



IRD Duhallow RaptorLIFE Newsletter – Summer 2016



Summer is in full swing with meadows in bloom, and birds and mammals busily gathering food for their young. The RaptorLIFE team have also been busy! The following provides a short update on what we have been up to.

Farmer survey

Farming in disadvantaged and marginal areas of Ireland has always been challenging, but in recent years the economic pressures on the farming community have been keenly felt. RaptorLIFE is currently interviewing farmers in the Duhallow area, with the purpose of investigating how farmers and landowners can be better incentivised and supported to help conserve Hen harriers. Any landowner interested in partaking in the survey please contact the RaptorLIFE project.



Invasive species control

Himalayan balsam removal on the upper reaches of the Blackwater River is now underway. This will continue over the summer months. In Autumn, the control of invasive Knotweed will recommence on the River Araglin and Upper Blackwater. This work was started last year, but the resilience of the weed means it will take repeated attempts to eliminate it. The RaptorLIFE team appeals to all

landowners to contact us if they have either Himalayan Balsam, or Knotweed on their property. These invasive plants can devalue properties, cause bank erosion, and create problems for the environment. The RaptorLIFE project provides a coordinated response to controlling invasive plant species along 126 kilometres of river, with the long term aim of eradicating certain species from the Upper Blackwater Catchment. As part of our conservation work we are committed to removing these invasive plants to improve

river life, and to conserve our natural flora and fauna. All costs of these eradication works will be covered by the project.

Hen harrier monitoring

Hen harrier monitoring is well underway and the RaptorLIFE team along with raptor experts Tony Nagle and Dr. Alan Mee, as well as local volunteers, are currently keeping tabs on a number of nests within the Duhallow area. Females are now incubating eggs with some already feeding chicks. Within the next month four lucky Hen harrier chicks will be tagged and their movements tracked daily.

Bumblebee and Butterfly Identification workshop

We had a great turn out for this biodiversity monitoring workshop. Tomás Murray of the International Biodiversity Data Centre provided our participants with the skills to monitor Irelands pollinators to international standards. Great fun was had by all, and we expect lots more records to be submitted to the National Biodiversity Monitoring Centre from the Duhallow region.



The Amazing Swift seminar

The Duhallow Birdwatching group and RaptorLIFE hosted an information seminar on Thursday 23rd June entitled “The Amazing

Swift” with guest Speaker Lynda Huxley. The Swift is an enigmatic bird that comes to our towns and villages from May to August. They are truly amazing birds as they fly for most of their lives, only landing to breed. When a fledgling swift leaves its nest it will fly for two years non-stop before it lands again. Swifts breed in old buildings mostly behind fascia boards and gutters. In the past 15 years the population has declined by 46% in Ireland. For the past three years Lynda has been working to try to reverse the declining population by installing and promoting the use of next boxes, and raising awareness.

The seminar was well attended and everyone came away with a much greater appreciation of this amazing bird. Make sure to keep an eye out for future events hosted at IRD Duhallow in Newmarket. You can find out what’s on by checking our Facebook and website pages (addresses listed below).

Volunteers or further information

If you are interested in volunteering for bird watching, or conservation actions and wildlife management, please contact the RaptorLIFE team at:

- **Phone:** +353 (0) 2960633;
- **Web:** www.duhallowlife.com/raptor-life/;
- **Facebook:** @IRDDuhallowLifeProject;
- **Email:** ilse.corkery@irdduhallow.com; or john.ballinger@irdduhallow.com

IRD Duhallow’s LIFE projects would like to acknowledge and thank all of the landowners, supporters and volunteers for their assistance with the projects to date.

