

Vaughan Trust Fermanagh Hay Meadow Competition

Prior to the introduction of silage, hay was the main source of winter fodder in Ireland. The combination of low fertility and late cutting produced fields containing a great variety of plants with no two meadows being the same. On the drier sites the yellow and white from the ox-eye daisy dominated whilst a purple haze from the ragged robin dictated the colour on wetter sites. Whilst working in the hay field the farmer could come across a range of other wildlife, bumblebees, butterflies, grasshoppers and birds such as corncrake, sky-lark and meadow pipits.

The meadow was an integral part of the farm with the survival of the farm depended on adequate fodder reserves for the winter. Their management didn't stop after the hay was won; hedgerows were kept trimmed during the winter to ensure nothing blocked the sun and sheughs around the field were maintained to keep the fields drier. This once common habitat is now one of the countries rarest farmland habitats with its loss leading to an overall decline in much of our wildlife species and also a loss in the knowledge and traditions of haymaking so important to previous generations.

In Northern Ireland, Fermanagh is now one of the last areas with good examples of traditional species rich hay meadows. To recognise the importance of these remaining meadows, the Vaughan Trust is sponsoring a competition for Fermanagh farmers to reward good examples of hay meadow management. The competition, run by the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP), is open to any Fermanagh farmer who feels that they have a good example of a traditional hay meadow on their farm. The meadows will be judged in early June with the top three farmers receiving a prize of £300, £200 and £100. Entry forms are available from the Vaughan trust website (www.vaughantrust.com) and from DARD Direct at Inishkeen House, Enniskillen. The closing date for entries is 27th May.



The purple flowers of Ragged Robin in a wet haymeadow on the shores of Lough Erne.



VAUGHAN TRUST

Fermanagh Hay Meadow Competition

1.Name _____

2.Address _____

Phone no. _____ Mobile _____

3. Area of hay meadow _____

The completed application should be returned to: Patrick McGurn,
Portinode,
Kesh
Co Fermanagh Bt93 8aq



Fermanagh Hay Meadow Competition

Explanatory notes

1. The competition is open to all farmers in Fermanagh who still manage a traditional hay meadow. The meadow does not have to be under an ESA or CMS agreement.
2. The production of hay must be the main aim in the harvesting of the crop, however fields that are occasionally made in big bale silage due to wet weather conditions will still be eligible.
3. The meadows will be visited in early June and judged on a range of factors including, overall field management, the range of wildflowers growing in the field and the condition of the sward.
4. The field judged to be the best example of a well-managed species-rich hay meadow will be the over all winner and will receive a first prize of £300. There will be a second prize of £200 and £100 for third place.
5. Closing date for applications will be the Friday the 27th May 2011.

