

All in a Day's Work

Kieran Quirke, Forest Manager, Coillte

PROFILE

Kieran Quirke is a forest manager working for Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board. His work involves the sustainable management of trees and their environment.

Photographs courtesy of Coillte



Where did your interest in trees come from?

From childhood one of the first books I remember reading was "Robin of Sherwood and his Merry Men". This sparked my imagination and led to role playing with my brothers and sisters in a place called Castlefreke Wood in West Cork. I think it was there I

gained a love for the outdoors and trees in particular.

What training did you do to get where you are today?

I went to University in Wales where I completed a degree in Forestry. I then worked as a contractor for a number of years in the forestry sector mainly

doing tree measurements and timber volume estimations. I joined Coillte under a graduate recruitment programme and spent some time working in Wicklow, Wexford and am now based here in Castleisland in County Kerry.

What type of work do you do?

My work is quite varied and mainly involves planning the timber type and quantity to be harvested from the forests to supply the sawmills. I make sure that felled areas are replanted to sustain timber supply into the future and that all our forests are kept clean and visually attractive. I also manage forest

recreation areas, maintain forest walking trails, picnic benches, viewing points etc. Another important part of my job is protecting and enhancing biodiversity areas associated with the forests.

Is there any rare or unusual wildlife in the forests you manage?

Yes, the Hen Harrier, one of Ireland's and Europe's rarest birds of prey, nests in young forests in the upland areas near Castleisland. I protect this species by minimising any disturbances like harvesting close to nest sites and by maintaining a succession of young forests.

What is the best thing about your job?

The variety and being able to work both indoors and outdoors. One moment I could be on the office computer and the next I could be fighting a forest fire.

What is the worst thing about your job?

I hate to see any dumping in the forests. Unfortunately I regularly come across piles of domestic waste, car tyres, sofas, mattresses, washing machines and burnt out cars. I work with litter wardens and the Gardai to try and eliminate this dumping.

What would you do if you weren't doing what you do?

Boatbuilding..... with wood of course!



Clockwise from top: Deer in the forest; Cutting timber; Firefighting exercise; The forests of Ireland.

