

## 29. Ballylanders [Griston Bog]



*The Duck Sanctuary*



*The boardwalk*

Located to the south of Ballylanders; travelling from Garryspillane on the R513, go through the crossroads at the shrine and turn next right. The Nature Reserve is located 1km south on the right hand side. This is a lowland raised bog, which has a boardwalk with wooden seating and information signboards. This nature reserve has been developed by the local gun club and is open all year round. It is best visited in the summer months when insects and plants come alive.

Walking distance 1km, Time 20 min. Terrain easy. O.S. Map 73: Start grid ref R759232

**Warning: Please stay on the footpath at all times, as there is a hidden ditch close to the path in places.**

**Starting at Point 1**, walk along the boardwalk to the viewing platform **[Point 2]**. Up to 75 bird species have been seen here, including Sedge Warbler, Willow Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, Whitethroat, Cuckoo, Common Sandpiper, Merlin, Sparrowhawk and Hen Harrier. Common Darter dragonflies often rest on the railings. Tussocky Ling Heather is dominant on this bog, with tussocks of Hare's-tail Cottongrass and scattered plants of Royal Fern. Signboards on the platform show pictures of the species

found here. Continue along the winding footpath where you will find a small bog pool on the right **[Point 3]**. Sedge Warblers often give a blast of song from the Willows during the summer. At the next junction **[Point 4]**, keep to the right, where you will pass the far end of the duck sanctuary. Mallard are raised here on the island by the gun club. Little Grebe has also recently started to breed here. The chicks, which are known as humbugs, may be seen hiding on the mother's back. Moorhen are common and the Kingfisher visits regularly. The Blue Emperor Dragonfly was first recorded in the County of Limerick at Griston Bog in July 2005; a male was seen patrolling the area while a female was ovipositing (laying eggs). This is the largest species of insect found in Ireland. Other dragonflies seen here include Four-spotted Chaser, Amber-winged Hawker and Common Darter. Damselflies are also in abundance, among them Azure Bluet, Common Bluetip and Spring Redtail. The large new pond contains a variety of pondweeds as well as the invasive alien Curly Waterweed.

On good sunny days you will find Orange Tip, Green-veined White, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, Large White,



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Ringlet, Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies at various times of the year. Long-eared Owls have bred on the Island for many years, and this is the best place in the County of Limerick to see them in the evening time. Follow the path around the edge of the pond until you reach a small gate **Point 5**. Here there are benches to sit on and relax, and this is a popular place for feeding the ducks. Continue along the path around the sanctuary that leads through a stand of conifer trees and brings you full circle back to **Point 4**. Retrace your way back to the starting point.



*Long-eared Owl (Kevin Collins)*