



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

Press Release

4th November 2011

From Darkness to Light Autumn Turning to Winter Across the Mulkear Catchment

While much of the catchment has been in flood for over a week, daytime temperatures remain well above normal, averaging 12 to 14 degrees Celsius and grass growth has been exceptional. Autumn is rapidly fading and winter is fast approaching. The hour has gone back, the evenings are drawing in and people are turning to face Winter throughout the Mulkear catchment.

It is often asked is this year end or is this the end of Autumn? There is of course a disparity between the official Met Éireann perspective on Autumn and the official Irish calendar. From Met Éireann's meteorological perspective, the months of Autumn include September, October and November. In the Irish calendar, based on Celtic tradition, the months of Autumn run from August to October.

This week we celebrated the turning of the year with Oíche Samhna or the “evening of samhain”, the night of 31st October to 1st November. ‘Samain’ was the festival which marked the end of the season for harvest, trade and warfare. It was a time for tribal assemblies and local gatherings. It marked the end of the Celtic year, a time for celebration and reflection. In marking the start of winter, it was, and continues to be today, a time to begin preparing for winter. Thus, the concept of beginning in darkness and working towards the light of Spring.

Despite the relatively mild weather, preparations for winter continue throughout the Mulkear catchment, as they have down through the generations. Farmers involved with MulkearLIFE are busy preparing their cattle and other livestock. This involves bringing them away from rivers and into winter housing or off to the mart to be sold.

Trees in catchment are in the final stages of their vibrant Autumn display. The riverbanks are awash with fruit and berries. As tradition would have it, after Oíche Samhna any berries left on the trees and bushes were not considered for consumption or harvest. To this day, there still exists a widespread belief that after Oíche Samhna all fruit is bewitched and thus inedible. This is of course great news for the wonderfully rich biodiversity along the rivers and throughout the Mulkear Catchment.

It is also a time of reflection for MulkearLIFE. A reflection on a wonderful year of partnership building on the ground resulting in substantial progress on a wide range of project actions more of which will be posted in due course.

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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