

A Boat Trip On The Royal Canal -- 11 June 2009

Sunday May 24th was a very auspicious day for the Irish Wildlife Trust. It was celebrating its 30th birthday – 30 years of wonderful work which benefits us all – and had asked that a Wildlife Walk be organised in every county to mark the day.

Naturally, here in Westmeath, they turned to the Environmental Group to organise the day and we, in turn, decided to do things differently and approached our friends in the Royal Canal Amenity Group. A few 'phone calls later (thanks Sarah Caffrey!) and all was set for a wildlife cruise on the Canal with R.C.A.G. providing the boat, the crew and the lifebelts. Beats walking any day.

And didn't skipper Christy Dalton and his First Mate, Shane, give the lucky ones a fabulous day. From Thomastown harbour to the Hill of Down, back again to Thomastown, then down through one of the locks and back again to the harbour. And the sun shone all day.

Now, we are aware that there are rumours about which might lead the innocent to believe that some of those taking part on the day simply sat back enjoying the comfort of the Edwin G., the scenery, the sunshine, and let the world go by! Nonsense! They all worked hard all day on their Wildlife Survey. Or so they tell me – and, of course, I believe them.

But, in truth, the day just served to reinforce in our minds what a fantastic treasure we have in our Royal canal. In the space of those few glorious hours our happy sailors were able to record 18 different types of flowers and trees, 12 different species of birds and a myriad of insects large and small. Not to mention pike, roach and other fish. Thank God we have people like the Royal Canal Amenity Group working to protect and preserve it all.

A brilliant day, in brilliant company. So, many thanks to R.C.A.G., to Christy and Shane and to Sarah for all the organising. And to think that the Canal Group make all this facility – boat and crew – available for FREE! All they would accept was a donation to help cover costs. A fabulous scheme.

Veronica Lynam

Chairperson,

Westmeath Environmental Group