



I.R.D. Duhallow Ltd.



## IRD Duhallow LIFE Newsletter

*Project Update (Summer 2013)*



Summer is now upon us and what unusual seasons we are experiencing. Some would argue that we have had a 6month winter and the LIFE project would not disagree as many of our project actions were delayed by continuous flood water and wet field conditions. But hopefully as the land begins to dry it is now full steam ahead. Here are a few updates on the project.

**Tree planting:** We have continued with our tree planting work and concentrating mostly on two species of willow. However we are expanding the planting programme to include Ash also on drier ground.



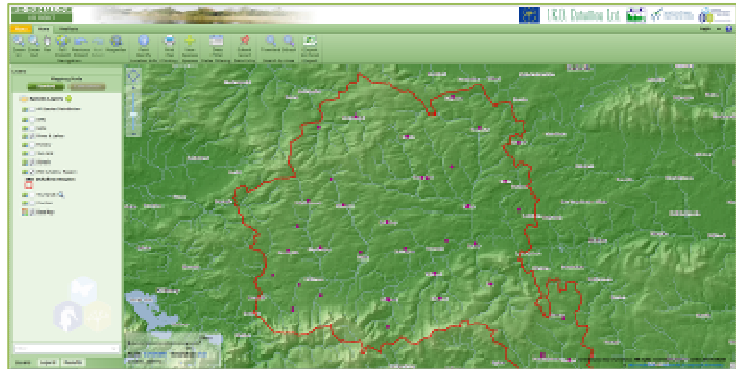
**Fencing:** A major push is being undertaken now to continue with our fencing work. Where possible we are asking farmers to assist. A point worth noting is that we have discovered through our research, that generally the cattle can access vegetation up to 1.2m under a single strand electric fence. Therefore we need to move fences back at least that distance to account for this. Double strand electric fence or barbed wire do not require this provision. Also we have developed a novel system for fencing in flood prone areas and this has been successfully at one of our test sites in the SAC.

**Conferences:** The LIFE team were busy presenting at major International conferences over the last two months. We presented our findings on our work to improve Otters and separately work on the removal of the invasive non native plant the Himalayan balsam. We also presented at conferences designed to examine EU water policy and CAP. A clear message was given that any legislation must be workable on the ground, be fair and work for local people such as the farming community. We hope to develop this work with the OPW to examine possible developments in flood management, farming and wildlife.



**Visit by other EU LIFE projects:** We were delighted to host an EU LIFE project from Slovenia, (LUTRA, the Institute for Conservation of Natural Heritage in Slovenia) who visited our work and listened to a presentation on our project. In addition Mr Ruairi O'Conhuir also gave an informative presentation on the MulkearLIFE project during our Environmental Awareness Month in April.

**Nature detectives:** June will be an exciting month for our young Nature Detectives. Following on from our very successful “species recording programme” last year, the LIFE team and Inland Fisheries Ireland will be visiting National Schools and working with school children on this exciting project. Students will be surveying the wildlife in their neighbourhood which will be mapped on a dedicated internet wildlife recording map located at [www.duhallowLIFE.com](http://www.duhallowLIFE.com) website. The project was developed with national body for wildlife recording, the National Biodiversity Data Centre and has proven to be a big hit with students and teachers alike. So watch out we are coming to a school near you!!



**TY's spring into action:** Following on from the “species recording programme”, the Transition Years students in Duhallow are mapping the data collected by our young Nature Detectives to provide us with a fantastic window into wildlife in Duhallow. Along the way the TY's are learning about computer mapping (GIS) and bringing themselves one step closer to being ready for the Smart Economy! Who said that Science isn't cool!

**Sandmartin colony:** The Duhallow Birdwatch Group are kindly monitoring our artificial Sandmartin colony and we look forward to the results in due course. Check out the month of April on the IRD Duhallow LIFE 2013 calendar for a picture of the structure). If you would like one of these lovely calendars don't hesitate to contact us at IRD Duhallow.

**Silt traps:** Siltation of Freshwater Pearl Mussel Habitat and salmon spawning areas is a major problem for the Upper River Blackwater SAC and its tributaries. The LIFE project completed a study of silt traps placed in coniferous plantations on the Mullaghareirk Mountains to examine their effectiveness for the local environment. We are currently working with landowners with a design which we developed with RSS which hopefully will reduce siltation from drainage channels.



**Land drainage:** We want to highlight once again the damaging consequences to aquatic life that excessive land drainage can cause. During wet weather, freshly exposed drains become eroded and release silt into the main river causing damage to the river habitat. Therefore we encourage landowners where possible to prune back vegetation blocking drains rather than break the soil with excavators. Excavators usually lead to increased erosion and siltation. Contact IRD Duhallow for further information.

**Future LIFE:** THE IRD DuhallowLIFE team are delighted to be able to support IRD Duhallow on a new potential LIFE bid. Many of our project actions have highlighted areas where progress can be made with stakeholders and wildlife. We identified during our river surveys last year that other sections of the Upper Blackwater SAC are degraded and some of the techniques developed by the LIFE project are applicable to these areas. Our extensive work on invasive species means that we have trained teams on the ground expert on their removal. Our regular meetings with the Duhallow Environmental Working Group and the Duhallow Birdwatch Group have highlighted the potential benefits that can be given to other species including the rare bird the Hen harrier. Which incidentally was identified by some of our Nature Detectives last year when they returned their recording sheets to their schools last year. Where possible we will lend our support to this project and are encouraged by the interest from a broad range of stakeholders for a new LIFE project in the Upper Blackwater SAC and the adjacent SPA for birds.



[www.duhallowLIFE.com](http://www.duhallowLIFE.com); Tel: 029-60633