



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

Press Release

21st July 2010

Catchment Wide Otter Survey Work

A comprehensive catchment wide rapid assessment survey took place in late June 2010 by five teams including individuals from the MulkearLIFE, Shannon Regional Fisheries Board (now Inland Fisheries Ireland), National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) and local volunteers. The survey day was preceded by a full day training session with Dr. Ferdia Marnell from NPWS.

In total 85 sites were surveyed of which four sites were inaccessible and thus a final total of 81 sites were used on the following rivers, tributaries and streams: Mulkear, Bilboa, Dead, Newport, Killeengarrif, Clare, Annagh, Reask, Pope's, Cauteen, Cahernahallia, Dooglasha, Small, Cully, Ahboy and Glaiscluainarbhaoile. Other smaller streams were also included. The vast majority of sites (82%) were at bridges or weirs. The remaining sites were located along river banks, at fords or culverts or along drainage channels.

Sites With No Evidence

Exactly one third (33.33%) of the 81 sites had neither evidence of otter or of mink activity present.

Sites With Otter Evidence

Evidence of otter activity in the form of an actual sighting, prints or spraint (dried fragments, dried intact, not fully dry) was reviewed at each site. Otter were recorded at 50 out of 81 sites (62% of all sites). Of the positive otter sites actual otter prints were recorded at 54% of sites. Only 24% of the positive otter sites had both otter prints and spraints present. Of the 50 positive otter sites 64% recorded only evidence of otter activity (the absence of mink activity).

Sites With Mink Evidence

Evidence of mink activity in the form of an actual sighting, prints or scats (dried fragments, dried intact, not fully dry) was reviewed at each site. Mink were recorded at 22 out of 81 sites (27% of all sites). Of the positive mink sites actual mink prints were recorded at 59% of sites. Only 23% of the positive mink sites had both mink prints and scats present. Evidence of mink trapping (actual traps) was recorded at 3 and possibly 4 different sites. Of the 22 positive mink sites 18% recorded only evidence of mink activity (the absence of otter activity).

Next Steps

The full findings of the survey work are at present being analysed and recommendations on proposed sites for artificial holt construction are being reviewed.

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.

Issued by:

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