



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

Press Release

27th January 2013

Mulkear Conservation Volunteers Install Another Otter Holt

On Saturday morning last (26th January 2013), a small but mighty hard working party of dedicated Mulkear Conservation Volunteers gathered to install another artificial otter holt in the Mulkear catchment. The work took place in the southern part of the catchment on a small tributary stream to the Dead River. The Dead River and its various tributaries form key tributaries of the Mulkear River and are of strategic importance to the catchment.

The work being undertaken by MulkearLIFE and the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers is designed to reverse the decline in the otter population in the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation. It is focused on the creation of additional habitat, improving food supply and installing artificial otter holts. The habitat improvement work has to date focused primarily on sites where habitat has been lost or significantly degraded.

MulkearLIFE, with the support of Mulkear Conservation Volunteer members, IFI and NPWS colleagues, has undertaken extensive survey work throughout the entire Mulkear Catchment in June for the past three years (2010 to 2012). The surveys covered 86 sites covering some 650 square kilometres of the catchment across counties Limerick and North and South Tipperary. These surveys, coupled with an intensive six-month natal otter holt survey, has helped inform sites for the installation of artificial otter holts. The installation of artificial otter holts, made of recycled plastic, are designed to help increase the otter population throughout the catchment.

The otter is one of Ireland's most elusive mammals and is very rarely seen. It is usual that all one gets to see is a flash of brown followed by the sound of a splash into the water, as otters are at home in their watery world. They are extremely well adapted to their watery world, are excellent swimmers, have large lungs and can stay under water for several minutes. On the surface they swim low in the water, with only their front head visible above water. Otters eat a wide variety of food and essentially will consume what's one offer. They feed mainly on fish (salmon, trout, sea lamprey, eels and crayfish) and small amphibians (frogs).

The Mulkear catchment has been subjected to drainage works for well over one hundred years, the first major scheme having taken place in 1874. These works have had a very considerable impact on riparian vegetation and riverbanks with a concurrent negative impact on otter habitat. In Ireland, otters are fully protected under the 1976 Wildlife Act. It is an offence for anyone to hunt, disturb or intentionally kill an otter. It is one of the qualifying species of interest in the designation of the Lower Shannon as a Special Area of Conservation. The animal is also protected under the EU Habitats Directive. The Habitats Directive obliges Ireland to ensure that the conservation status of the otter, and other species and habitats in designated Special Areas of Conservation, are protected and enhanced.

MulkearLIFE has to date installed otter holts at various sites (main river channel and tributaries) and at least two of these have been used by otter to date. MulkearLIFE is planning to install approximately five more holts at strategically important survey sites throughout the catchment. The remote surveying of holt sites with motion sensor cameras will play an important part of MulkearLIFE's work in 2013.

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 on this website under the 'Reports & Resources' section. Outings take place on Saturday mornings the full schedule for 2013 is available here: [Mulkear Conservation Volunteers: 2013 Schedule of Outings](#). Please download and keep for the year. If you wish to join or receive additional information please e-mail info@mulkearlife.com or phone 061 498 769.

A Big Thank You to all Mulkear Conservation Volunteer members who gave up their Saturday morning to lend their support for this important work. MulkearLIFE would also like to express its deep gratitude to the local landowner for his support and assistance.

The next planned MCV outing is Saturday, 23rd February 2013.

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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