



“Restoration of the Lower Shannon SAC (Mulkear River) for Sea Lamprey, Atlantic Salmon and the European Otter”

## Press Release

26<sup>th</sup> May 2014

### World Fish Migration Day – A Great Success

The two events hosted by MulkearLIFE / Inland Fisheries to mark World Fish Migration Day (WFMD) on Saturday last (24 May 2014) were a great success. The events were part of a one day global initiative, with almost 300 events worldwide, to create awareness of the importance of migratory fish. WFMD is held to improve the public's understanding of the importance of open rivers and migratory fish and their needs. The ability of fish to freely migrate is crucial to achieve healthy fish stocks.



**Atlantic Salmon migration for World Fish Migration Day (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)**

The events on the Mulkear River were designed to highlight the importance of fish migration to take advantage of the full extent of the Mulkear catchment. The events in particular highlighted the importance of Atlantic Salmon and Sea Lamprey migration and the two events took place on the

first man-made barrier to the upward migration of these species on the Mulkear River, namely Annacotty weir.



### A helping hand for Bradán Mór for WFMD (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

The massive Atlantic Salmon, appropriately named *Bradán Mór*, got a little bit of help on his migratory journey on Friday night from the sea to Annacotty on the Mulkear River. *Bradán Mór* then formed the centre piece of the day's activities in Annacotty and was greatly admired for his efforts to turn up for World Fish Migration Day by young and old.



### Bradán Mór makes the journey to Annacotty for WFMD (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

The day started off early, with the first event kicking off at 6am. It was hoped that the early start would allow for a live demonstration of Sea Lamprey successfully ascending Annacotty weir but this was not to be the case. While a small group of hardy souls turned up to view the event, unfortunately the sea lamprey decided it was a bit too cold for them to put in a performance. Having just arrived into the Mulkear River in the last week, several sea lamprey and one sea lamprey redd were noted below Annacotty weir. Regrettably, water levels were too high for

members of the general public to venture out onto the weir and river conditions did not allow for good viewing.



### **A 6 am start to view sea lamprey ascend Annacotty Weir (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)**

The second event at 12 mid-day was a great success. Despite persistent light rain and the poor weather, a large group of enthusiastic fish migration followers, turned up and a great day was had by all. The mid-day event had a particular emphasis on children and helping them to enhance their understanding of the importance of fish migration and healthy river ecosystems. The children did not disappoint. Their knowledge and enthusiasm was a source of great joy to MulkearLIFE and our colleagues in Inland Fisheries Ireland. The event highlighted the work of MulkearLIFE and our project partners to improve sea lamprey passage at barriers on the Lower Mulkear River and work to improve habitat for migratory Atlantic Salmon throughout the Mulkear system.

The event was an overwhelming success and included family fun events, face painting, a quiz, fish costumes and prizes for all. The event included live fish demonstrations of the various life stages of the Atlantic Salmon.

The day include a discussion on the fascinating and wonderful life cycle of the Atlantic Salmon and the various barriers its meets on its return journey within Irish rivers.





**Don't forget us – fish on display for WFMD (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)**

Children got to see juvenile salmon close up and learnt best practice in terms of handling fish under the careful guidance of IFI Fisheries Officer Jane Gilleran.

Also included in the event was a discussion of fish migration in a global context. The extent to which man is impacting on free fish movement via the construction of various barriers to fish migration and in turn how this is impacting on healthy fish populations was outlined. In an Irish context, the extent of historical barriers on Irish River systems, including the Mulkear River and catchment, was discussed.



**Dave Germaine outlines the importance of free fish passage (Image: RÓC)**

And then there was the fun and games traditionally associated with events hosted by MulkearLIFE in the catchment over the past five years. This included face-painting, the 'Big Quiz' and dressing up in fishy costumes.

A great many children and some adults took advantage of the opportunity to get their face painted – with at least one adult deciding that a sea lamprey would look well on her face. The best dressed fish costume, went to Nora the Migratory Jelly Fish, who crossed over from the Banner County to Annacotty.



**Nora, the migratory jellyfish, who turned up for WFMD (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)**

MulkearLIFE would like to sincerely thank all who turned up to make World Fish Migration Day on the Mulkear River such a great success despite the poor weather. In addition, MulkearLIFE would like to thank all who helped out on the day, including our colleagues in IFI, the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers, Joanna McAuliffe for the face painting, Annacotty Tidy Towns, the Mill Bar for the use of the car park and most of all to Peter for the loan of the magnificent Bradán Mór.

**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.mulkearlife.com](http://www.mulkearlife.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.

**Issued by:**

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