



C/o The River Don Trust
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Mink Update –River Don, 5th August 2011.

Please find below a brief summary of work undertaken on the Don since April 2011, as discussed at the above meeting. I have also noted any queries and questions raised as well as any assistance offered. Please feel free to use this data and to inform anyone of the Scottish Mink Initiative- I'll never say no to a volunteer!

Mink rafts, captures and signs.

20 new mink monitoring rafts have been placed since April 2011, with 12 volunteers monitoring these. There were already ~60 already in place from previous projects.

15 landowners and proprietors have been contacted and offered permission to access land. So far, an excellent response to requests for assistance. Question was raised- was it necessary to approach landowners? As matter of courtesy I prefer to ask permission and also as there is the possibility of carrying an air weapon onto the land should mink be found, permission is required from the landowner to do this.

~10-15 mink caught across the Don since January, although only 5 since April. Anecdotal evidence from members of the public and fisherman has suggested a decrease in signs and sightings in recent years, suggesting that the mink population across the area is at a lower density. This is not proven and a good coverage of monitoring rafts and trapping would enable me to understand the population better.

Hoped that another 30 rafts could be deployed before the winter weather sets in; particularly around the lower end of the river from Kemnay downstream. More volunteers are also needed across the Urie and in this key area.

7 Mink have been seen across the area, with 6 signs recorded on rafts. Generally where there are multiple mink sightings in one area it is accredited to one mink. Most of these sightings have been on the main river, whereas most captures are along tributaries. Captures have been at Keig (2), Oyne fork (Urie - 2) and Granholm (1) and Cluny/Ton (2, with 3-5 earlier in the year). Granholm estate informed that they caught 30 mink in the latter part of last year but have only caught 1 or 2 so far this year.

Water voles

Although this is no longer a water vole conservation project, records of new water vole populations are interesting and recently 3 populations have been found on smaller tributaries of the Urie at Gartly Moor and the Kellock burn. Other populations on Glenbuchat and Nocht were also found earlier in the year by Jamie Urquhart.

Press and Promotion

A National Press release was sent out in May, promoting the project. This appeared in many of the local and national papers and on STV in Tayside, although not many volunteers stepped forward in Aberdeenshire. Interviews were also done for radio stations, Northsound



News and WAVE FM Peterhead. An article was written for Kemnay village newsletter which recruited 3 new volunteers – highlighting that local newspapers and newsletters/magazines are more worthwhile. More names of local magazines are needed right across the Don. Web forums and other media are also proving useful and it is hoped names and contact details of any local interest groups (wildlife, environment, walking/rambling, young farmers etc) could also be passed on to me.

It was noted that some villages- particularly Monymusk have village notice boards where posters could be placed. Assistance in finding the contacts for such boards would be greatly appreciated. Similarly it was pointed out a Kildrummy Newsletter was sent out from the Inn.

The new Scottish Mink Initiative website www.scottishmink.org.uk is expected to go live in the next few days. Keep checking to see! This is a broad website which covers the whole region of the Initiative but snippets of local news can be added on an occasional basis.

Next few months.

There are still a handful of volunteers who have expressed an interest and looking to be set up with a raft/trap- this should happen in the next 2-3 weeks. Jon Davidson, Jim Kerr and a local resident in Alford have offered to act as dispatchers for other volunteers in their local area- which is a huge help.

More promotion is needed specifically across the Don to recruit new volunteers and any local knowledge of ways to do this is greatly appreciated.

It is hoped that another 30 rafts could be deployed across the Don before the winter weather sets in; particularly around the lower end of the river from Kemnay downstream. More volunteers are also needed across the Urie and in this key area. Rafts placed around Strathdon and the upper don area would help to reconfirm the mink population around here.

Longer term...

It is hoped that the entire catchment could be well covered in mink rafts by mid-2012 and trapping could be comprehensive. This would mean the Aberdeenshire area of the Initiative would be well covered and the movement of mink into neighbouring catchments (Dee, Ythan, Spey, Deveron) would be reduced. I currently cover from Stonehaven right up to Loch of Strathbeg and inland as far as Braemar.

The Scottish Mink Initiative is aiming to eradicate breeding mink from the region. While this would not remove every single mink it would reduce the population to such a low level the impact of the species would be minimal.

Your input

I am always keen to hear your input- you know the river a lot better than I do! If you know of places I can promote the work I am doing, recruit volunteers, give talks to group etc then I am more than willing to listen. If you have any queries regarding mink, the work I am do or the general project, do let me know.

Many thanks for your assistance