



## IRD Duhallow RaptorLIFE Newsletter – Summer ‘19



*Summer is here, just about and birds and mammals are off gathering food for their young, are nesting and the RaptorLIFE team have been busy monitoring all this!*

### Prey monitoring

The project records the species of small mammals and birds on the 6 project farms. Each farm is surveyed twice, once in early spring, and once in early summer for small mammals and again for birds. This shows the abundance or otherwise in particular habitats. This also shows the effect of the actions being done on the farms by the project. Some of these actions include maintaining/planting hedgerows, improving heather habitats, rush control through mulching, habitat use and controlling invasive plant species.



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### Nest Monitoring

Nest monitoring is in full swing, with some chicks close to fledging. While other nest sites failed to produce, whether this was because the unseasonal cold weather, predation or other factors it is not known. This in itself is worrying as it confirms the reducing numbers of Hen harrier 38% drop since 2005 in SPA.



### Regeneration of heather habitat

Further to our trial site on the Blackwater corridor is was decided to carry on the sow heather seeds throughout the corridor where the LIFE project had cleared. This will help regenerate heather in this vulnerable area, thus providing valuable habitat for Hen harrier and its prey, plus numerous mammals and invertebrates. We are looking forward to seeing the results of this in the near future.

## Himalayan balsam pulling

The Project have followed on from the success of DuhallowLIFE advocating a non-chemical method for controlling the non-native and highly invasive Himalayan balsam.



Removing the plant by hand in dry conditions, the plants that have been pulled are left to desiccate and rot. However, when conditions are wet and humid; greater care is required as the newly removed plant can continue growing from nodes along the long stalk. For this reason, the plant needs to be broken up with the root removed.



Shortly even great care will be needed with the plant in flower, as seedpods form from the flower heads. These spring-loaded pods can expel seeds up to 7m away. The crews are very busy pulling the balsam from dense areas on the river Blackwater, these areas are largely inaccessible making the eradication difficult. The other stretches of the Blackwater and Araglin are showing dividends of all the efforts put in to date. This treatment will help control the erosion on the river as when the balsam would die back in winter it would have left banks exposed. These sites that were once infested with Himalayan balsam are now re-vegetating with native flora and fauna.

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.

*The IRD Duhallow LIFE project is supported through the LIFE financial instrument of the European Community*

## Farmers river days

RaptorLIFE invited all its landowners on the River Blackwater and River Araglin, that had their land fenced off from the river by the project to a day on



the river. There was an opportunity to do some angling and casting with some very experienced anglers, but all the landowners found the invertebrates and all the life the river had to

offer too intriguing to depart from. Andrew Gillespie of IFI kept these farmers riveted to his wealth of knowledge that he related to them. There was a second farmer's day on the river two weeks later that RaptorLIFE was asked to speak at.

This was with similar results. We are hoping these



landowners will go out and spread the word about the *life* in the river and by doing so it will create greater awareness, appreciation and respect of the river, which would benefit all.

### 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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