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Fame Lab

TALKING SCIENCE

2020 IRELAND FINAL

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FINALISTS

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#01

HELEN HORKAN


Why Do We Die?

Helen completed her BSc in Medical Genetics in the rainy north of England, and decided to follow the rain to Galway to undertake a PhD at NUI Galway. She is part of Science Foundation Ireland's first cohort in the Centre for Research Training in Genomic Data Science. Working in Professor Uri Frank's lab, she is looking at how an immortal animal repairs its DNA. In her spare time, Helen is an international roller derby referee and loves rock climbing and her dog, Tesla.

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#02

CONOR DUFFY

Born to Run: How Culture is Written Into Our Biology

Conor is a third year PhD student in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, where he is the resident neuroscientist in Dr. Claire McCoy's immunology research group. His work focuses on multiple sclerosis, and how manipulating the expression of genes could be a promising avenue for new treatments. Outside of the lab, Conor has a deep appreciation for bees, and also loves to run.

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#03


SANDRA HURLEY

Don't Fence Me In

Originally from Holland, marriage to an Irishman brought Sandra to Ireland. As a trained artist, she worked in primary schools under the Artist in Schools scheme, which was funded by the Arts Council until the recession hit. Sandra then decided to follow her passion for science and horses at the University of Limerick, where she got her BSc in Equine Science as a mature student. She is currently a PhD student, doing research into the effect of the bit on equine behaviour, welfare and physiology.

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#04

SIMON SPICHAK

I'm A Zombie, And So Are You!

Simon is an Irish Research Council postgraduate scholar at University College Cork. He is interested in the non-neuronal cells in the brain, the microbial cells in the gut and how they communicate during early life.

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#05

MARINA MULLIGAN

Deciphering The True Meaning Of Tweets

Marina is a Conservation Biologist who has previously researched rainforest species and the bioacoustics of birdsong. Her background includes a BSc in Zoology and MSc with the University of Exeter. With a huge interest in communicating science to the public, she hopes to inspire people to take their own actions against biodiversity loss.

A portrait of Katherine Burns, a woman with long, wavy reddish-brown hair, wearing a thick, light brown knitted scarf and a dark jacket. She is looking upwards and to the right with a slight smile. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with snow on the ground and trees.

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#06

KATHERINE BURNS

Everybody Hates Wasps

Katie is an Irish Research Council postgraduate researcher in the Stanley Ecology Lab at University College Dublin. Her main research interests are the public perceptions of pollinators, crop pollination, and interactions between managed and wild pollinators. She is passionate about wild pollinator conservation and nature appreciation.

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#07

JOSEPH PENNYCOOK

The Other Side Of The Family

After studying in Cornwall, Joe moved to Ireland to undertake a Science Foundation Ireland funded PhD at University College Cork. He investigates the bacteria that live in the human gut and how they respond to antibiotics, but really he's interested in anything alive. Outside of the lab, Joe is an occasional jogger, board game enthusiast, and semi-successful otter watcher.

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#08

ELENA PAGTER

Plastic, Not So Fantastic

Originally from California, Elena made it over to the other best coast in Galway to finish her MSc in Marine Conservation and Biodiversity. She is currently an Irish Research Council funded PhD candidate in Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, looking at microplastics in Galway Bay's sediments and fauna. Elena enjoys elaborate hotpots and the occasional sunrise swim.

A man with curly brown hair, wearing a dark grey zip-up hoodie over a dark blue collared shirt, is speaking into a black microphone on a stand. He is looking slightly to his left. The background is blurred, showing warm orange and red lights, possibly from a stage or event.

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#09

ANDREW M^cGOVERN

Don't Be Shy. The Important Difference between X and Y


Andrew completed his undergraduate degree in Neuroscience and continued it into a research-based Masters in University College Cork.

Andrew is currently a teaching assistant focused on Bio-sciences at the University of Limerick. He is passionate about neuroimmunology, science communication and higher-level education.

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#010

LUCA MIRIMIN

Contactless Genetics – How Environmental DNA is Revolutionising The Way We Study And Understand Life On Earth

Luca has lived, studied and worked in Italy, the UK, South Africa and Ireland, where he is now a lecturer in Aquatic Ecology at the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. Luca's research uses DNA to study life in water, ranging from sea squirts to whales.

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HOST

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HOST

JONATHAN M^cCREA

Jonathan is a multi-award-winning TV and radio broadcaster with 10 years of experience in broadcasting and journalism. He is the founder of Whipsmart Media, SCI:COM conference and is also the creator of Futureproof, Newstalk's award-winning flagship science programme.

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JUDGES

A portrait of Gillian Burke, a woman with curly brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a white tank top and a gold necklace with a heart pendant. The background is a blurred green foliage.

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JUDGE

GILLIAN BURKE

From 'maggot farming' to television presenting, biologist and BBC Springwatch presenter, Gillian Burke, has followed an unusual career path from a childhood in Kenya to joining one of Britain's best-loved wildlife shows. She shares her love of the natural world through film and enjoys the challenge of showcasing the animals most people love to hate. Gillian is also drawn to human stories of behaviour change. As a science communicator and environmentalist, reporting on genuine conservation success stories as evidence that things can change for the better has become her hallmark as she defiantly remains a conservation optimist.

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JUDGE

JUDITH MOFFETT

Judith holds the position of Director at Cpl Group and is responsible for Cpl's Technical Divisions across Pharma, Biotech, Medical Device, Engineering, Construction and Supply Chain. She has been in Cpl for 15 years and is passionate about science public engagement and in particular, encouraging children to enter into a career in the Science & Engineering sector.

Judith has a B.Sc. in Biology and Chemistry, a M.Sc. in Science Communication and a Diploma in Effective Management.

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JUDGE

NIALL SMITH

Niall Smith studied astrophysics at University College Dublin and graduated with his PhD in 1990. He lectured in the Department of Applied Physics & Instrumentation in Cork Institute of Technology for 18 years before becoming the Institute's first Head of Research in 2005. Niall is the Founder-Director of the internationally award-winning Blackrock Castle Observatory which is just about to celebrate its 13th anniversary. In his spare time, Niall is a keen ballroom dancer and enjoys crime dramas.

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INTERVAL ACT

EMER MAGUIRE

Emer Maguire flawlessly blends laugh out loud musical comedy, science, and Northern Irish charm. She is a TEDx performing musical comedian, an international award-winning science communicator and a double Irish Radio Award winning BBC radio presenter. It all started when Emer won FameLab UK in 2015 with a talk on the science of love. She then went on to win International Science Stars in 2017. Emer's performances take an uproariously funny (and sometimes scientific) look at the oddities of human behaviour through her ingenious musical comedy. Off stage, Emer is a presenter of 'Science and Stuff' on BBC Radio Ulster, and also is co-creator and presenter of elements focused podcast 'Elementary My Dear'.

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