

Celebrating Ireland's

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Our forests provide us with great settings to connect with and appreciate nature, particularly in challenging times. In late September 2020, the Teagasc Forestry Development Department launched a photography competition, inviting participants to capture and celebrate our forests through images.

The competition featured four different themes over four consecutive fortnightly periods during October and November, highlighting some of the many benefits provided by our trees and forests.

The themes were **Forest Landscapes, Trees on the Farm, Forest Animals and Plants** and **Enjoying Our Forests**, respectively.

The competition really captured the imagination, with well over 1,000 wonderful images submitted by enthusiastic participants of all age groups across the country.

The comments and captions that accompanied the images were particularly gratifying, with many highlighting their uplifting experiences within the havens provided by their local forests. This article brings together a selection of captivating images from the competition, along with their captions and brief descriptions. The images themselves tell their stories in a most powerful manner.

Based on the success of this initiative, Teagasc plans to launch a new photo competition in 2021, which will incorporate new themes and further competition categories.

Category 1: Forest Landscapes

Forests can enhance our landscape and provide us with wonderful locations to enjoy. The images in this category reflect beautiful forest landscapes we can experience in every part of Ireland.

These photos capture tranquil scenes, stunning colours and leave us wanting to be in such places ourselves. The images clearly show why trees, in combination with other key landscape features such as water, are so important to our lives, our surroundings and our wellbeing.

cycle of birth and renewal.

Photo: Marty Guinan 'Apple of her eye'. Marty's photograph shows a heifer helping herself to an apple off the 'Apple Tree' on his



Photo: Jane Walsh 'The beauty around us'. Jane's overall winning photo presents a stunning image of "a simple yet beautiful walk on a gorgeous day in Hazelwood, Co Sligo."



Photo: Mary Hahn 'Enchanted Forest'. Mary captured "a beautiful magical walk through the forest at the Sally Gap, Co Wicklow. A clearing in the trees lets the light flood in, allowing the moss to grow and dress the trees in vivid velvet green"

Category 2: Trees on the Farm

The photos in this category provide fine examples of how trees, which represent a multipurpose resource, can fit in on the farm, complement

farming enterprises, enhance the farm aesthetics and biodiversity, and offer shelter for natural processes that are always a joy to behold.



forests – in pictures



Photo: Zita Power 'Feeding time under the oak tree'. Zita's category-winning photo, taken in Co Wicklow, captures the "wondrous sight of a piglet wrestling for milk against the backdrop of a lush oak tree."

She describes this simple but captivating farm experience as "a welcome and well needed break from the current chaos of the world." The image also reflects the turning of the season, as well as the

farm in Co Offaly.

Category 3: Forest Wildlife and Plants

The photos in this category bring us close up to a range of charming woodland species, some of which may be difficult to spot as they can be very

elusive. The featured image shows how trees and forest habitats can provide a home and refuge for our important wildlife species. Forests are one of the most important sources of life, colours, nature and beauty.

As eloquently described by Candela,

a young enthusiastic competition entrant: "Wherever you look, you will find different living things, incredible animals, exotic plants. The forest transmits calm and peace. With its smells, sounds and views, it provides wonderful space full of life. And



that's why it's one of the best topics to represent this world."

Photo: Tom Ormond 'Frosty morning'.

Tom describes how, on a frosty October morning in Killarney National Park, he heard this stag roaring in the woods and patiently waited for it to appear. Luckily for Tom, "it did not disappoint and when it roared in a cold

corner of the field, its breath vaporised and I captured this image."

Category 4: Enjoying Our Forests

The selected photo really brings out a sense of fun and enjoyment in a wonderful forest setting. It provides a great example of the recreational resource provided by our forests, which promotes physical activity, health and wellbeing for all ages.

Photo: Killian O'Driscoll 'Peek a boo!'

Killian took this photo while playing hide and seek with his son in the autumn leaves at

