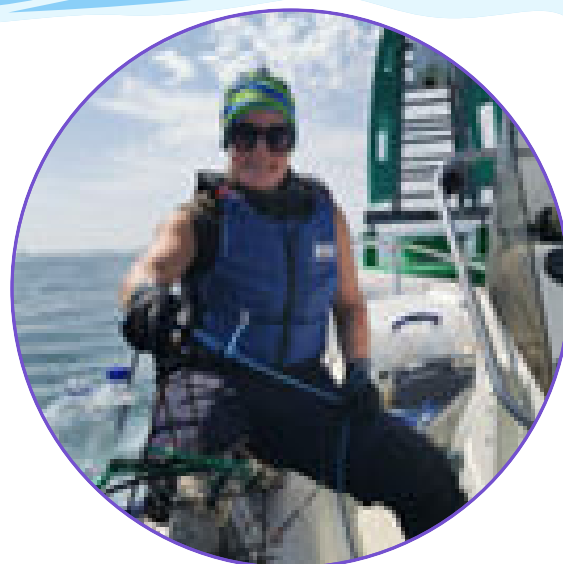


CAREER PROFILES:

NAME: JEN COUGHLAN

POSITION TITLE

SENIOR TECHNICAL OFFICER, UCD SCHOOL OF BIOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE



AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR JOB:

Marine research group

assisting undergraduate, postgraduate students, postdoctoral and academics both in the field and in the lab in all areas of marine research and ecosystem restoration projects

Teaching

3rd stage zoology/environmental practical setup and demo in invertebrates/vertebrates/ecology/field skills

Admin

ordering materials/supplies, risk assessments, various committees, inducting new students in the lab and field and all and anything else that needs to be done!



WHAT'S A TYPICAL WORKING DAY LIKE FOR YOU?

It's very busy these days as I setup and demo undergraduate practicals as well as work in the field which can be anything from intertidal surveying anywhere in Ireland, sampling from the boat around Dublin port and up the Liffey (mainly), setting up camera mounts to monitor fish around our habitat units before dawn or installing large concrete environmental enhancements with drills and bolts. In between these tasks, I help students in the ecology lab with identification or other sampling/sorting of marine flora and fauna, do my general administration work of writing risk assessments or ordering materials as well as managing the various experimental aquarium systems we have running for oysters and crabs.



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WHERE ARE YOU USUALLY BASED? E.G. AN OFFICE, A LAB, A RESEARCH VESSEL, A HOME OFFICE



Mostly 50:50 split between fieldwork and on campus. Field sampling/work can be anywhere around the coast of Ireland or abroad, depending on the project! In Ireland, we mainly work in the intertidal but we also sample using our boat, some SCUBA, snorkelling, SUP, and kayaks. This can be anywhere along a rocky shore, piers, seawalls, rock armour or any other coastal feature. Our work these days mainly involves habitat restoration with native Irish oysters and seagrass to re-establish their traditional beds around the Dublin coastline but we also work a lot with heavy drills/tools and concrete if we are installing environmental enhancements to increase biodiversity along artificial structures so it's very varied, dirty and heavy at times.

BESIDES FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS, WHAT SKILLS OR TRAITS ARE MOST USEFUL FOR YOUR TYPE OF WORK?

It's good to have a love of being outdoors and in all weathers. My particular job is very physical so reasonable fitness is an advantage. Also, soft skills like being able to work on your own initiative, being able to work in difficult and challenging environments and the determination to keep going to get big projects over the line.

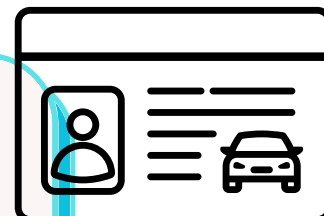
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THIS LINE OF WORK?

26 YEARS



WHAT WORK EXPERIENCE, QUALIFICATIONS OR TRAINING WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR GETTING INTO THIS CAREER?

It's good to have a full drivers licence and sometimes the skills you have picked up as hobbies become hugely beneficial such as SCUBA diving or Powerboat/Diver Coxswain licence. There are a lot of flora/fauna courses run by various organisations including the National Biodiversity Data Centre. As well as being fun, these can teach valuable identification skills which is really important as an ecologist and takes time to build up knowledge and experience.



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**WHAT ADVICE
WOULD YOU GIVE TO
A YOUNG PERSON
INTERESTED IN THIS
CAREER PATH?**



My job has changed dramatically since I started. I would say always embrace any opportunities that come your way, you never know where they might lead or what contacts you will make and that has been a major contributor to my job developing along this challenging but fun pathway.



**WHAT'S YOUR
FAVOURITE
PART OF YOUR JOB?**

Being out in the field with enthusiastic students and especially being out on the boat is what makes me tick. I have always loved the sea so I am lucky to be able to work in, on and sometimes under it!

**WHAT'S THE MOST
CHALLENGING
PART OF YOUR JOB?**

Red tape and permissions for bigger projects that we do in the field. Some of these such as habitat restoration and concrete installations require compliance certificates, foreshore licences or other approval which can cause a lot of frustrating and challenging delays.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO THIS CAREER?

My dad was always really interested in the sea and marine life and he instilled that passion in me. I studied a BSc in Trinity College Dublin, specialising in marine in my final year. I then went on to do a taught Masters in Environmental Biology In Swansea University, also specialising in marine themed research. The early 90s in Ireland was not an easy place to start a career in science so I had a lot of jobs (including working at Dublin Zoo) before I finally came back to start as a technical officer in UCD. At that time, I was only working in general biology classes but really wanted to get back to marine biology so I chatted with the new marine academic at the time and told him I would be delighted to work on any upcoming projects if he needed any help. He sent me to work at sea for a month sampling deep sea fish on a research vessel and that was that, I started working primarily with the marine research group.

TIME to
STUDY



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