

Reviews, Feb meeting

## IRELAND'S RIVERS

*Irish Times* – Best books for Christmas 2020 - Coffee-Table Books

**Ireland's Rivers** (UCD Press, €40), edited by Mary Kelly-Quinn and Julian D Reynolds, aims to raise awareness of Ireland's often undervalued river resources. It captures the evolution of Irish rivers and interrogates how humans have depended on, used and abused our rivers through time.

*Irish Independent*: The best books of 2020

A beautifully produced academic tome *Ireland's Rivers* (UCD Press, €36) aims to raise awareness of Ireland's fantastic and often undervalued river resource, and the importance of keeping our waterways clean and healthy.

*Irish Independent*, Nov 2020

...ak out some people, but when you ve into the words, you will be there, joying what Rory describes as "a febration of good things to eat". His istrations are very cute too. Oh how I've missed my visits to Yotam itolenghi's café in Notting Hill, my

very large, smiling face that only a mother could love, she devotes a chapter to "a loving defence of brown food". She is so right when she says comforting brown food, "it gently beckons us with a whisper, not a shout".

Nigella Lawson

lyrical prose, it's easy to see why Whitehead has won the prize for fiction twice. As an International Dublin Literary Award 2020 nominee, John Boyne's *A Ladder to the Sky* (*Black Swan*) from 2018 is one of the Irish writer's most deliciously dark works to date. He has created unforgettable characters in Maurice Swift and Erich Ackermann – the former is a 65-year-old gay man, and a novelist of serious renown, who decides to take the younger Erich on his book tour. A Molotov cocktail of ambition and seduction: a modern-day *All About Eve*.

### COVID NATURALIST

by Hilary A White

A welcome by-product of the first lockdown was a quieter, slower world that allowed us to notice nature getting on with things in its own splendid way. This was reflected in a surge of nature writing.

Man of the moment is unquestionably Dara McNulty, the Ulster teenager whose *Diary of a Young Naturalist* (*Little Toller*) won the Wainwright Prize for Nature Writing en route to nabbing an unprecedented three An Post Irish Book Awards nominations.

The journal/daybook format also worked wonders for other Irish nature writers. Every home could benefit from a copy of another Book Awards nominee, Jane Powers' *An Irish Nature Year* (*William Collins*), which serves bitesize morsels of rich natural insight for each day of the year. Mayo nature-writing supremo Sean Lysaght gave us the excellent *Wild Nephin* (*Stonechat*), while cinema legend John Boorman delicately logged the arboreal beauty of his lockdown in Annamoe, Co Wicklow, with his nature diary, *One Eye, One Finger* (*Lilliput*).

Like Boorman, Richard Nairn sought to champion the splendour of our native woodlands with his authoritative portrait *Wildwoods* (*Gill*).

**Ireland's Rivers** (UCD Press), edited by Mary

Kelly-Quinn and Julian Reynolds, gives these veins of the Irish landscape a detailed and fully illustrated historical and ecological analysis.

We were treated to new releases by two of the UK's greatest nature writers. Six years after swooping to glory with her raptor-themed grief memoir *H is For Hawk*, Helen Macdonald returned with *Vesper Flights* (*Jonathan Cape*), a collection of essays and articles. Meanwhile, Tim Dee's *Greenery* (*Jonathan Cape*) was a deeply personal memoir channelled through the theme of bird migration.

With his Syd Barrett looks and magical name, mycologist Merlin Sheldrake took us inside the astounding world of fungi with *Entangled Life* (*Bodley Head*).

Part travelogue, part wild exploration, *Owls*



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