



## IRD Duhallow RaptorLIFE Newsletter – Spring ‘19



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

### Winter roost monitoring

Hen harrier winter roost monitoring has been completed at Ireland’s most important winter roost site. With higher numbers yet again of Hen harriers having been recorded this past winter. On one occasion 21 being counted, with an average of 10.



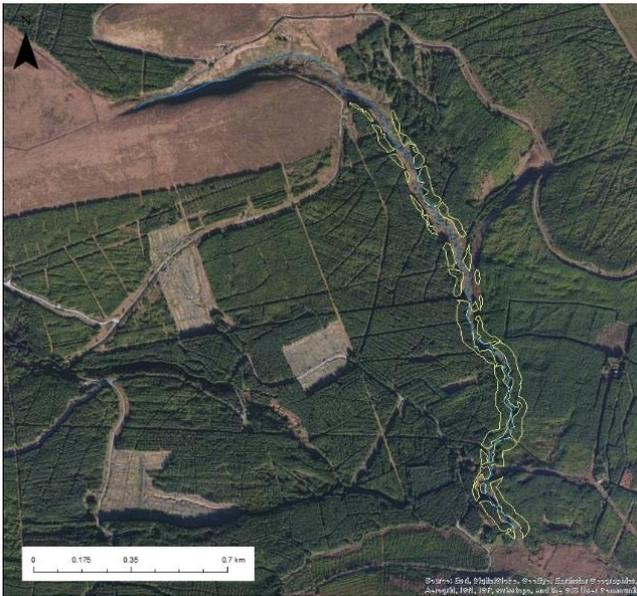
### Connecting two Natura 2000 sites by creation of wildlife corridor along the river Blackwater.

We are now happy to say that we are nearing completion of our corridor. Trees are now removed from 92% of the corridor and remaining 8% is going to be cleared after Hen harrier breeding season is over. The corridor, when completed, will be of particular importance not only for the Hen harrier, but also for all other wildlife to disperse through highly fragmented patches of blanket bog, whilst improving water quality of the juvenile Blackwater river.

We want to thank Coillte staff, who were most professional and was always willing to help. We would not have achieved this without their help in licencing and felling.

### Breeding Season

The breeding season monitoring is now under way, with Hen harrier pairs confirmed at many of the traditional nest sites. We hope that it will be a successful breeding season, which helps us to understand breeding ecology of those amazing raptors. An observation of each nest site and recording all activity for at least three hours is a standard method employed by our team.



### Regeneration of heather habitat

The regeneration of degraded bog is what makes us happy. We trail various techniques on five demonstration farms aiming to improve or regenerate heather cover. Felling of trees in Corridor (see above) gave us another opportunity to trail yet another technique of hand sowing of the heather from previously harvested capsules. We are hoping that (in this currently barren site) heather will quickly return and provide services for wild insects and animals. Future monitoring of this one-hectare plot will give us information if establishment rate is satisfactory.



### The survey of lamprey habitat

The brook lamprey, although quite common in our rivers, is a primitive fish similar to an eel, which suffered big decline across entire Europe and is now highly protected species. Many people think that it is parasitic similarly to their larger cousins. This is not the case as brook lamprey spends most of its life as a larva and feeds on river sediments. It becomes an adult for only few days. When this happens, it does not feed at all, as its digestive tract disappears! Sadly, after those few days, during which it spawns intensively, it dies. Not only this makes it similar to salmon but also spawning habitat – clean gravel of the river bed.



### 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).

- **Phone:** +353 (0) 29 22181/60633
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