



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

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## Press Release

25<sup>th</sup> July 2011

### **Mulkear Conservation Volunteers reveal the wonders of nature**

Members of the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers met at Annacotty on Saturday last (23 July 2011) to implement the second phase of the Management Plan for Himalayan Balsam at this important site. The large turnout ensured that work could be done on both sides of the Mulkear River, above and below the new and old bridges. The site in question is an important high nature value (HNV) site and is of high amenity value. It is also an important demonstration site to highlight the impact of the invasive weed, Himalayan Balsam, on native Irish flora and fauna.

The conservation outing was focused primarily on addressing the considerable problem of Himalayan Balsam on the Mill Bar side of the Mulkear River below Annacotty weir. The sheer volume of Himalayan Balsam manually removed was staggering – at least 10 mini skip bag loads were collected from the area immediately below the footbridge alone. This amounted to several tonne weight which had to be hauled up to the car park area for removal. The Himalayan Balsam plants were intermixed with a number of young Giant Hogweed plants which were also very carefully removed. The conservation outing also included a general clean up of the site resulting in the removal of several smaller bags of rubbish.

Members of the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers worked hard to retain the native riparian vegetation and ensured that this vegetation was not trampled but kept in place as an important and valuable habitat in its own right. The end result of the day's work was amazing. The most dramatic immediate result of the work was the opening of the side channel into the Mulkear River just below the footbridge. The clearing of the invasive species, together with rubbish and debris, brought the side channel back to life and with it an abundance of flora and fauna began to show. The most noticeable was a tiny pigmy shrew, a wonderful example of a white clawed crayfish and a holly blue butterfly. All three native species, which are important indicator species and protected in Ireland, returned to their enhanced habitat undisturbed.

Thanks to all members of the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers who gave up their Saturday morning and early afternoon to help make the outing such a success. The next scheduled outing of the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers will take place on the 27 August 2011. The event is scheduled as part of Heritage Week 2011 and will be in the form of a half-day field trip entitled 'The Magical Mulkear: A Field Trip Of Discovery.' As the event is open to the general public pre-booking is required.

Membership of the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers is free and is open to all. New members are always welcome. The work programme of the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers is linked to and supported by MulkearLIFE. Full details are available here on this website under the 'Reports & Resources' section. Outings take place on Saturday mornings. If you wish to join or receive additional information please e-mail [ruairi@mulkearlife.com](mailto:ruairi@mulkearlife.com) or phone 061 498 769.

## 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.

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