

Good morning Geographers,

On the off chance I am catching you in a particularly good mood this morning, nominations are now open for the [2019-20 NUI Galway Teaching Excellence Awards](#). These are student-led nominations that give you the chance to reward what you feel has been an especially fulfilling learning experience.

RESEARCH highlights

The ongoing debate over the age of the *Ceide Fields* in Mayo continues in the national newspapers. Are they *older than the pyramids*, revealing the Irish nation's pedigree as "children of the first Europeans"? See [here](#) (or attached) for how Eneida Jennings, Karen Molloy & Michael O'Connell's pollen analysis has written the latest chapter in this fascinating story.

Our final year students are working away on their own research, with Raluca Niculae in the [PRU](#) preparing pollen samples from a *Ballyblood Bog sediment core*, dating back to the late glacial period. It will tell us about environmental conditions in Co Clare at the close of the last ice age. In a similar study MSc student Ryan Smazal is working on a core from Lough Inchequin, Co Clare also. Both are under the tutelage of Karen Molloy.

TEACHING highlights

In the field this week 2nd yr Biogeography students are around campus, mapping the distribution of an *invasive alien species* (*Petasites fragrans* - see [Biodiversity Ireland](#)). Looking at such questions as: current distribution? preferred habitats? controls on distribution? potential for greater invasion?

Of note around Geography this week

Shane Conway ([Rural Studies Unit](#)) featured in a recent episode of RTÉ's Ear to the Ground, where he discussed the *importance of part-time* farming and incentivising farmers and their families to live and work in their local community. See YouTube clip [here](#).

Upcoming talks

Town Hall Theatre, 1:10pm to 1:50pm, Thursday (Feb 20th)

Speaker: Dr Karen Molloy (it seems to be Karen's newsletter this week!)

Landscape and environmental history of Galway: prehistoric woodlands to Medieval city

Fossil pollen provides a window on past landscapes. This lecture presents evidence of landscape change in Galway, through the millennia, as revealed by analysis of sediments from within Galway city.

See a link to full programme here: [Spring Lunchtime Lecture Series 2020](#)