

A case study of terryland forest park



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For the last exercise of semester two for my Geography in Practise module we were tasked to perform one of two Field Trips in a group. I decided to do the Case Study of Terryland Forest Park. The goal of this field trip was to discover how this park was used, its impact on nature both as an ecological corridor and a natural habitat, and how the forest is used as a recreational space. It is also my intention to discuss how various factors effect the way the park is used by both people and wildlife.

Methodology

Before setting out on the field trip a number of things had to be done. I printed off all the required readings off of Blackboard and spent the week before reading through the various readings. I also made sure to review any lectures that we did in the during the previous weeks that may have had any relevant information n relation to the case study. Once I had read all that was necessary I ensured that I had filled out all required forms. I made sure that I had suitable clothing and everything else that was required for the trip. The final step I had to undertake was to ensure that I had understood the purpose of the field trip. I wrote down numerous questions in a copybook that I would bring with me the day of the field trip and I would strive to answer these questions on the field trip to make the writing of this essay easier. Once I had completed all these tasks I was ready to go on the field trip.

Once the day of the field trip came I met with my group outside of the Kingfisher Gym on the college campus. Once we were all there we proceeded up the steps to the N6, we walked along the bridge until we came to the closest entrance to the park. Once we entered the park we took pictures of

anything relevant at the entrance. Upon first entry of the Forest it feels slightly neglected, the signs are faded and there is rubbish littered in many spots on the ground. Of course, it is not the management of the parks fault for the litter being so bad but more to do with the bush drinkers and the public using the park. While looking around the park I took notes on what I was thinking and what I saw as relevant to the field study. We proceeded to follow the curve around the park so we were walking along the river, there were a number of benches many in a dilapidated condition some were missing the wood off of the seats and on one the table part of it was completely uprooted. Although there were black bin bags hanging off of every single bench there was still a very sizable amount of litter present in the park, it was even dumped beside and under the benches that had the bin bags on them. This was an incredibly disappointing site and thoroughly ruined the aesthetic of the park.

After this we went to continued to follow the river round the curve and across the small bridge we were hoping to find signs of animal inhabitation in the forest park. Across the bridge there was an outdoor gym further along the trail. We found some proof to wildlife presence in the park but it was hard to determine of what variety.

Results

The field trip to the woods turned up many results. It is clear that the park completes its roles effectively. The locations viability as a natural area is a success, the population of trees and other plant life certainly ensures that it acts as the “ Green Lungs of Galway”. It was also clear that there was a good amount of wildlife present in the Forest. The food stuffs left behind by

visitors to the area were chewed up and scattered around which could in dictate either a presence of rats or another larger mammal perhaps a fox or maybe a badger. There were also scratch marks on the ground that were a few centimetres deep, this would be good evidence towards a badger digging for worms, grubs and other invertebrates to feed on.

Across the bridge on the Terryland Shopping Centre side of the forest we found a hole in the ground surrounded by trees, we were unable to determine what sort of animal set or den it was. We presumed it was a larger animals den as the entrance was of a decent size, we made an assumption that it was presumably a fox or a badger. There was also a sizeable number of smaller nesting birds to be seen and heard in the forest such as robins and goldfinches. Some nests were also visible in the trees which showed that they lived in the forest and not in some of the other surrounding areas. The presence of these birds is another indicator that there is a healthy supply of invertebrates present in the forest.

The evidence I have written above is a sure sign of the viability of the park as a natural area. The success of the locations viability as an ecological corridor is down to a number of reasons. One of the most important aspects was the protest to stop a new proposed road from cutting through the forest. If this road was allowed to have cut through the forest it would have divided it up into a smaller section thus disrupting the natural flow of the ecological corridor. Thankfully a number of people protested the planning of the road and successfully stopped it from being erected in the forest. This was a great victory for the ecological corridor that as present in the forest and it helped to ensure its existence and viability in the forest. The ecological corridor is <https://assignbuster.com/a-case-study-of-terryland-forest-park/>

incredibly important as it links Lough Corrib to the Galway hinterlands. This is an essential factor in the survival of the various species' that are present in the forest. It also helps with diversification and preserving clean genetic pools. These factors have ensured the success of Terryland Forest Park as a viable ecological corridor.

It is hard to say whether or not the Forest park succeeds in its goal of being a recreational place for all citizens of the city. It is clearly obvious that many efforts have been made to transform the area into the recreational space that they desired. There are benches (presumably installed by the council) scattered throughout the forest in that makes it very accessible to the public to sit down and enjoy the nature. Unfortunately, most of these were damaged in some ways or another. Many of them had extensive damage done to them with missing seats and slabs of wood missing from the table part of the bench. Unfortunately, as well as that there was a clear presence of litter beside nearly every single one of the benches. Some of this litter was food stuff but for the most parts it was various types of empty beer bottles, cans and bottles of spirits.

This was especially disappointing as every single one of the benches had a black bin bag hanging off of it, all of the bags on the day were mostly empty so the presence of litter is a purposeful and incredibly lazy act. It is clear that the committee over the park has worked hard to make it a viable recreational area. Another aspect that shows how hard they have tried is the presence of the outdoor gym in the forest. It is a very interesting and novel idea. It is hard to judge how many people make use of this amenity. The machines were all in good condition and rather clean, so it is hard to know

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whether or not they are well used and looked after or rarely used at all. It is clear that there is an incredible amount of effort put in by whoever runs the park to make it a viable recreational space. Both the benches and the outdoor gym are clear evidence of this. It is hard to know how viable it will be for a recreational aspect to persevere in the park in the future because it is hard to determine that whomever littered around and damaged brand new benches in the park would have any respect for damaged benches and an already littered in park.

Discussion

There are many factors effecting the forests viability as a natural area. Firstly it is questionable how effectively does the area mimic a natural woodland. Obviously, it is impossible to have a truly authentic natural woodland in the middle of a city. In fairness to Terryland Forest Park it does a very good job of mimicking a natural woodland with its limited area. The variety of flora and fauna ensure that it is a close representation to a natural Irish forest. Of course, when discussing the successes of the forest as a natural area or even the forest as a whole the main downfall to every positive is the effect of antisocial human behaviour. The forest was planted almost entirely due to a group effort by the community to take the area back and to create a useable public space that everyone could be proud of. Unfortunately, there was also a large amount of destruction to the woods to be seen on the field trip almost all perpetrated by humans. There were a number of trees knocked down, it was hard to see what else could have knocked these trees other than people. There were also large amounts of cardboard laid down on the ground. This is aesthetically displeasing but more importantly is how it would

suffocate any plant life such as grass and wildflowers beneath it. We also came across a number of bonfires that had been set up scattered throughout various locations in the woods. All of them seem to have been lit using wood from the forest and one of them even had a whole tree sitting in the ashes, presumably somebody tore down a whole tree and laid it down in the fire. This destruction is a pity to be seen perpetrated by a select few individuals in a forest that was made by the people for the people. The damage caused definitely effects the hard work put in to turn the park into a viable natural area. The area as a whole serves a major role as an environmental corridor. The river running through the site plays a major role in the functioning of the ecological corridor.

According to the Galway City Habitat Inventory by Natura unlike most of the Corrib some parts of the Terryland River have been heavily modified(Natura, 2005, p. 21). Its role as an economical corridor is affected by a number of factors both positively and negatively. The river is the biggest positive and is the main factor in its ability to be an economic corridor and a natural habit. A number of different species of birds, mammals and fish live both in the water and on the banks of the river. It is clear that the river is major draw to the wildlife and allows passage for the various forms of life to gain safe access to different habitats. The two main factors that impede the viability of the river as an ecological corridor are invasive species and human interference. Many invasive species have taken over the waterways of Galway and the Terryland River is no exception. The most threatening invasive species to the ecological corridor is most likely Japanese Knotweed. This persistent weed is incredibly dangerous and poses an extreme risk to all native plant and

animal species in the area. It can grow in almost any conditions and often grows in rivers and riverbanks, this can lead to suffocation of the waterways. This causes difficulty for mobility for fish and nesting birds. It can also cause the water to be starved of oxygen which leads to mass fish death. The presence of invasive species most certainly poses a risk to the viability of Terryland forest park as an ecological corridor. Humans have also had a negative effect on the viability of the ecological corridor in Terryland. Destruction of the banks can lead to disruption of nesting for various species of birds. For example work was carried out by the O. P. W. (Office of Public Works) to deter the spread of Japanese Knotweed in the Terryland river and the effect on the local aquatic wildlife was devastating (McNamara, 2013). Although the intention of the O. P. W was to relieve the river of the stress of the knotweed it could be argued that they did more harm than good by using a mechanical digger for the job instead of doing it manually by hand. This above case is an example of human impact impeding the viability of the ecological corridor in Terryland forest park.

The area has a difficult relationship with its role as a recreational space. The area is clearly used by the people of the city. Many people walk their dogs in the park and there are people who go to the outdoor gym and uses the available facilities. These are very positive signs and show that the park is being put to use. Unfortunately, there is an incredibly negative aspect to the public's access to the park. The amount of litter in the park is quite frankly incredibly hideous. There are whole swathes of ground covered in empty alcohol containers. It is clear that the presence of this destruction is incredibly off putting to other people using the area as a recreational area.

The damage done to the park is extensive in some area. Young trees have been knocked over and used as fuel for bonfires. In some areas the littering is so extensive that it has quelled the plant life beneath it. It is hard to determine whether or not the damage done to the soil and the plant life is irreversible. We can only hope that the people doing this damage come to their senses and stop ruining everyone else's ability to use and enjoy the recreational space provided by the park. According to C. Philip Wheeler in *Urban Habitats* " it is important that local communities are involved and do not become distanced from their recreational sites"(Wheeler, 1999, p. 109). It is hard to determine how long lasting the viability of Terryland Forest Parks recreational spaces will be if the park isn't respected and looked after. If peoples' habits do not change soon it will put other people off of using the space.

The final thing I will discuss in this essay is how I would perform a field survey to characterise the soils found at the park. I would make it random by throwing a quadrat in three different areas. The first location I would throw the quadrat would be the circular clearing in the middle of the park. I would take a sample and try to characterise the soil by the physical properties. The second place I would take a sample would be along the river banks. It would be interesting to see would there be any variation in the soil type between the two. The final place I would take sample the soil would be in the middle of some of the wooded areas. I believe this soil might be different in comparison to the soils from the other two areas and it would presumably contain a much higher humus content.

In conclusion there were many observations and insights to be taken from Terryland forest park. It is clear that the park plays many roles such as a natural area, an ecological corridor and a recreational space for the people of the city. The viability of these roles comes under fire to many things. Unfortunately, one of the main threats to the park as a whole is human interference and destruction. Hopefully a more proactive stance towards ecology and the protection of the park will be taken to ensure the forests many roles stay in place well into the future. Of course, humans aren't the only negative impact on the park and human impact also brings many positives as well. After all it was the people who planted the park and took pride in the nurturing of it. I'm sure if there was a community effort to take pride once again in the park it could once again become a true park for the people.