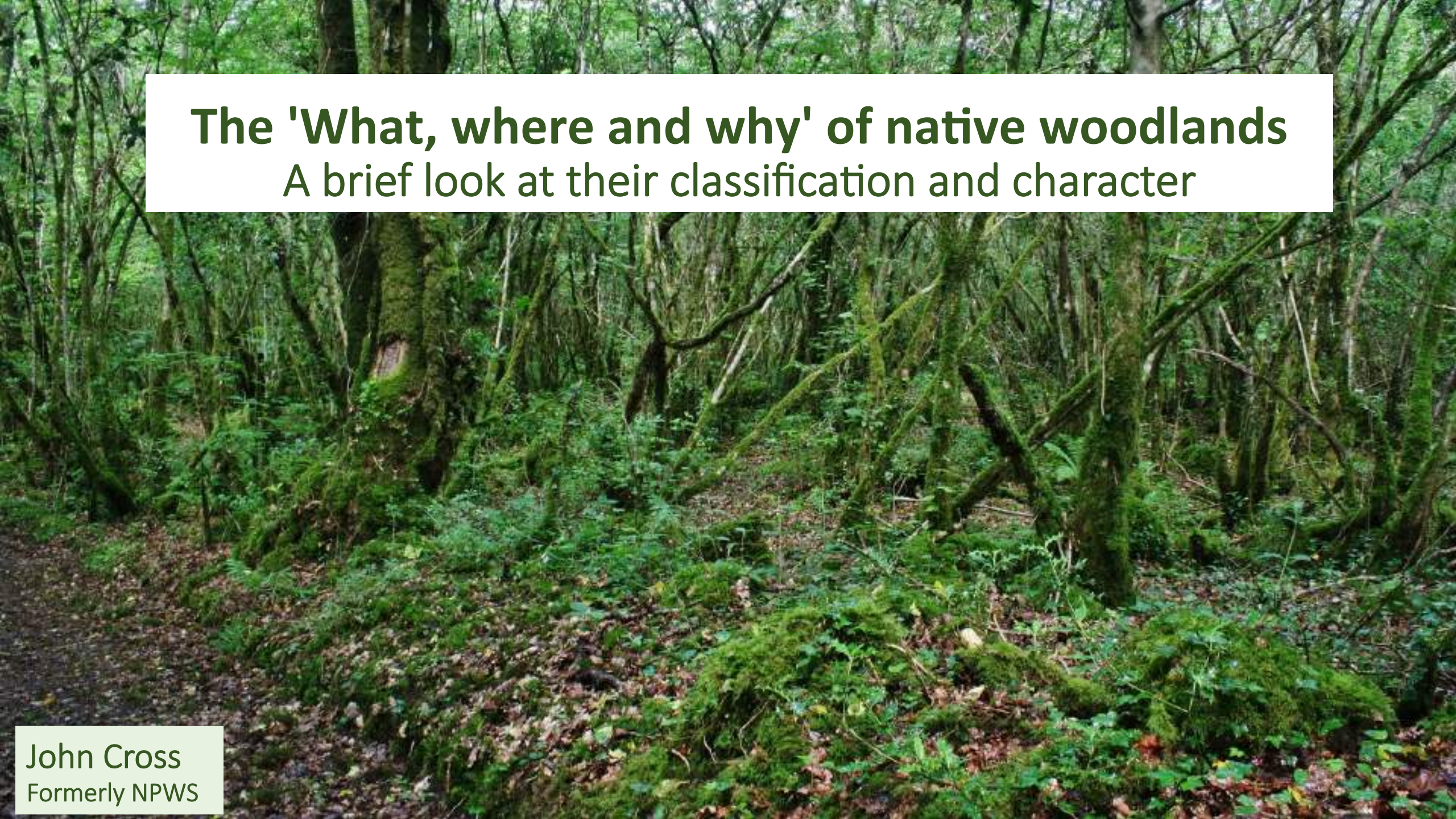


# The 'What, where and why' of native woodlands

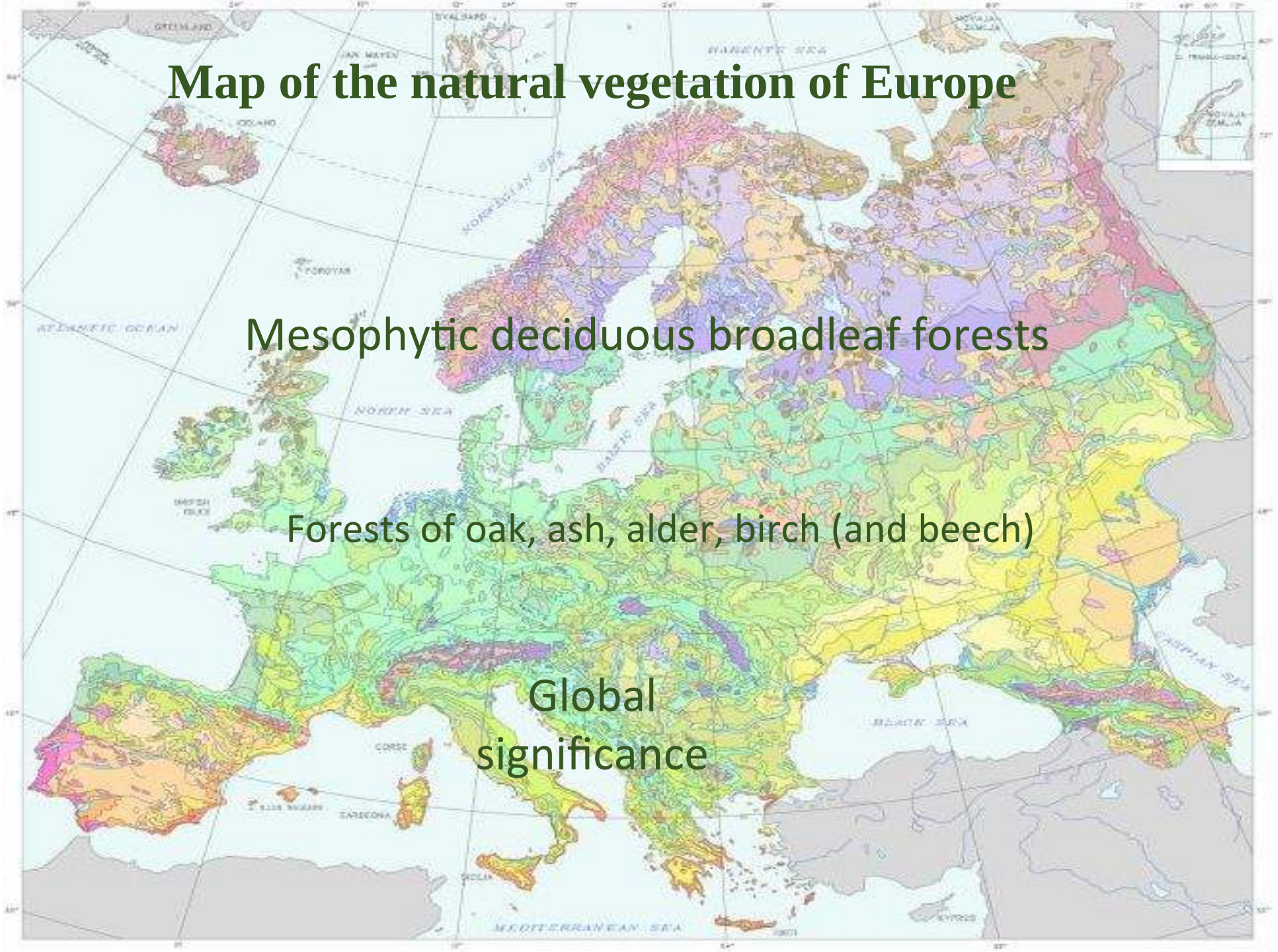
## A brief look at their classification and character

John Cross
Formerly NPWS

# Surveys and Research in last 20 years

- **National Survey of Native Woodlands (NPWS and Forest Service) Perrin *et al.***
- BioForest/ForestBio (UCC)
- Native Woodland Scheme
- Woodlands of Ireland
- Vegetation Map of Europe (Bonn)
- Regular monitoring under EU Habitats Directive (NPWS)
- Preliminary survey of Ancient Woodlands (NPWS – Perrin *et al)*
- Monitoring of permanent plots in KNP (D. Kelly)
- Research on Scot's Pine
- Coillte LIFE Projects

# Map of the natural vegetation of Europe

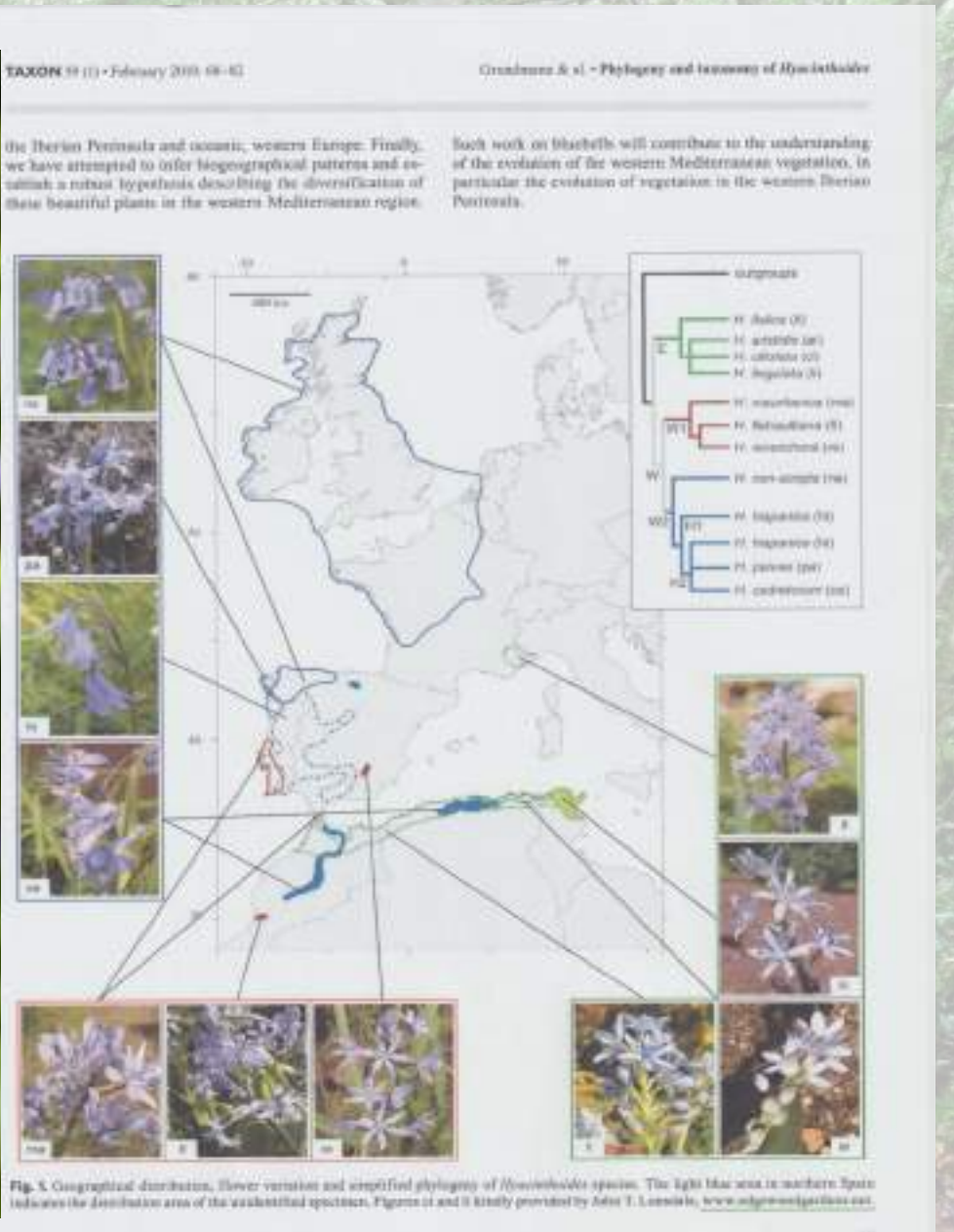



Mesophytic deciduous broadleaf forests

Forests of oak, ash, alder, birch (and beech)

Global significance

# Ash woodlands and bluebells in Europe

# Principal Native Woodland Types

(based on 1320 relevés - Perrin *et al*)

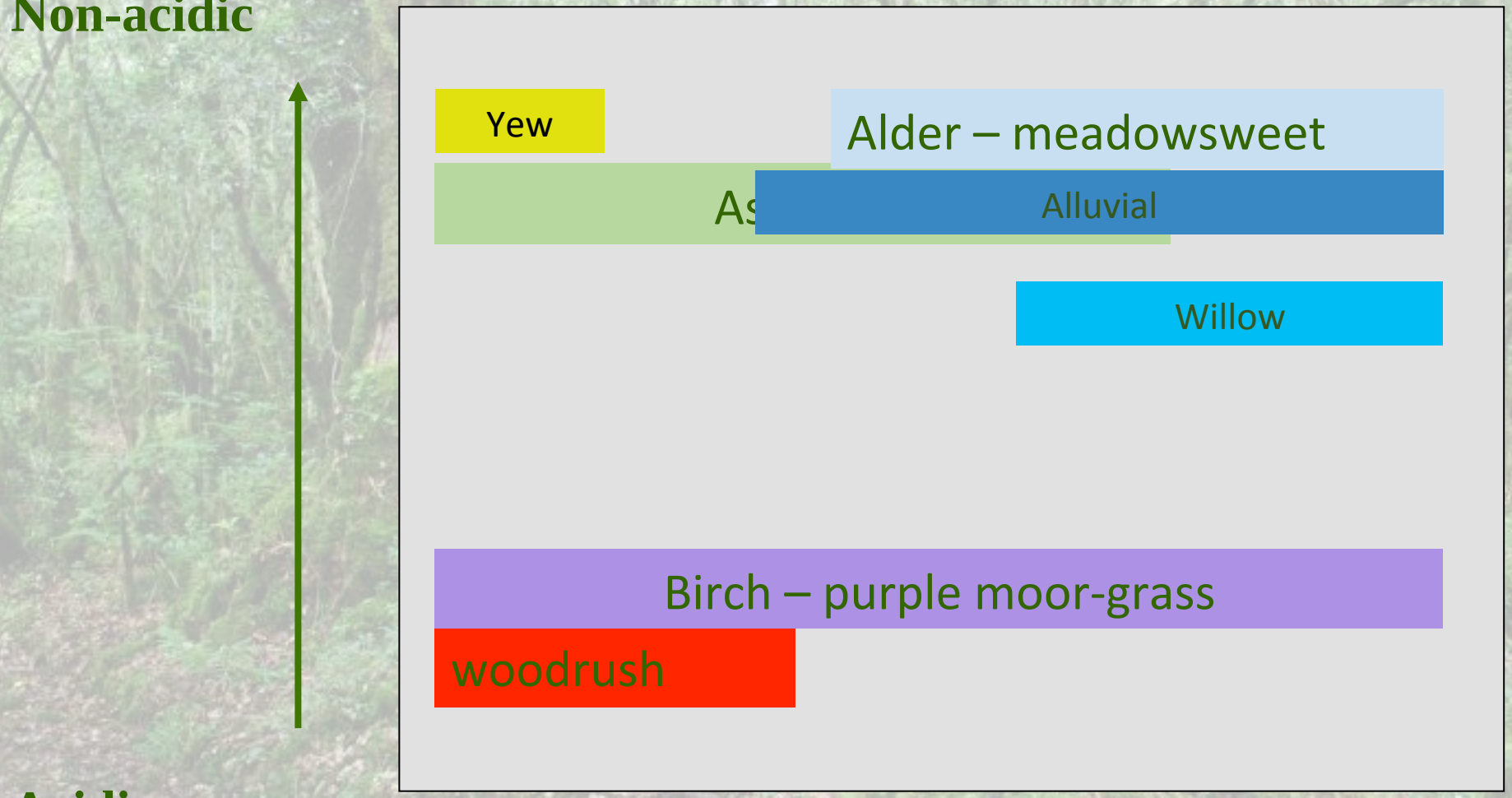
- Sessile oak – Woodrush (3 sub-types)
- Ash – Ivy (6 sub-types)
- Alder-Meadowsweet (5 sub-types)
- Birch- Purple moor-grass (6 sub-types)
- Minor types – yew, willow

# What determines the distribution and character of our native woodlands?

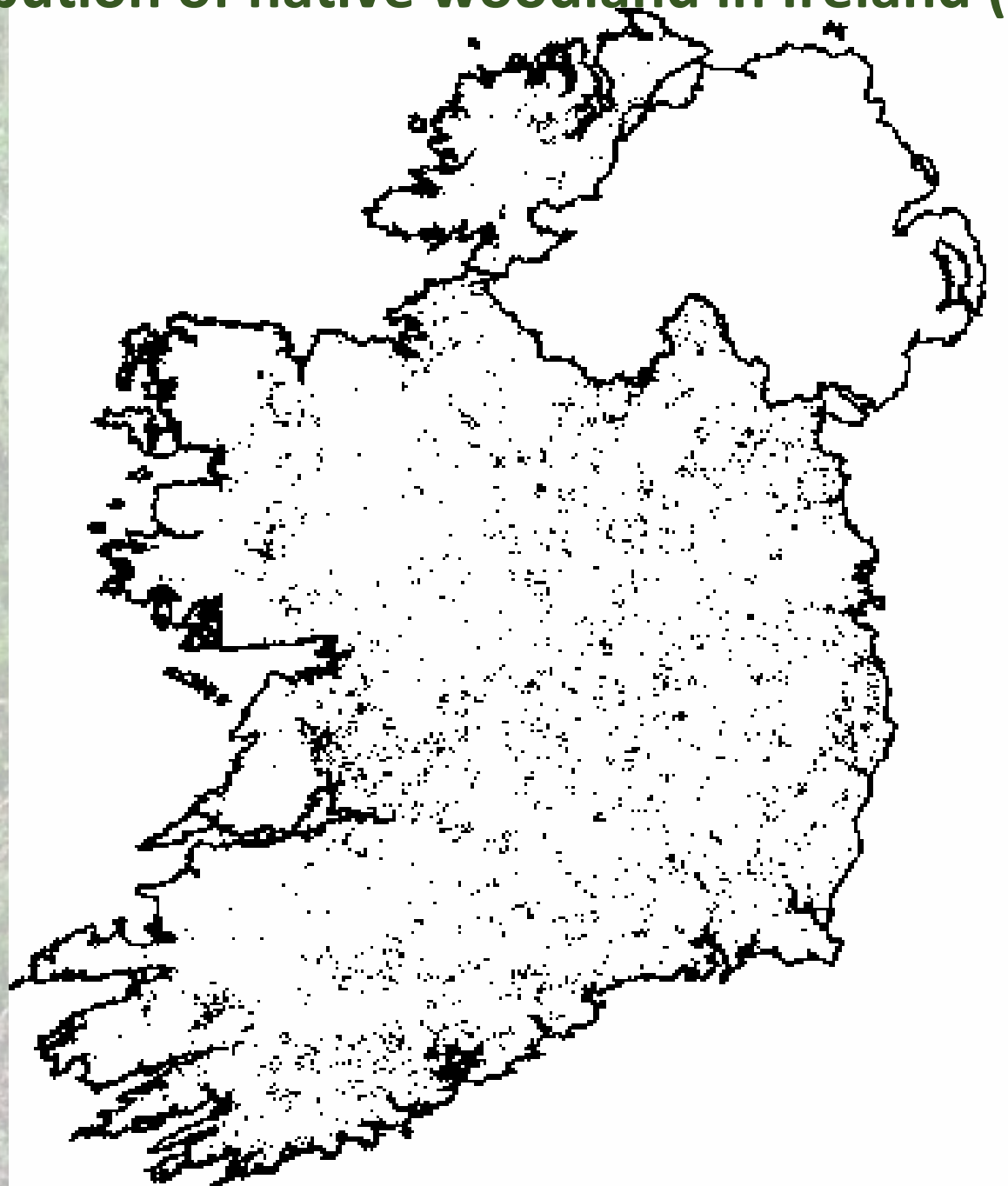
1. Climate: mild and moist
   - W-E rainfall gradient
   - NE-SW temperature gradient
   - Altitudinal gradient
2. Soils
   - Acidic-non-acidic
   - Dry-wet
3. Hydrology: important in determining distribution of alluvial and other wetland woods
4. Human activity – explains some of the variation in character

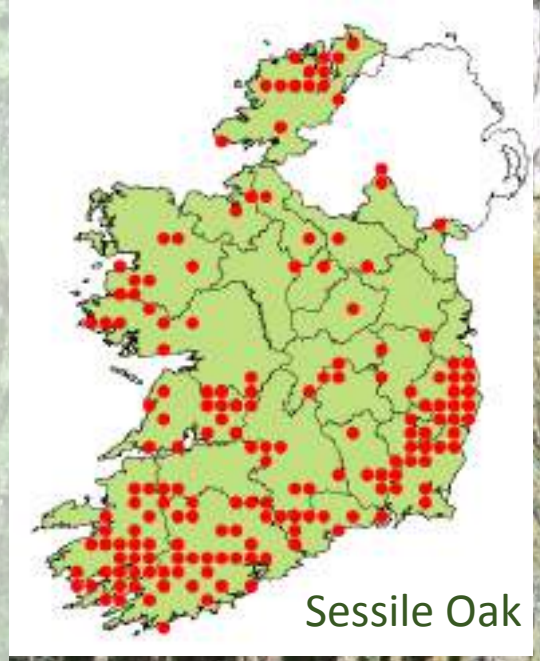
# Schematic distribution of woodland types

## (based National Survey of Native Woodlands)



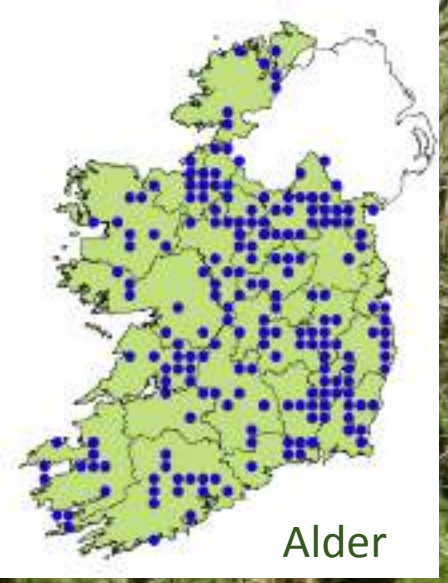
# Distribution of native woodland in Ireland (Republic)





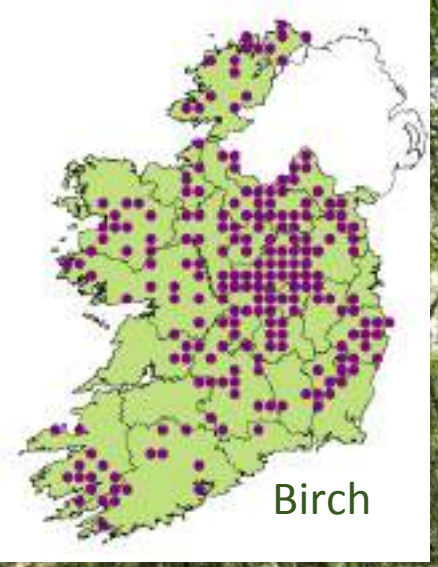

Poor in vascular plants, rich in bryophytes and lichens, mono-specific, even-aged, overgrazed.


Rich in vascular plants, well-structured, lightly-grazed, regeneration.



Alder

Species-rich, unmanaged, ungrazed, dead and fallen timber. Hydrologically important.




Species-poor, uniform, even-aged, ungrazed.

# What are the practical implications of this knowledge?

**Informs management**

- Structural and species-diversification, e.g. felling, coppicing
- Control of grazing
- Encouraging regeneration
- Removal of non-native (and sometimes invasive) species
- Dead and decaying wood
- Ancient woodlands

**New Woodlands**

This information provides a basis for current and future woodland management for biodiversity, timber and other products.

**Thank you for your attention**