

The MISE Launch



The MISE (Mammals in a Sustainable Environment) launch took place Friday May 20th. This was a special event to introduce our new Ireland – Wales INTERREG IVA project to our local community. This project is a result of more than a year of research and collaboration between the project partners in Ireland and our nearest neighbours in Wales. We were joined by our partners in Ireland including representatives from Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) and Waterford County Council (WCC) and from Wales, we were joined by the Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT), The Countryside Council of Wales (CCW) and Snowdonia National Park (SNP). We had about 60 people in attendance for the evening's events.

The event got under way by an introduction from the project leader, Catherine O'Reilly (WIT), who gave a brief overview of the project and how its overall objective is to involve people in learning about their local environment through mammal conservation. This will be achieved through the running of workshops and training events that will up skill members of the community who are interested in learning about some of the more elusive mammals such as pine martens and the red squirrel. The project will also be supported by novel DNA testing services that have been developed in WIT.

The first speaker was Peter Turner (WIT) who gave an in dept overview of some of the research that has led to the development of the project. Peter discussed the pine marten of Co. Waterford and how non-invasive survey techniques can be combined with DNA analysis to help study this rare and fascinating animal. Peter described hair-tubes which are essentially a cut of PVC sewer pipe, wired to a tree and baited with chicken. Whilst removing the bait, the pine marten enters the tube and leaves a hair sample on a strategically placed sticky patch, the hair sample can then be used to extract DNA and to identify the individual using a technique called DNA fingerprinting. Peter also demonstrated

how pine martens use the tubes by showing images and videos of the pine marten captured using a remote camera. Pine martens can also be detected by DNA testing the scats which can be a great method to get people involved in the initial stages of monitoring. Peter also briefly described some of the other methods used in WIT which include hair-tube surveys of red squirrels and small mammal bait pots which are a great method to use with school children.



Peter Turner (Waterford Institute of Technology) introducing the MISE project

The second speaker of the evening was Kate Williamson who spoke about the work she has helped co-ordinate with the Snowdonia Mammal Group. Kate described the otter survey work that has involved volunteers to survey the coastline of Wales. Similar projects can now be established in the SE of Ireland using the expertise of our Welsh partners.



Kate Williamson of the Snowdonia Mammal Group

Our final speaker of the evening was Conor Kelleher of Bat Conservation Ireland, who gave an overview of some of the bat monitoring schemes that are currently in place in Ireland. Bat conservation Ireland is an excellent example of how generous members of the community can be with their time and develop skills and expertise over a number of years to help conserve and monitor bats. As part of the MISE project, we hope to invite experts like Conor to run workshops and training events over the next number of years.

We then had a brief interlude while it got dark and had some light refreshments. This was a great opportunity to mix with the people who had attended the evening and were keen to talk about their experiences with different mammals in the local area. Many people came forward with interesting ideas and suggestions ranging from pine marten den box designs, to areas where we could survey otters. We were delighted by the overall interest and enthusiasm that people had brought to the evening.



Conor Kelleher, Bat Conservation Ireland, leading the bat walk

When it was finally dark, Conor Kelleher led a bat walk in the Carriganore woodland. We were able to detect two species of Pipistrelle including Soprano and Common. We also detected Leisler's, apparently a common species in Ireland, but of international significance, as it is rare in Britain and Europe. We also detected Natterer's bats, one of Ireland's rarer species. Both adults and children alike were all intrigued by the different species we were able to detect and we all had great fun spotting the bats in flight. It was a great finish to what was an excellent evening, enjoyed by all who attended.

Parallel to Conor's bat walk, members of the MISE team disembarked to Portlaw wood for an evening of pine marten trapping. The trapping formed part of the annual pine marten census work, a long term study examining the number of pine marten in the woodland. The trapping was carried out to detect lactating females and therefore required experienced trappers.



Peter Turner (WIT) introducing the pine marten of Portlaw Woods

The following morning, a public event took place in the woodland where members of the public got to see a trapped male pine marten. The event was led by Peter Turner. This was the first time that most people had seen a trapped pine marten. The pine marten was

very quiet in the cage and even took jam from a spoon. A couple of people had travelled from as far as Dublin for this rare opportunity to see a pine marten. When the pine marten was released, it ran with great speed into the under growth. The group was also shown a remote camera, a hair-tube and were also introduced to red squirrel survey techniques. This event was a great success, one that will be remembered by all that attended for some time to come.



A male pine marten from Portlaw woods. Trapping was conducted under licence from National Parks and Wildlife.



The pine marten about to take jam from a spoon. Trapping was conducted under licence from National Parks and Wildlife.



Pine marten licking jam from a spoon. Trapping was conducted under licence from National Parks and Wildlife.