



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

Press Release

3rd May 2013

Busy week with school field trips to Annacotty weir

After two great weeks on the Bilboa River and having catered there for over 160 school children from seven different local schools, MulkearLIFE’s Environmental Education Programme moved on to the Mulkear River this week and held field trips at Annacotty weir and surrounds all week. In total seven schools, including two all Irish schools, enjoyed the beauty of the Majestic Mulkear on their individual half days field trips. Over 180 students and their teachers participated in the seven field trips this week.

Thankfully the weather duly obliged and we were again blessed with warm sunny days. The Mulkear River itself was looking particularly beautiful in the warm sunshine. The salmon, eels, trout, river lamprey, tens of thousands of invertebrate, mute swans, sand martins, grey herons, dippers and even a sparrow-hawk but in a performance on site yesterday.

The field trips undertaken this week at Annacotty weir are designed to help students put theory into practice as the school children learn about the wonderful natural heritage of the Mulkear River.

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 while learning about Leave No Trace.

The students also get to review the “Mural of LIFE” site and go on a walk through an exceptional riparian zone on the St. Vincent’s Special needs school side of the river. Here students learn about Leave No Trace, river connectivity, the importance of riparian habitat, soil fertility and otter habitat.

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. The field trips highlight in a fun way the significance of Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and European Otter in the Mulkear and the conservation issues which surround them in the catchment. The field trips also focus on wider biodiversity and how this can be enhanced and protected.

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 will continue at Annacotty next week with the last few remaining schools eagerly anticipating their day down by the river..

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.

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