

Provision of nesting boxes for Kingfishers - Action C8



I.R.D. Duhallow Ltd



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Introduction:

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In recent years the morphology and hydrology of the River Allow has rapidly changed. This is primarily due to intensification in both agricultural and forestry practises. Bank erosion is having a devastating effect on the survival of the kingfisher as it requires steep river banks to build nests in which to brood and raise their young (Birds of Kerala, 2010; Crowe *et al*, 2008). A key project action (C8) of the I.R.D. Duhallow LIFE Project requires that suitable sites be identified for the installation of 12 nest boxes for the kingfisher.

The Allow River (Ballynaguilla Bridge to confluence with Blackwater - 30.5km) was surveyed in 2011 for possible signs of kingfisher activity. While suitable nesting banks were found no nests were observed. Some of these banks were deemed suitable for the installation of artificial nesting units, or chambers.

Objectives:

- Install artificial nesting units into suitable banks.
- Monitoring sites for activity

Methodology:

4 sites in the Allow catchment were used for this action: 2 on the Allow and one each on the Dalua and Brogeen. One site on the Owentaraglin was also chosen as part of a community awareness scheme.



The nesting units were chosen on the recommendation of many websites, including

Birdwatch Ireland and the RSPB. The base of the tunnel (1m in length) and chamber is made of mesh to allow drainage, while the main body of the unit is made from a breathable 'wood-crete' which was designed to prevent condensation.

Two units were installed at each site (kingfisher usually have two broods per season and build a new nest for each brood), one metre apart.

To install a nesting unit, a hole approximately 70cm deep and 120cm wide is dug within a metre of the river bank. It is important to maintain and keep the top sod to be placed back on the filled in hole. This reduces the appearance of disturbance to the site.

Once the depth is reached two holes of about 20cm in diameter are then dug into the bank to meet the bigger hole. The nesting units should be loosely filled with the soil already excavated. Make sure there are no large stones.



The two units can then be installed with the opening of the tunnel slightly in from the face of the bank.

Results:

6 sites have had kingfisher nesting units installed. They have all yet to be occupied.

Discussion:

While none of the sites have so far been successful, there has been an increase in kingfisher sightings on the Allow, by the project team, volunteers and the public. These are very promising signs. Also nests and attempted nesting tunnels have been found by the project team on the Allow. Kingfishers tend to give up on a tunnel if they encounter a large stone.

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