



IRD Duhallow LIFE Newsletter

Project Update (Spring)



Being the last full month of Winter, the month of February is normally a cold time of the year, characterised by frosty mornings and clear night skies. This is a quiet time for most wildlife in Duhallow as many birds have yet to return from their overwintering feeding grounds in far off places. Most Adult salmon have spawned in our rivers at this stage. Although the majority of salmon will die from exhaustion a small percentage will return to sea as “mending kelts”. These will return as much larger fish the following summer or even overwinter at sea returning as very large “multi sea winter salmon”. Brown trout too will also normally have spawned at this stage. Some of the aquatic birds are now making preparations for the coming breeding season. The LIFE team at IRD Duhallow will be monitoring these species, paying close attention to the nest boxes that we put up last year for Dippers. We had a great result in 2012 and hopefully look forward to a similar or better result for the coming year. We will shortly also install nest boxes for kingfishers.



Volunteers wanted

The Himalayan balsam, as most people in Duhallow are now probably aware of is an invasive plant requiring control and eradication along the River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation. Rural Social Scheme participants and the LIFE team have been working to remove this plant from the Rivers Allow and Dalua. In 2012 they were assisted by local volunteers and in 2013 we aim to increase volunteer participation. We are looking to involve people with an interest in the outdoors to help with this important aspect of the project. There are also lots of other activities that you can get involved in, and currently we have volunteers working with the LIFE team on producing better educational material for schools, tracking otters, mapping habitat on rivers and monitoring sediment dynamics in the rivers. If you feel that you might be interested in getting involved, please contact the LIFE team here at IRD Duhallow.



Freshwater Pearl Mussel



Did you know that the Freshwater Pearl Mussel is an ancient freshwater shellfish species that has existed in rivers in Duhallow since the last Ice Age? Scientific work on Irish Freshwater Pearl Mussel suggests that they come from two discrete genetic lines, one from Iberia and the other from Eastern Russia. Indeed it is most likely that each river population also differ from each other. In that case the Pearl mussels on the River Blackwater and its tributaries are unique. Regrettably this population is under severe threat from habitat damage mostly caused by land use changes and is facing extinction. The LIFE project is working at implementing conservation measures coupled with developing actions that should conserve the

attaches itself to the gills of salmon and trout prior to settling out on the river bed. Therefore they need healthy fish populations which act as hosts and so the project is also concentrating on the increasing fish populations in the Upper Blackwater. For more information on this contact the LIFE team at IRD Duhallow or check out their projects website (www.duhallowLIFE.com).

Do you have information on Freshwater Pearl Mussel in your area?

We are looking to talk to people who might have historical or other relevant information on Freshwater Pearl Mussel in their local area. So if you have information on Pearl fishing in the past or just their occurrence in a particular river reach or anything else that you feel might be of interest, we would love to hear from you. For example we are after receiving information that Freshwater Pearl Mussel once existed on the Brogeen River outside Kanturk, but that population no longer exists. This kind of information helps us put the current range of the Pearl Mussel into context and helps us better understand why they are disappearing so rapidly.



Otter hunting

Sadly it has come to our attention that the illegal practice of Otter hunting still continues in Co. Cork and we have received reports that it occurred recently in Duhallow. This cruel activity is banned under the Wildlife Acts and we would encourage people to report such activity (chasing and killing otters along river using hound dogs) to the Garda and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Drivers beware – otters crossing

At this time of year otters are susceptible to being hit by motor vehicles and we have had recent cases of road kills (male otter just outside Freemount village and a female and cub north of Kanturk town). Please take our local wildlife into consideration when driving and slow down if you see wildlife on road margins attempting to cross. Driving within the speed limit not only save lives but is good for wildlife too!



Christmas trees given a new lease of LIFE



We had a great response to our appeal for used Christmas trees. The media interest was also incredible as journalists picked on the notion of recycling Christmas trees for the good of wildlife and landowners alike. This is great for the LIFE



project as it helps create a wider awareness of what we are trying to achieve. So we would like to thank all those who dropped in their used trees some of which have already been put to good use along the banks of the River Dalua. There is an article on the projects website (www.duhallowLIFE.com) which explains more thoroughly what the trees are being used for. The LIFE team were overwhelmed by the enthusiastic response from the people of Duhallow and would like to express our sincere appreciate to all those who helped out.



www.duhallowLIFE.com; Tel: 029-60633

