



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

Press Release

5th September 2011

Series of 4 Illustrated Talks - September / October 2011

MulkearLIFE / Inland Fisheries Ireland today announces details of another block of free Illustrated Talks. These talks form part of the four year Environmental Education Programme of MulkearLIFE working with schools and in the local community throughout counties Limerick and Tipperary. The September / October 2011 series of talks will focus on Ireland's rich natural heritage with a particular focus on the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation and the Mulkear catchment. The series will take place over four Wednesdays in September and October and will include leading experts sharing their knowledge of biodiversity, the fresh water pearl mussel, the Shannon dolphins, the conservation work of local volunteers and the work MulkearLIFE. The venue for all talks is the Inland Fisheries Ireland Office, Dock Road, Limerick, which is a 2-minute drive from Limerick City Centre, with ample free parking in front of the building. Talks will commence at 8.00pm and there is free admission to all talks.

The first talk will take place on Wednesday 14th September. The guest speaker will be Ms. Shelia Downes of the RPS Group and her talk is entitled “Conservation of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel in Ireland”. Ms. Downes is a Clare native working with in the Annacotty office of RPS but with projects throughout the island of Ireland. Her talk will focus on work underway to conserve the Freshwater Pearl Mussel (FPM) which is declining dramatically across Europe including Ireland. It is protected under national and international legislation and is included on the IUCN Red Data List as ‘Endangered’ – i.e. – those species whose populations have undergone a major decline (>80%) in the past 10 years. Her talk will focus on the interrelationship between the conservation of the FPM and catchment management. Ensuring that Irish rivers maintain high water quality to retain and sustain viable populations of FPM is key to this. Her talk should be of particular interest to anyone with a general interest in biodiversity.

“Becoming A Conservation Volunteer: Volunteering for Nature” is the title of the second talk on Wednesday 21st September with Mr. Ruairí Ó Conchúir as guest speaker. Mr. Ó Conchúir is MulkearLIFE's Project Manager and is based in Limerick. His illustrated talk will outline what is involved in becoming a conservation volunteer. The talk will outline the work of conservation volunteers throughout Ireland. More particularly, the talk will outline the outstanding work which is being undertaken by the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers (MCV) throughout the Mulkear Catchment. The practical conservation work of the MCV includes manual removal of Himalayan Balsam, path clearance, assisting in otter survey work and otter holt construction, river clean-ups, assisting with field trips, workshops and training. The talk should be of interest to all and especially to those who would like to get involved in local conservation work in the Mulkear catchment.

Dr. Simon Berrow will guest speak on Wednesday 28th September and his illustrated talk is called “Shannon's Dolphins – What Lies Beneath the Estuary”. Dr. Berrow is a Lecturer in the GMIT teaching on the Applied Freshwater and Marine Biology Degree course. He is also Project Manager of the Shannon Dolphin and Wildlife Foundation and has been deeply involved with the Irish Whale & Dolphin Group (IWDG) for many years. This is a return visit for Dr. Berrow to be part of MulkearLIFE's talks series following an illuminating multi-media presentation as part of a series of talks in Cappamore in April. His talk will focus on the importance of protecting the Lower Shannon and Shannon Estuary as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to ensure the long-term sustainability of fish stocks and the resident pod of Bottlenose Dolphin. He will outline research work on the interrelationship between the

Shannon dolphins and their food web. His talk should be of particular interest to local anglers and anyone with an interest in the Shannon estuary and wildlife and his illustrated talk is guaranteed to be insightful and memorable.

The series of illustrated talks will conclude on Wednesday 5th October with a talk by Mr. Glen Wightman entitled “MulkearLIFE’s Habitat Restoration Work”. Mr. Wightman is Project Officer with MulkearLIFE. His talk will focus on the history of river drainage in the Mulkear catchment and the impact of these works on biodiversity. Mr. Wightman’s illustrated talk will highlight practical conservation measures undertaken by MulkearLIFE and its project partners Limerick County Council and the Office of Public Works. His talk will show how these habitat restoration techniques mimic natural river habitats which increases the fish populations while improving the overall biodiversity. His talk should be of interest to all and especially to local anglers and anyone with an interest in Mulkear River and its tributaries.

Admission to all talks is free of charge and all are welcome. Free parking is available on site. Further information regarding any of the talks may be obtained from info@mulkearlifec.com or from MulkearLIFE, Inland Fisheries Ireland (Limerick) on telephone number 061 300 238 / 087 062 5582.

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.mulkearlifec.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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