



## Press Release

6<sup>th</sup> March 2014

### Tragic Killing Of Young White Tailed Sea Eagle

It is with great sadness that MulkearLIFE has learnt of the news of the confirmed shooting of one of the two White-tailed Sea Eagles which had breed successfully close to Mountshannon, in Co. Clare last summer. There was much celebration last year as it had taken 110 years for this great news and yet one of the two birds from the Mountshannon nest site has been killed nine months later across Loch Derg in Co. Tipperary. The bird was shoot and the impact of the 50 pellets broke one of its legs and wings but the bird survived some weeks after the shooting before starving to death unable to fend for itself. A truly tragic end to such a majestic and beautiful bird.



## **Dr. Allan Mee with the shot White Tailed Sea Eagle**

MulkearLIFE has a particular affinity with the Irish White-tailed Sea Eagle Reintroduction Programme and the work of the Golden Eagle Trust. Not only has the first breeding occurred on Loch Derg on the Shannon River, but Dr. Allan Mee, Project Manager of the White-tailed Sea Eagle Reintroduction Programme and Lorcan O' Toole have been part of past MulkearLIFE events. It is a great tragedy that such a young bird, which may have had 20 or more years to look forward to, has been killed without reason. It is a tragedy also that this bird, one of the first to breed in the wild for 110 years, has now been destroyed in its infancy and prevented from finding a mate and potentially successfully breeding on the Shannon River for many years to come. The Golden Eagle Trust's press release notes that the young male eagle, which was reared by a pair of White-tailed Eagles at a nest on Lough Derg, flew from the nest in July 2013 along with its sibling. After a few months of care by its parents both young eagles began to disperse more widely and become independent of their parents. The last confirmed sighting was of one of the two juveniles near Dromineer, Co. Tipperary, on the east shore of Lough Derg in January. After information supplied by a member of the public and a subsequent search on lands on the shore of Lough Derg the dead White-tailed Eagle was found near Ballinderry, North Tipperary, on the north-east shore of Lough Derg. Subsequent post-mortem by pathologists and radiographs showed the young eagle had been shot, the body holding some 45-50 shotgun pellets.



### **Minister Deenihan T.D has condemned the killing (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)**

Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, said: “I am shocked by this crime. The birth of this bird was a special day for nature conservation in Ireland. So much work has gone into reintroducing this species here, and there has been wonderful cooperation by many different groups to achieve successful breeding. To have all this undone is a significant blow. Eagles are protected by law. I would urge anyone with information to contact An Garda Síochána or my Department’s staff in the area.”

Dr. Allan Mee noted that “finding one of the first two young White-tailed Eagles to fly from a nest in Ireland shot dead is heart-breaking. It is absolutely incomprehensible that someone would shoot one of these magnificent birds but even more shocking is that one of the first two Irish-bred eagles has been shot only 7 months after leaving the nest.” Those who attended the wonderful talk given by Dr. Mee as part of the MulkearLIFE’s series of illustrated talks will recall that the possibility of White Tailed Sea Eagles nesting on the Lower Shannon was mentioned as a real possibility by Dr. Mee at the time.



**White Tailed Sea Eagle (Image: Blue Frog website)**

This was also outlined during the wonderful visit by the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers to the site. Several MCV volunteers have helped out at Mountshannon over the past two years. In the press release, Dr. Mee added, that “although all losses impact the project, for me the loss of this male, the first Irish-bred White-tailed Eagle of the reintroduction programme, is especially difficult to take. This bird and its sibling were the hope for the future of the species in Ireland. Many people spent months closely watching this bird’s progress until it flew from the nest near Mountshannon last year. I feel gutted for these people as well as the bird. Let’s hope its sibling and the other chicks to fly from nests in Ireland in 2014 will see a better fate. Ultimately it is up to ourselves to make this happen by cherishing the wonderful wildlife we do have, including eagles, and their habitats.”



**Nest watching at Mountshannon with Dr. Allan Mee (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)**

MulkearLIFE's colleague in the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Stefan Jones stated that the available evidence indicated that this offence resulted in an especially drawn out and horrific death for this bird: "This bird would have been unable to fish and forage as normal, and it appears that it slowly starved to death as a result. Bearing in mind the broken limbs and the fact that it had approximately 50 shotgun pellets in it, it is amazing it managed to survive for such a period.

Despite this terrible set back MulkearLIFE wishes the Golden Eagle Trust every best wish in its work over the next number of months. The project looks forward to a future visit by the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers to Mountshannon and supporting the Golden Eagle Trust in what every way possible. We look forward to White Tailed Sea Eagles gracing the skies above Loch Derg and throughout the Shannon system.

#### **Notes for Editors**

1. High Resolution Digital Images are available to accompany this Press Release.
2. Interviews can be arranged with the Project Manager by using the contact details below.
3. MulkearLIFE is a new €1.75 million European Commission funded LIFE Nature project working on the restoration of the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation (with a focus on the Mulkear River catchment) for Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and European Otter. Further details may be viewed on the project website [www.mulkearlifec.com](http://www.mulkearlifec.com)
4. Inland Fisheries Ireland (Limerick) is lead partner together with the OPW and Limerick County Council. Additional funding support comes from National Parks and Wildlife Service. Other supporters include Teagasc, IFA, ICMSA, and local angling groups.
5. The project is one of the first and most important integrated catchment management projects in Ireland. It is a flagship EU LIFE Nature project –covering some 650 sq km which contain a variety of habitats and protected species. Much of the area is designated as a Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the EU Habitats Directive and forms part of the Natura 2000 Network.

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