



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

Press Release

17th April 2013

4th Year School Field Trips Get Underway

It has been an extremely busy few weeks for MulkearLIFE. With classroom engagements complete, river based field-trips related to the fourth year of MulkearLIFE’s Environmental Education Programme got underway on Thursday and Friday of last week and have continued this week. In showery but bright conditions students from throughout the catchment took to the Bilboa River at Bilboa Bridge. The schools included Bearna NS, Toinn an Tairbh NS, Murroe NS, CBS Secondary School (Doon), Monard NS and Garyshane NS. Despite some showers, a great time was had by all.

The Project’s Environmental Education Programme targets primary and post primary schools within the Mulkear catchment. To date the programme has reached out to over 1,700 school-children and their teachers. The field trips focus on the work of MulkearLIFE and the importance of riparian habitat and the connectivity of rivers and wildlife corridors.

Students gain a better understanding of Ireland’s fish species, invertebrates and water quality, the major threat of non-native invasive plant species and an appreciation of the seven principles of Leave No Trace. The field trips are an extremely important investment of time and resources by MulkearLIFE, with the support of colleagues in Inland Fisheries Ireland, in the future conservation status of Ireland’s rivers and biodiversity.

The EEP gives the schoolchildren involved a heightened sense of “environmental ownership” and recognition of the importance of the river catchment as an important natural resource. In particular, it promotes awareness of the catchment and the habitats and species in the rivers and streams. The Programme highlights the significance of Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and European Otter in the Mulkear and the conservation issues which surround them in the catchment. The work also focuses on the wider biodiversity surrounding us all and how this can be enhanced and protected.

The field trips undertaken this week and last were to the Bilboa River and were designed to help students put theory into practice as the school children learn about the wonderful natural heritage of the Mulkear catchment. This is done through real practical research; kick sampling for invertebrates, assessing water quality, electro fishing, assessing the impact of invasive weeds, habitat survey work and general fun of exploring rivers and riparian zones.

During the field trips yesterday morning, the first Sand Martins and Barn Swallows turned up and like the school children began to discover the wonderful riparian zone of the Bilboa River. This added greatly to the joy and wonderment of the field trips for both the schools and MulkearLIFE staff.

The field trips will continue tomorrow and over the next three weeks as MulkearLIFE will welcome hundreds of students and their teachers to various sites throughout the Mulkear catchment.

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
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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