses, weed killer is used, detrimental to the high water table here. Thus hugely damaging to the unique habitat of the Curragh.

And as for hedge cutting, it's more like hacking these days, a huge percentage of all the hedge rows in my area were horribly cut this season, like the past few seasons (I am not against it as in a proper fashion it is beneficial to both flora and fauna) But the cutting blades were obviously still blunt because most branches were not cut cleanly just ripped through sheer force of the machinery. leaving the hedges rough, weakened and thus open to infection. For one wild example a good mile of hazel hedge was torn assunder, all the summers new shoots ripped and thus there were no hazelnuts this autumn.

Hedges need to be cut so they are healthy hedges, not just hacked and sparse. There are less wildlife in these too, compared to well managed hedges, what wild creature wants to live in a place that's wide open to the elements, none. They thrive in nice dense healthy hedgerows.

Hedges need to be managed, e.g half cutting and bending sideways to thicken up weak hedges and proper trimming. also ivy control.

Mammals, birds, insects, bee's, a host of small plants and more thrive on the fabulous habitat of hedgerows, from living in them to foraging on them.

Who doesnt love to pick a blackberry or sloe and see the hedges buzzing with life in the summer or see the robin or blackbird chirping away whilst perched on a heavy snowy hedge. Mis management of these and the balance is gone.

The natural framework is very important to the delicate balance of native Irish Hedgerows, they are abundant, but not infinite.

These two issues are not very well understood, but some folks do know and do them in best practice. I feel changes need to made to re introduce best practice, to re inform people how to do this and then a controlled task force can help it all work.

Another main thing above all else is to get the issue of dates out of primary legislation. Dates should be set by Ministerial regulation instead.

How it's done and when it's done: knowledge and time; need to be looked and changed for the better.

Many thanks for reading this and I wish you well in the most likely big task ahead of you, yet an extremely well needed one.

Regards