

Title	Answering the Curlew's Call: A Beo and Raja adventure
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Publication date	2025-02-18
Publication information	Wright, Nathan T., Laoise Ní Chléirigh, Máire Nic an Bhaird, Barry J. McMahon, and Thomas P. Curran. "Answering the Curlew's Call: A Beo and Raja Adventure." University College Dublin, February 18, 2025.
Publisher	University College Dublin
Item record/more information	http://hdl.handle.net/10197/27410

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Answering the Curlew's Call -Guidance Notes and Learning Activities

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Introduction

This is the third comic in the Beo and Raja series created from an original concept by Maynooth University and University College Dublin in the <u>BioBeo</u> Horizon Europe project on bioeconomy education, which is funded by the European Union. This publication is created with the support of a number of other organisations including the <u>BiOrbic Research Ireland Centre for Bioeconomy</u>, <u>Breeding Waders EIP</u>, <u>Curlew</u> Action (UK), <u>BirdWatch Ireland</u> and the singer <u>David Gray</u>. The title of the comic is inspired by the Irish rugby anthem "Ireland's Call". It could be seen as a rallying cry for Beo and Raja to help the curlew species from going extinct in Ireland. The curlew's call is very distinctive and could also be considered a cry for assistance.

This comic explores the deep connection between language, culture, the land and the bioeconomy. Inspired by the first president of Ireland - Douglas Hyde's vision, it recognises how these elements have historically shaped societal change - once in the desire for independence, and today in the urgent response to climate change. By understanding this interconnectedness, we foster a stronger bond with our heritage, our environment, and our communities. Through love, knowledge, and a collective will to protect our land and all living things, we can inspire communities to embrace a bioeconomy. This vision is at the core of our work with BioCultúr, a BiOrbic project dedicated to sharing the concept of the bioeconomy by highlighting the values of connection, interdependence, and sustainability.



Coole Park's famous Copper Beech "Autograph Tree"

Comic Page 1

At the centre of the first comic book page are images of two prominent figures:

Douglas Hyde (1860–1949), also known as An Craoibhín Aoibhinn (The pleasant little branch), was a Roscommon man, a scholar, linguist, and the first President of Ireland (1938–1945). A key figure in the Gaelic Revival, he championed the preservation of the Irish language and cultural heritage. He understood that language was more than just communication - it was deeply tied to the land, history and identity of the Irish people. Hyde saw place names as living records of Ireland's past, each carrying echoes of mythology, history, and the natural world. His work emphasised the importance of understanding and respecting one's environment, as it shapes not only cultural memory but also national identity.



Check out this Brainstorm article for fun and interesting information on Douglas Hyde for everyone in the community!

https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2019/0513/1049181-the-man-behind-the-moustache-meet-the-realdouglas-hyde/

For more information on Douglas Hyde's life in Irish for children, please refer to the Irish language programme *Cosán na Gealaí* and the sixth-class non-fiction reader *Ní Maith Linn Bulaíocht* (Reader 3).

https://www.siopaleabhar.com/tairgi/cosan-na-gealai-rang-6-leabhar-3-neamhfhicsean-ni-maith-linn-bulaiocht/

Lady Isabella Augusta, Gregory (1852-1932), was an Anglo-Irish dramatist, folklorist, and co-founder of the Irish Literary Theatre and Abbey Theatre alongside W.B. Yeats and Edward Martyn. Known for her retellings of Irish mythology and contributions to cultural nationalism, she played a key role in the Irish Literary Revival. Her home, <u>Coole Park</u> in County Galway, became a hub for Revival figures, and her work with the Abbey Theatre was pivotal to its growth.

<u>The Autograph Tree</u> located within the walls of *"Flower Garden, Coole Park"* much loved by Lady Augusta bears the marks of the initials on a mature Copper Beech carved by William Butler Yeats In 1898 she asked to carve his and over the following decades many more distinguished guests were invited to add their own.

Continuing their walk in Coole Park, Beo and Raja are alarmed by a distress call. On a closer look, they realise it is the bird <u>Curlew</u>!

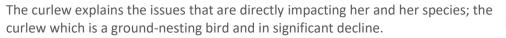
In the inset scene in the National Library of Ireland, there is a poster image in the background of WB Yeats and his poem "<u>He Reproves The Curlew</u>". As the curlew is so rare now, Yeats might not have written the poem in modern Ireland. This highlights the impact of the curlew in literature, music and dance.

You can also see Beo reading one of Douglas Hyde's diaries to Raja in the National Library of Ireland (NLI) as his diaries are housed in the NLI. Hyde began keeping diaries at just 14 years old, and they are now preserved in the library - 13 volumes in total, covering the years 1874 to 1912. These diaries are also available digitally on the NLI website, so you can explore them from your classroom or home - anywhere in the world! Imagine being able to read what Ireland's first President did every day as a teenager in Tibohine, Frenchpark, Co. Roscommon. These diaries are a fantastic resource, showing not only Hyde's daily life but also how he began learning Irish. He started writing in English, but as he spoke more Irish with local people, he began writing down the sounds he heard, gradually improving his Irish.

Roscommon's land and people deeply inspired him, shaping his understanding of heritage, folklore and identity. <u>https://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000649203</u>

Comic Page 2

A heartfelt interaction can be seen between Beo, Raja and the curlew, where it explains the dire situation that it is in. The interaction reveals how (Colhoun et al., 2022) habitat degradation from agricultural intensification, drainage, peat extraction, and afforestation has driven declines in curlew and other ground-nesting birds in Ireland since the late 20th century [Refer to the Irish Wildlife Manual 138 for more information] (Status and Distribution of Breeding Eurasian Curlew in Ireland 2021 Irish Wildlife Manuals 138, n.d.).



On page 2 we see Hyde sharing with us some words from an article he wrote. This article was called 'A Plea for the Irish Language' which he published in *The Dublin University Review* in November 1886 highlights how Ireland's land, heritage, and culture are deeply intertwined. He saw the Irish language as a bridge connecting people to their history, with every hill, tree, and valley holding legends that shaped the identity and character of the Irish people. Preserving the language wasn't just about words - it was about sustainable living, honouring traditions, and maintaining a connection to the land. Hyde believed that losing the Irish would mean losing a unique way of seeing and understanding the world.

The <u>Curlew</u> explains that it breeds in upland and lowland bogs, wet grasslands, and unimproved or semiimproved pastures. It particularly favours damp pastures lightly grazed by cattle, with a mix of tall and short grasses and scattered rushes or tussocks. The bird highlighted how taller grass provides a safe place to lay eggs and hide chicks from predators, while shorter grass offers ideal foraging spots for insects. It also mentions avoiding areas with trees or scrub, as these can attract predators, posing a risk to its safety.

The second depiction captures the interconnectedness between the intentions of Douglas Hyde to preserve the Irish language and how the disappearance of Curlew from Ireland is a loss of heritage for all. This highlights how the interplay between the human and the non-human is real and must be recognised as it impacts all involved.

Comic Page 3

Beo and Raja embark on a mission to raise awareness about "Sábháil an Crotach – Save the Curlew," emphasising the urgent need to protect the curlew and its habitat and how we can live in harmony together. Their message quickly gains traction, appearing in various media outlets, including newspapers, articles, and news channels. They discuss the **disappearing wetlands** and highlight the "Glowing Circle" formed by the coexistence of farmlands and wetlands.

During their journey, they discover a key supporter—**David Gray**, a dedicated advocate for curlew conservation. At one of his concerts in Croke Park, Dublin, Ireland, he passionately urges people to take action, reminding them that pride in

one's homeland must also be reflected in efforts to protect its native species. Croke Park (Páirc an Chrócaigh) is used as the setting to highlight the heritage and culture of Gaelic games and the language associated with the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), which was founded in 1884. This links back to the





previous comic "Back to the Future with Beo and Raja – A Tale from the Early Bioeconomy" which features the ancient game of hurling in one scene.

David Gray, renowned singer-songwriter, is closely involved with curlew conservation efforts, which may not be widely known. His connection stems from his deep personal concern for the plight of curlews, a species under severe threat in the UK and Ireland. David produced a documentary in collaboration with **Curlew Action**, highlighting the urgent need to protect these iconic birds. His interview discussing curlew protection can be viewed <u>here</u>, offering valuable insights into his motivation and the broader conservation efforts.

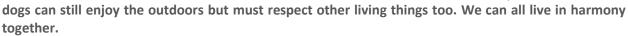
Curlew Action is a charity dedicated to safeguarding curlews through practical conservation work and public awareness. More information about their mission can be found <u>on their website</u>. Our collaboration with Curlew Action emphasizes the importance of collective efforts to protect this species and biodiversity as a whole.

Additionally, we are delighted to welcome **Mary Colwell**, a leading advocate for curlew conservation and the founder of Curlew Action. Mary will be present on Thursday and is the author of *Curlew Moon*, a powerful account of her 500-mile walk across the curlew's breeding grounds, raising awareness about their decline. Her book is available <u>here</u>, offering an essential perspective on the cultural and ecological significance of curlews.

Comic Page 4

David Gray's message resonates deeply, drawing connections between conservation and cultural heritage. He recalls how **influential Irish figures like Douglas Hyde and Lady Gregory** championed the Irish language and identity, reinforcing the idea that safeguarding the curlew also means preserving the land and the heritage it represents.

Inspired, Beo and Raja take their campaign door-to-door, educating communities about the curlew's plight. They highlight how <u>unleashed pet dogs</u> pose a major threat to the bird, especially in wetlands and fields. The community responds positively, committing to keeping their dogs on leads in curlew-sensitive areas: the



Comic Page 5

On page 5, Douglas Hyde shares a verse from a song he collected from Biddy Crummy, an elderly woman from Frenchpark, Co. Roscommon. The song, Paidrín Cumhra (A Fragrant Prayer), was published in Hyde's *Religious Songs of Connacht* (1906). It is a morning prayer to be recited upon waking to birdsong. The piece gained popularity and was chosen by Padraic Colum to open his *Anthology of Irish Verse* (1922). For more information on Biddy Crummy please see this publication. https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/id/eprint/19495/





Below is the original version alongside Hyde's poetic translation.

Paidrín cumhra mhúin

Mo leanbh dom féin

Gan mo shúil do bheith dúnta

In aimsir screadta na n-éan,

Ag dul ar mo ghlúnaibh, ag guí '

S ag agairt Mic Dé Cuimhniú ar an

Uan atá brúite Marbh faoin gcré.

A fragrant prayer upon the air My child taught me, Awaken there, the morn is fair, The birds sing free. Now dawns the day, awake and pray And bend the knee, The Lamb who lay beneath the clay

Was slain for thee.

Beo's parents lead by example, organising efforts to **clean up wetlands and wildlife areas**, inspiring the community to join in. Their actions reflect the principles of a **circular bioeconomy, where waste is minimised, and nature thrives**.

In the next scene, the **curlew appears joyful and secure**, with more curlews visible in the background, symbolising the community's success in conservation. This demonstrates the importance of **protecting umbrella species**, as safeguarding one species indirectly supports its ecosystem, ensuring the survival of other wildlife. Douglas Hyde, Ireland's first president and a champion of protecting heritage and culture is seen in the background.

Comic Page 6

As the story nears its conclusion, Beo and Raja reflect on their journey—connecting their efforts to save the curlew with Ireland's **linguistic and environmental heritage**. Raja, inspired by their progress, looks forward to their next conservation mission. A signboard outlines the essential steps to protect the curlew, while the thriving environment in the background—filled with **dragonflies**, **butterflies**, **and a curlew's nest**—signals a positive transformation and an abundance in the natural world once again. There are less trees in later scenes as the curlew prefers open spaces.



In the final scene, Beo, Raja, and the community celebrate their success in protecting nature and the curlew. The story closes on a hopeful note as a curlew soars confidently into

the sky, symbolising resilience, progress, and the triumph of conservation efforts. This is a story of hope and of example. Like the curlew, the Irish language was once in severe decline, but it too, returned from the brink. It is an image of respect, showing Beo with Raja now on a leash, and although enjoying the wetlands, is not impacting on other living things nearby

References

Colhoun, K., Flannelly, F., O'Neill, J., Phelan, E., Servignat, H., O'Donoghue, B. & Kelly, S. 2022. Status and distribution of breeding Eurasian Curlew in Ireland 2021. *Irish Wildlife Manuals*.

Status and Distribution of Breeding Eurasian Curlew in Ireland 2021 Irish Wildlife Manuals 138. (n.d.). Available at: https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/IWM138.pdf.

2. Activities for Learning Communities

Introduction

Here are 10 activities for children that connect to the themes of the comic, including bioeconomy, sustainability, conservation, language, culture, heritage and the curlew species. Before embarking on these activities, if you are within travel distance to wetlands, upland bogs or local curlew nesting areas, please visit cautiously and familiarise the children with the areas explored in the comic. If you are able to organise a tour to any of the following destinations in Ireland, before or after engaging with the comic, it will strongly support teaching and learning - *The National Library of Ireland Dublin, The Abbey Theatre Dublin, The Douglas Hyde Interpretive Centre in Roscommon, Coole Park Nature Reserve Galway.*

Broad Learning Outcomes:

The following broad learning outcomes aim to nurture a holistic understanding of heritage, environmental care, and societal change within a bioeconomy context.

The participants will be enabled to:

- enhance cultural and environmental understanding by exploring the interconnectedness of language, culture, land, and the bioeconomy. A deeper awareness will potentially develop of how historical movements, like the desire for independence and modern responses to climate change, shape societal values and behaviours. How these elements impact the identity of communities and the environment will emerge.

- explore sustainability and interdependence through developing an appreciation for the principles of sustainability, interdependence, and bioeconomy. They will recognise the vital role of community cooperation and collective action in fostering environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources.

- recognise heritage, language, and social change as intrinsic elements in shaping societal values and identity, using historical perspectives (such as Douglas Hyde's vision) to understand how these elements influence both past and present cultural and environmental movements. Cultural connections and how they can inspire all generations to engage in climate action and bioeconomy initiatives will be illuminated through engagement with the material.

1. Curlew Habitat Collage (Visual Art Activity)

Objective: Create a collage showing the curlew's ideal habitat, using recycled materials, paper, and natural elements (grass, twigs, leaves).

To do: Discuss the curlew's environment—wet grasslands, upland bogs, and semi-improved pastures. Children can draw or cut out images of these areas and assemble them into a collage. Use natural materials like pressed leaves, light twigs, grasses etc to represent different elements of the curlew's habitat.

Skills: Creativity, understanding of ecosystems, sustainability, construction, design, bioeconomy innovation.

2. Food Webs (Discussion, Writing and Visual Art Activity)

Objective: Understand the food web in which the curlew belongs.

To do: Lead a discussion on the food web of the curlew. Ask prompt questions such as – what does the curlew eat? Who shares the food of the curlew? Who are the predators in the curlew food web? What happens if one element of the food web becomes extinct? Explore the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (ipcc.ie) website for excellent information on bogs/wetlands and food webs. Create large food webs on recycled paper in groups.

Skills: Writing, empathy for animals, awareness of wildlife protection, bioeconomy innovation.

3. Curlew Puppet Play (Performing Arts)

Objective: Children create a curlew puppet and perform a short play.

To do: Provide materials like paper bags, feathers collected on nature walks, fabric or odd socks to create curlew puppets. Encourage the children in groups to act out a story based on the comic, with the curlew explaining its plight. They can create a dialogue about the importance of protecting nature and cultural heritage but remind them of a hopeful tone!

Skills: Teamwork, storytelling, environmental awareness, bioeconomy innovation.

4. Design Your Own "Language Hero" (Writing Activity)

Objective: Write a story about a character who helps preserve a language or species living in a bioeconomy. Include interesting characters including your chosen hero like Beo and Raja and the curlew in the comic!

To do: The children create their own character who is passionate about preserving a language or an endangered species, just like Beo and Raja. Ask them to write a short story where their character takes action to help. They can illustrate too if they wish or create a comic strip instead of a traditional essay format.

Skills: Writing, creativity, cultural exploration, language, bioeconomy innovation.

5. Curlew's Call (Sound Exploration)

Objective: Learn the sound of the curlew and explore the importance of sound in communication.

To do: Play a recording of the curlew's call for the children or if you know there are curlews nearby, go on a nature walk and listen out for their call. Discuss the bird's need to be heard in its environment for safety. Invite the children to mimic the curlew's call using their own voices or create their own bird calls. Show them the animated version of the comic available on YOUTUBE, to also hear the curlew's call!

Skills: Sound recognition, creativity, auditory learning, scientific enquiry, bioeconomy innovation.

6. Sustainable Farming Activity (Research/Hands-on)

Objective: Explore how farming affects wildlife and how farming can be very supportive of sustainability and nature-friendly.

To do: Research the effects of agricultural practices on wildlife, focusing on curlew habitats. Create a small-scale model of a sustainable farm using recycled materials and natural materials, including wetlands, grasslands, and safe spaces for wildlife. Discuss how these methods can help the curlew thrive. Consider interviewing expert farmers who are already actioning this!

Skills: Research, sustainability education, teamwork, bioeconomy innovation.

7. Curlew Poetry Writing (Writing Activity)

Objective: Write poems about the curlew or its habitat.

To do: After reading about the curlew and its environment on the curlew action website and reading the Beo and Raja comic together, encourage children to write poems from the perspective of a curlew, talking about its habitat, challenges and possible solutions. They can also write poems that celebrate the beauty of wetlands, nature and the magical curlew.

Skills: Creative writing, empathy, environmental awareness, bioeconomy innovation.

8. Story Map of Coole Park (Research and Art)

Objective: Create a visual story map of the characters' journey through Coole Park.

To do: Ask children to research Coole Park, including its history, the trees, and the famous Autograph Tree. They will then draw a map of the park, adding significant locations where Beo and Raja might have travelled or where the curlew's habitat is located. If you live near Coole Park Nature Reserve, be sure to visit in person.

Skills: Research, map-making, visual storytelling, historical enquiry, geographical enquiry, bioeconomy innovation.

9. Curlew & Culture Research Project (Research and Writing)

Objective: Research the connection between the curlew and Irish heritage, focusing on how the language and nature intertwine.

To do: Introduce the website <u>www.duchas.ie</u> where the children can research if the curlew is mentioned in Irish folklore or literature. Encourage them to investigate how the bird is a symbol in Irish culture and language and how it was spoken and written about. Invite them to write a report or create a visual presentation that explains these connections in small groups. It is useful to use both the term 'curlew' and the Irish language version 'crotach' when exploring the dúchas site. Additionally, is the curlew represented in other cultures? Research this point in a multicultural classroom and online!

Skills: Research, writing, cultural studies, folklore enquiry, bioeconomy innovation.

10. Harmony for our pets in Nature (Discussion & Writing Activity)

Objective: Understand the importance of keeping pets safe around wildlife and vice versa and the impact on species like the curlew when we are not careful with our pets.

To do: Lead a discussion on how unleashed dogs can affect wildlife, particularly ground-nesting birds like the curlew. Invite the children to write a letter to a community member explaining why it's important to keep dogs on leads in sensitive wildlife areas and the interconnected nature of our actions. We can love dogs but we can also love other animals too!

Skills: Writing, empathy for animals, awareness of wildlife protection, bioeconomy innovation.

11. Who is Douglas Hyde? (Research and Drama)

Objective: Investigate who Ireland's first president was and the impact he continues to have on our lives today. Explore how he, along with others helped to save Irish identity and the language of the land.

To do: Introduce the website <u>www.president.ie</u> where the children can research the role of the president of Ireland and several sources relating to Douglas Hyde. Additionally, explore <u>www.duchas.ie</u> for references to Douglas Hyde, Dubhghlas de híde, An Craoibhín Aoibhinn (his pen name), and The Gaelic League which he founded in 1893. Invite them to write a report or create a dramatic interpretation of the content they uncover on the presidential website, such as his impressive speeches, his inauguration etc. The children can also discover other relevant sites and any available books in the school and/or their local library on Ireland's first president.

Skills: Research, digital, historical enquiry, drama, bioeconomy innovation.

12. Who is Lady Augusta Gregory? (Research and Drama)

Objective: Investigate who Lady Augusta Gregory was and the impact she continues to have on our lives today. Explore how she, along with others helped to save Irish identity and heritage through the arts.

To do: Introduce the websites <u>www.abbeytheatre.ie</u> and <u>www.coolepark.ie</u> where the children can research a founding member of the National Abbey Theatre and her home in Galway. Additionally, explore <u>www.duchas.ie</u> for references to Lady Gregory and The Abbey. Invite the children to explore one of her plays and recreate a dramatic interpretation of their favourites. The children can also discover other relevant sites and any available books in the school and/or their local library on the folklorist and playwright Lady Augusta Gregory.

Skills: Research, digital, historical enquiry, drama, bioeconomy innovation.

13. Portraits of Ireland (Visual Art, Geography and History)

Objective: To create a portrait of a hero or heroine from the following list – Lady Augusta Gregory, Douglas Hyde, The Curlew, Beo, Raja, David Gray.

To do: Provide art materials such as paints, charcoal, pencils, pastels etc. Now that the children are very familiar with all of the characters in the comic, they are invited to choose one and paint, draw, sketch ... their chosen hero or heroine!

Skills: Research, historical enquiry, geographical enquiry, artistic, bioeconomy innovation.

14. Mindfulness Colouring (Visual Art and SPHE)

Objective: To enjoy a mindfulness activity in the outdoors using nature's palette.

To do: Provide art materials for the children. Download the Beo and Raja comic in black and white and sitting in a comfortable sit spot, use the colours you see in nature around you to colour the comic in your own style. This is a calming and mindfulness exercise for all.

Skills: Artistic, bioeconomy innovation, mindfulness.

15. Create a Comic (Visual Art)

Objective: To create a comic in the Beo and Raja series.

To do: Provide art materials such as paper, paints, charcoal, pencils, pastels etc for the children. Download all of the comics in the Beo and Raja series so far at MURAL Maynooth University or UCD Research Repository. Read the comics together. Now that the children are very familiar with all of the characters in the comic series, they are invited to create their own comic. What will Beo and Raja do next? Don't forget to include the themes of bioeconomy and sustainability though!

Skills: Imagination, creativity, artistic, storytelling, bioeconomy innovation.

Note

These activities blend several methodologies to engage in the themes of conservation, cultural heritage, and the role of language and heritage in conserving our world. The activities also encourage children to act, raise awareness, and foster a deeper understanding of their environment and its inhabitants. The

complex nature of a bioeconomy is introduced through a lens of interconnection and equity for all life but rather playfully!

Useful websites

https://www.ipcc.ie/discover-and-learn/resources/bogland-food-web/ https://www.ipcc.ie/discover-and-learn/resources/curlew-book/ https://www.curlewaction.org https://www.coolepark.ie https://president.ie/en/results?keywords=Douglas+hyde https://president.ie/1916/exhibition/en/content/stagesetters/culture/hyde-macneill/ https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/event/douglas-hyde-exhibition-virtual-tour/ https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/id/eprint/18457/ https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/curlew/

YouTube link to Comic Animation

https://youtu.be/uTyoQ3uXOvo?si=_jRjUccQ7Pgw-Xbq

Download the English Version:

Download the Irish Version:



