



IRD Duhallow RaptorLIFE Newsletter – Spring ‘18



Spring is barely here and the animals and plants of Duhallow are beginning to wake up from the long, wet winter. Daffodils are blooming and the days a little longer. The following provides a short update on the Raptor LIFE project:

Hen harrier monitoring

Hen harrier winter roost monitoring has been completed at Ireland’s most important winter roost site. The highest numbers of Hen harriers yet have been recorded this past winter.



The tagged juvenile female (from the Mullaghereiks) who spent the winter in Wexford, looks like she may well be heading homeward bound. As she flew back to Co. Cork.



Ballycotton first, then heading further west, down around Clonakilty.

Raptor breeding monitoring workshop has just conducted. It was an informative workshop in advance of this year’s breeding season, to a very keen crew of monitors. A large number of traditional nest sites will be surveyed over the next few months together with other potential sites also. Each site visit compromises of a 3 hours, to record all activity, from sky dancing, to food passes etc. All of which indicate a successful breeding pair.



Nesting baskets for Merlin within the SPA

RaptorLIFE are currently maintenance checking the Merlin baskets for the forthcoming breeding season. With Merlin being a shy bird, most of these are in remote upland areas. We had a surprise in one nest, of another nest within it! The ID of our visitor is not known, possible Mistle thrush. We will keep an eye on any return visits this season.





Regeneration of heather habitat

RaptorLIFE is continuing to trial various methods for improving heather habitat and upland habitats. Heather is the nesting habitat of choice for hen harriers, who are ground nesting birds and it provides ideal cover for a range of other wildlife species.

To date we have used brush cutters and a flail to create a



mosaic of different vegetation heights to increase the abundance of potential prey species for raptors such as meadow pipits, skylarks and small mammals. We hope to trial controlled burning after the nesting season is over. RaptorLIFE participated in a great day at the Society of Irish Foresters Regional Field Day Forest Fire Training Demonstration at Millstreet Country Park, Co. Cork. A large crowd attended and various talks on fire safety, techniques and control, including opening address by Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Michael Creed TD. Followed by veg management demonstration by George O'Connor of IRD's RaptorLife, talk on fire and veg management by Fergal Monaghan of the Hen Harrier Project and Dr Allan Mee of RaptorLIFE, Firefighting techniques by Coillte, water provision by Cork Co Fire and Rescue service. Tactical fire application by Kerry Fire and Rescue and helicopter firefighting demo! Many thanks to Ciaran Nugent and Eugene Curran, Forest Service for the invite and organisation!

Creation of foraging corridor and riparian buffer zone

Work has resumed on the creation of a feeding corridor at the Source of the Blackwater, connecting two designated areas together from the Special Protected Area of the Mullaghereiks (Hen harrier) to the Special Area of Conservation of the River Blackwater (Freshwater pearl mussel). This work involves clearing trees back 25m on each side of the river. This will not only create a foraging corridor for the Hen harrier, but also benefit the river too. This image is of the very young River Blackwater. It shows quite clearly the lack of a riparian buffer zone, when these trees were planted.

Further information

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).



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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.



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