



IRD Duhallow RaptorLIFE Newsletter – Summer ‘18



Summer is in full swing with birds and mammals busily gathering food for their young. The RaptorLIFE team have also been busy! The following provides a short update on the Raptor LIFE project:

Hen harrier monitoring

Although some male hen harriers are known to breed in their first year (young males differ in their plumage from older birds) after hatching it has never been proven that female harriers could nest in their first year. However this year Sruthán a female hatched at a nest in the Mullaghareirks north of Ballydesmond, Co. Cork, in 2017 returned to breed at a site in east Kerry.



IRD Duhallow's RaptorLife project scientist Dr. Allan Mee said "We were excited to see where this female would spend the summer but we weren't expecting her to nest this year.

Although harriers typically return to breed in late

March and early April this female did not leave her wintering grounds on the Wexford coast until well in to April arriving at her breeding site on 29 April. Within two weeks however she had not only found a mate but had laid a clutch of 4/5 eggs. By late June the pair were feeding their young typical prey items such as small birds like meadow pipit. The unusually hot and dry weather posed a real problem for the nesting pair. Birds of prey get all their water needs from their prey so as well as dehydration overheating was a real life and death issue for the chicks. Despite this the nest progressed well until the chick were 3-4 weeks old. With just days to go until the young would themselves take their first flight the nest was predated by a fox, an indication of the pressures that ground nesting birds like harriers face in the race to raise chicks in the wild. Within a day of losing her brood the satellite tagged female had travelled some 110 kilometres east to Slievenamon in south-east Tipperary! Although the loss of this brood was disappointing the RaptorLife project team were delighted to see this female return to breed in her first year".

Creating awareness amongst children

A lot of fun learning about nature was had at this year's IRD Duhallow's Nature Camp. Children are receptive to environmental education if it is

interesting and entertaining.



Up to 17 children attended this year's camp and were entertained by a number of fun outdoor activities including pond dipping for aquatic invertebrates, bug hunting with nets, small mammal trapping, scavenger hunts, making home-made bird seed feeders, orange and grapefruit river race, arts and crafts, learning about our native birds, mammals and animals with some of our stuffed species, making bug hotels, examining invertebrates with a microscope and animal bingo to name but a few! Children's love for nature comes naturally, all it needs is nurturing.

Raising young peoples' awareness is a key objective of the RaptorLIFE project, as they will be the future guardians of the environment.

Landowner survey

In 2016 RaptorLIFE surveyed a large cross section of 40 landowners in the Mullaghereik Special Protected Area (SPA). Primarily to find out how the designation has impacted them. It also assessed perceptions and awareness of Natura 2000 sites and associated responsibilities with regards to conservation management. In addition to assess their knowledge and attitude towards the Hen harrier. Most importantly it allowed the farmer to express his issues. This summer this was repeated with the assistance of Dr Jodie Asselin (Assistant Professor in Anthropology in the University of Lethbridge in Canada), who is collaborating with the project. She is at present living with her family in the SPA and is very keen to understand all the factors at play in our uplands.



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.

