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IRD DUHALLOW LIFE PRESENT AT INTERNATIONAL OTTER CONFERENCE

Submitted by IRDDuhallo on Fri, 2013-05-17 11:28



The IRD Duhallo LIFE project were delighted to be invited to attend the International Symposium (IUCN European Otter Workshop 2013: at the Trident Hotel, Kinsale, Co. Cork, Ireland April 24th to 26th) on the otter. Fran Igoo (LIFE team), Kieran Murphy (LIFE team) and Tomasz Siekaniec (LIFE volunteer) attended and presented at this excellent meeting.

Delegates from across Europe, a range of the other countries included Israel and Georgia. The conference focused on the conservation of the otter, traditional and new monitoring techniques, including sophisticated DNA methods and trap camera methods, and management activities affecting otters.

The themes were as follows: Coastal Otters, Spraint/Dietary analysis, Population estimates, Tracking otters, Re-colonisation, Recovery and Re-introductions, Conservation threats and conflicts, Roads and otters, Non-invasive monitoring. On the second day, a summary of the status of otter was given for each country.

The IRD Duhallo LIFE team presented on some of the otter work carried out to-date in Duhallo. Data was presented on mammal activity around the artificial otter holts which we placed throughout the catchment last year. We also presented on the current state of the catchment and the other conservation measures that we are rolling out with the help of local farmers, landowners, forestry interests, anglers and the general public. IRD Duhallo LIFE have carried out considerable public awareness raising concerning the issues affecting otters and have had articles published in the national and local media.

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Much of the work being conducted on the ground is beneficial for otters, from saving frog food (frog spawn) to improving riparian habitat. More recently the LIFE project has focused on highlighting conservation issues surrounding illegal otter hunting and road kill. Interestingly road kill was also highlighted by the Slovenian LIFE project which is a major issue throughout Europe and identified as a major threat to otters (see below).

Mr Ruairi ÓConchúir, Inland Fisheries Ireland also presented on work being carried out by the Mulkear LIFE project. Their actions for otter are concentrating for the most part on previously drained channels where otter habitat was either degraded or completely removed.

Dr. Ferdia Marnell, presented data for otters in Ireland. He highlighted three major threats for the otter in Ireland: Pollution, fishing and road kill. This information will be forwarded to Europe as part of the 6 year reporting cycle under the EU Habitats Directive (article 17).

We would like to thank Denise O'Meara, Andrew Harrington, Catherine O'Reilly and Peter Turner of the MISE project and Addy de Jongh for a wonderful two days and for the opportunity to present at such an important forum. Delegates were also treated to a very enjoyable trip to Sherkin Island over the weekend to continue presenting, to do some practical monitoring and relax.

Dr. Paul Chanin, UK Otter consultant gave the Irish LIFE presenters some very helpful advice: Speak more slowly and less slides please.... thank you Paul !

The Otter (*Lutra lutra*) is protected under the Irish Wildlife Acts (1976 & 2000) and is also listed on Annexes II and IV of the EU Habitats Directive. This Habitats Directive listing obliges Ireland to undertake surveillance of the species [as per Article 11] and to report regularly on the species conservation status [as per Article 17]. Despite being widespread throughout Ireland, the otter was deemed to be in poor conservation status in the most recent Article 17 report.

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

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