



IRD Duhallow RaptorLIFE Newsletter – Winter ‘18/19



The weather has been mild over the last few months, making working conditions for the LIFE project easier. With low rainfall making it more conducive to the project’s river work.

Planting of river banks

IRD Duhallow through the RaptorLIFE project have completed fencing nearly 29km of the Araglin and Upper Blackwater rivers. This will establish vegetation on these fenced stretches, helping to stabilise the banks. In addition, we continue to plant young native trees, where riverbanks are vulnerable to erosion. A healthy balance of trees along the river bank not only benefits wildlife, but also helps protect farmland against river erosion.



Hen harrier winter roost monitoring

Winter roost monitoring for Hen harrier began in October and will continue throughout the winter

up until spring. At this time of the year Hen harriers congregate together at communal roosts.



There is little information available on the numbers of hen harrier over the winter period here in Ireland, so monitoring at this time is vital.

Creation of wildlife corridor

IRD Duhallow through RaptorLIFE is working with Coillte to create a wildlife corridor linking the Stacks/West Limerick Hills/Mullaghereiks Special Protected Area with the Special Area of Conservation on the River Blackwater. By the end of the project an area 50m wide will be cleared of conifers. RaptorLIFE workers are currently



clearing the brush (branches etc.) which is left behind after forest clearance. Excessive brush mats can release large amounts of nutrients as they decompose and can prevent regeneration of native vegetation if not managed.

So far, five sections of conifers have been removed, and the project is now planting riparian margins with a 10m wide strip of native broadleaves trees. This work will proceed over the next 2 years and will culminate in a 30m wide and 3km long open corridor for foraging hen harriers and other wildlife. With the added benefit of better water quality, from the new riparian buffer zone.



In addition, the crew have been gathering heather seeds and spreading them in the areas of clear fell that will remain unplanted on the River Blackwater corridor. This provides a native seed source to assist in the recovery of the ground layer which is left bare after forest removal.

Work on the project farms

This past year it was decided to encompass rush and purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea* management in addition to

heather regeneration, 35.8ha of this type of farmland habitats has been mulched. The dry winter, has allowed this work to be continued well outside the closed nesting season.



Lamprey Habitat Surveys

Looking forward to the Spring field season, RaptorLIFE will commence a survey of habitats suitable as spawning and nursery grounds for lamprey. The Blackwater catchment is inhabited by three species of lamprey: Brook lamprey, river lamprey and sea lamprey, all of which require clean gravels and good water quality to spawn. Upon hatching, juvenile lamprey move to silted areas known as nursery grounds where they feed and grow until developing into adults. Raptor Life will map the distribution of suitable habitat on the Upper Blackwater and Owentaraglin over the coming months.

Further information

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.





I.R.D. Duhallow Ltd

