



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

Press Release

13th June 2011

Highly successfully catchment wide Otter Survey

The second comprehensive catchment wide rapid assessment survey of otter took place on Friday and Saturday of last week (10 & 11 June 2011). In total 85 sites were included in the survey which covered the entire catchment of 650sq Km. The work was undertaken by nine teams, which included two colleagues from Inland Fisheries Ireland, a staff member from the National Parks & Wildlife Service, the MulkearLIFE team and a large number of members from the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers (MCV). The survey work was preceded by training sessions in otter survey methodology and identification in March and June of this year for MCV members.

The survey work was undertaken in near perfect weather conditions on both days. However, in the days preceding the survey, heavy rainfall had resulted in above average rainfall and as a result rivers and streams were in flood in the days before the survey. This resulted in evidence being washed away from several sites where one would normally expect to find significant evidence of otter and mink. This notwithstanding excellent evidence was found in a large number of sites especially in the upper catchment.

The 85 sites included the following rivers, tributaries and streams: Mulkear, Bilboa, Dead, Newport, Killeengarrif, Clare, Annagh, Reask, Pope's, Cauteen, Cahernahallia, Dooglasha, Small, Cully, Ahboy and Glaisclluainarbhaoile. Other smaller streams were also included. The vast majority of sites were at bridges. The remaining sites were located along river banks, at weirs, fords, culverts or along drainage channels.

The full results of the survey will be posted over the next number of days and help guide MulkearLIFE's work with otter. In particular, the survey findings will help with the continuation of the project's work in terms of the placement of artificial otter holts and the creation of habitat for otter.

A Big thank you to all who helped in the survey and especially to all members of the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers, who not only attained the otter training during the year, but who gave so generously of their time on Saturday.

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.mulkearlifeproject.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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