

Inspection of Artificial Otter Holts in the Allow Catchment

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October 2012

Introduction:

The Otter (*Lutra lutra*) has been listed on Annex II and Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive (CEC, 1992) and Appendix II of the Berne Convention (Council of Europe, 1979). It is Red-data book listed as Vulnerable (Whilde, 1993) and fully protected in Ireland under the Wildlife Acts of 1976 and 2000. Because of this legislation; The IRD Duhallow *LIFE*+ Project has included the Otter as a key species and a concrete action (C-action) has been assigned to its survival and protection in the Allow Catchment

After survey work for Otter activity in the Allow River Catchment Area it was decided to place artificial holts (homes) in 10 locations, corresponding with areas of low activities. These holts were installed in February 2012 by Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and TÚS participants; supervised by Dr. Fran Igoe (Project Scientist). In October 2012, the sites were inspected for signs of use.

Objectives:

- Install Otter Holts where it is deemed necessary.
- Establish whether or not Otters have been active in or around those holts.

Methodology:

The location of each holt was added to a map and visited on October 25th 2012. Time and resources prevented earlier inspection but it is envisaged that more frequent inspection will be made over the course of the project, and hopefully beyond.

It must be noted that since it was 8 months between installation and initial inspection. This time spanned Spring, Summer and Autumn months giving time for vegetation to recover from the disturbance of installing holts. Because of this, it could considerable time to find some of the holts and their entrances.



Once the exact location of the holts and entrances was established signs for animal activity was sought. This included prints, spraints or well worn tracks.

Site	River	Activity
Rowls Aldworth	Allow	Yes
Rowls Langford North	Allow	No
Kilberrihert (a)	Allow	Yes
Kilberrihert (b)	Allow	Yes
Bawnmore South	Allow	Yes
Curragh (a)	Dalua	No
Curragh (b)	Dalua	Yes
Cloontycommade	Dalua	Yes
Island	Dalua	Lost
Paal East	Brogeen	No

Discussion:

The holts have been inspected many times with three never showing any signs of activity. The project team are not concerned with this as the holts were installed to raise awareness with the local landowners.

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