



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

Press Release

17th December 2012

In the Year of Rain: Review of Work to Benefit Sea Lamprey

2012 was a difficult year for MulkearLIFE’s work with Sea Lamprey. The fine weather in March, April and May raised expectations that an exceptional summer was on the cards. Water temperatures in May 2012 reached their peak with an average daily temperature of 18.5 degree Celsius recorded on the 27th May 2012. The first sea lamprey had been noted at Annacotty on the 15th May. The warm water temperatures had signalled the start of sea lamprey spawning within the Mulkear system.

Unfortunately, the Project’s high hopes for a fine summer were misplaced. The week after water temperatures had reached their peak they plummeted when the weather broke on the 1st June 2012. What followed thereafter was a prolonged period of unsettled weather which lasted throughout most of the Summer months (June / July / August). The heavy rain caused flood conditions for most of this period. This made monitoring of sea lamprey passage extremely challenging. However, the MulkearLIFE Team, like the sea lamprey themselves, rose to the challenge and significant monitoring results were achieved during the year.

The monitoring of sea lamprey passage at Annacotty and Ballyclogh weirs began in late May with the arrival of sea lamprey in the catchment. Early morning monitoring sessions (05:00 hrs to 09:00hrs) were undertaken to observe sea lamprey ascending Annacotty Weir using lamprey passes specifically designed and installed by MulkearLIFE in 2011. A minimum of 34 sea lamprey were documented successfully passing Annacotty weir during two early morning sessions in late May. This meant successful passage had been achieved over the first man-made barrier to their migration on the Lower Mulkear River, opening up the possibility of almost 200km of additional habitat throughout the catchment.

With the Project Team satisfied with the results at Annacotty weir, attention quickly turned upstream to Ballyclogh weir, the next significant barrier on Lower Mulkear River. Two early morning monitoring sessions documented a minimum of 21 sea lamprey passing the barrier. Unfortunately, on the 1st June 2012 it started to rain with a vengeance leading to extreme flooding.

For the remainder of the migration period the water was too high and coloured to carryout observational work at the weirs and it is unknown if lamprey were able to pass the weirs. No to be outdone by the weather and the flooding, observational work for redds commenced on the tributary rivers, which are predominately spate rivers.

This survey work (which involved counting of actual sea lamprey redds and observational work in rivers) were carried out between spates. The work documented a total of 55 redds, 10 live sea lamprey and 2 carcasses in the Newport, Annagh, Dead and Bilboa Rivers in the period from 25th June to 3rd August 2012.

This was a significant human resource commitment by MulkearLIFE. The documentation of sea lamprey spawning in tributaries throughout the catchment represents a major project milestone for MulkearLIFE, Inland Fisheries Ireland and our project partners.

Other highlights of MulkearLIFE's work to benefit Sea Lamprey during 2012, included ongoing networking and cooperation with colleagues in Ireland, the UK, France, Canada and the USA. Most recently it has included new opportunities for cooperation with partners involved in the Atlantic Aquatic Resource Conservation (ARRC) project, which held its international end-of-project conference in Limerick in November 2012. MulkearLIFE was delighted to host the partners during a field trip to the Mulkear catchment and outline the project's work with on sea lamprey passage.

Finally, MulkearLIFE was delighted that the project's work with Sea Lamprey was featured by Michael Viney's in The Irish Times. Michael Viney has been documenting Irish wildlife in his highly regarded column "Another Life" in The Irish Times since 1977. The article on Sea Lamprey ran with the apt title 'A jaw-dropping sight, but in the best possible taste'. The article highlighted the importance of the protection of sea lamprey and how MulkearLIFE's work is helping to restore habitat not only for sea lamprey but for Atlantic Salmon and Otter.

MulkearLIFE, together with our colleagues in Inland Fisheries Ireland, look forward to continuing our work to benefit Sea Lamprey in 2013 – hopefully with a little less rain.

Further information regarding the project's work with Sea Lamprey may be viewed on this website including extensive video footage in the projects Video Gallery here: [Video Gallery](#) and on the project's YouTube Channel [MulkearLIFE YouTube](#)

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.

Issued by:

Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Project Manager – MulkearLIFE
Inland Fisheries Ireland (Limerick Office)
Ashbourne Business Park, Dock Road, Limerick
Tel: 061 300 238 / Fax: 061 300 308 / Mob: 087 062 5582
E-mail: info@mulkearlife.com
Web: www.mulkearlife.com / www.inlandfisheries.ie

