



Pròiseict Mionc Nan Eilean Siar

Fiosrachadh - An Lùnastal 2003



Tha e mar amas aig 'Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar' am beathach gallda, am mionc Aimearaigeach a sgrìobh na h-Uibhistean agus àireamhan den bheathach a lughdachadh anns na Hearradh. A' beachdachadh air glèidhteachais nàdair, tha am pròiseict a gabhail àite airson àireamhan eòin de bhrìgh eadar-nàiseanta a dhìon.

NAIDHEACHDAN

◆ Fiosrachadh air Glacadh

San Iuchar bhathar air 268 mionc a ghlacadh; 138 anns na Hearradh agus 130 ann an Uibhist. Aig àm dhen bhliadhna nuair a tha e uabhasach doirbh am mionc a ghlacadh, tha e air a bhith feumail gun deach againn air coin a chleachdadh gus làraich shaoibhaidhean a lorg. Ghlacadh sia bhoireann agus 17 isean san dòigh seo on Ghiblean. Lorgadh còig de na làraich sin ann an Uibhist a Deas agus aon ann an Uibhist a Tuath. Sna trì mìosan on Ghiblean, ghlacadh 13 mionc anns na Hearradh agus 33 ann an Uibhist. Bha còig de na chaidh a ghlacadh sna Hearradh air Easaigh is Ceileagraigh ann an Caolas na Hearradh agus ochd air Tarasaigh. Bha seo mar phàirt de sgrùdadh farsaing a bha a' coimhead air buaidh marbhadh air an dòigh san robh na bha air fhàgail gan giùlan fhèin.

◆ Tuilleadh Ribean air an òrdanachadh

Chaidh 200 ribe eile òrdanachadh. Tha iad seo eadar-dhealaichte on fheadhainn a th'ann an-dràsta oir tha iad fosgailte aig gach ceann agus saoilidh tu gur e tunail a th'ann. Fhuaradh cuideachd geòla a bhios ag obair ri taobh a' bhàta anns na Hearradh agus a thèid a chleachdadh air lochan. Tha curach ga chleachdadh ann an Uibhist ach am faigh luchd-obrach air a bhith a' lorg shaoibhaidhean sna lochan agus air eileanan beaga.

◆ Ceanglaichean Ionadail

Tha dùil gum bi an dara sreath de choinneamhan poblach ann Dimàirt an 30^{mh} dhen t-Sultainn ann am Beinn a' Bhaoghla agus Diardaoin an 2^{mh} dhen Damhair san t-Òb. Bidh co-òrdanaiche a' phròiseict, Sugoto Roy, a' dèanamh taisbeanadh goirid agus bidh cothrom ann air ceistean is còmhraidh.

Tha ochdnar air ùidh a nochdadh ann a bhith nam buill den bhuidheann ceangail ionadail a bhios a' sgaoleadh fiosrachaidh mun pròiseact anns na sgìrean. Tha feum air buill eile fhathast agus thathar an dòchas gun tèid coinneamh dhen bhuidheann a chur air dòigh mu dheireadh an t-samhraidh no toiseach an fhoghair.

Tha riochdairean on pròiseact an dùil còmhraidhean a thairgsinn do sgoiltean ann an Leodhas agus sna Hearradh san fhoghar. Ma tha sgoil sam bith airson an ùidh a chlàradh, bu chòir dhaibh fios a chur gu Sugoto Roy air 01859 550327.

◆ Ceangal Eadar-nàiseanta

Thadhail riochdairean o Choimisean na h-Eòrpa air a' phròiseact sa Chèitean. Chaidh iomradh air an obair a thoirt do Mhìcheal O'Briain bhon program LIFE Nature, prìomh chom-pàirtiche ionmhais a' phròiseict, agus do John Houston bho Ecosystems Ltd, comhairleach a' phrògram EU LIFE. Chaidh an toirt cuairt timcheall Uibhist far an d'fhuair iad tuigse air na duilgheadasan a tha ron luchd-glacaidh agus cho mòr 's a tha am pròiseact.

Chaidh an dara Aithisg air Adhartas dhan Choimisean a chur na chèile agus tha Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba ga deasachadh an-dràsta.

Tha co-òrdanaiche a' phròiseict, Sugoto Roy, gu bhith a' libhrigeadh pàipeir mun pròiseact aig Còmhdhail Eòrpach Eòlas nam Mamailean ann am Poblachd na Czech deireadh an Iuchar, agus chaidh pàipear a chur cuideachd gu Iris Ainmh-eòlais Shealain Nuaidh.

◆ Rannsachadh Oileanaich

Tha Alice Helyar, oileanach PhD air a bhith a' dèanamh rannsachadh mionaideach air a' mhinc ann an Tarasaigh. Tha Susie Turpie, oileanach MSc à York air a dhol còmhla rithe a-nis. Tha Susie a' sgrùdadh feartan làraich nan saobhaidhean an dà chuid ann an àitichean sa bheil am mionc pailt agus far nach eil e cho pailt. Bu chòir gum biodh e nas fhasa mionc a ghlacadh aig na làraich mar thoradh air an obair seo oir dh'obraich e gu math air an t-samhradh seo.

◆ Clàradh Àireamhan

Tha e mar phàirt dhen pròiseact nas urrainn de dh'fhiosrachadh a chruinneachadh airson gun gabh àireamhan a' mhinc a chlàradh. 'S e aon dòigh a bhith a' cur sgealban dathte nach gabh an cràmh am falach ann am biadh agus a' cur sin ann an àitichean far a bheil am mionc buailteach tighinn. Ma thèid an ithe, lorgar iad a-rithist sa bhuachar. Innsidh seo càite bheil na saobhaidhean aca. Cuidichidh seo, an cois dhòighean eile, le bhith a' faighinn a-mach co-dhiù tha am mionc ann an sgìre no nach eil. Cuidichidh e cuideachd le bhith a' meas àireamhan a' mhinc.

Nochd sgrùdaidhean DNA a rinn Deuchainn-lann Saidheans a' Mheadhain, am prìomh chunradair air pròiseact spadaidh a' mhinc, air buachar a chaidh a chruinneachadh ann an Tarasaigh gun gabh DNA a thoirt à buachar. Ach gu ruige seo, cha deach ach DNA Mitochondrialach a thoirt às agus chan e DNA Genomic, an seòrsa a dh'fheumar airson meurlorgadh ginteil. Ma shoirbhicheas le oidhirpean air DNA Genomic a thoirt às, bidh e uabhasach feumail ann a bhith ag aithneachadh bheathaichean fa leth agus a' meas àireamhan a' mhinc anns gach sgìre.

CÙL-FIOSRACHAIDH

Chan eil am mionc ri fhaotainn gu nàdarra sna h-Eileanan an Iar no fiù 's ann am Breatainn. Tha iad nan cunnart mòr do dh'eunlaith oir bidh iad ag ithe uighean, iseanan agus eòin air tighinn gu ire ann an àitichean a tha cudromach gu h-eadar-nàiseanta a thaobh eòin. Tha cuid de na làraich as cudromaiche san Roinn Eòrpa a thaobh eòin ann an Uibhist agus tha iad sin air an dìon fo Stiùireadh Eòin Fhìadhaich an Aonaigh Eòrpaich ann an Àitean Sònraichte Dìona (SPAs). Tha e mar fhìadhaich air Breatainn fon Stiùireadh seo na h-àitichean sin a dhìon. A bharrachd air a bhith nan cunnart do dh'fhìadhaich-bheatha, tha iad cuideachd a' dèanamh cron, gu dìreach no neo-dhireach, air croitearachd, turasachd agus iasgach. Tha ceist a' mhinc a' bualadh oirnn uile agus bidh e gu ar math fhèin fuasgladh fhaotainn dhi. Gu mì-fhortanach, chan eil fuasgladh buan ann ach cur às dhaibh tro phrogram marbhadh nach eil borb.

Tha Pròiseact Minc Innse Gall a' toirt còrr is £1.65m de mhaoin Eòrpach, poblach is eile dha na h-Eileanan an Iar. Tha an luchd-compàirt a' gabhail a-steach Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba, Comann Rìoghail Dion nan Eun, Pàrlamaid na h-Alba, Deuchainn-lann Saidheans a' Mheadhain is Iomairt nan Eilean Siar, agus tha cuid de mhaoin a' phròiseict a' tighinn bhon *EU LIFE Nature Fund*.

Airson tuilleadh fiosrachaidh air Pròiseact Minc Innse Gall no airson innse mu mhinc a chunnacas, cuir fios gu manaidsear a' phròiseict, Sugoto Roy, air 01859 550327 (s.roy@csf.gov.uk) no Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba ann an Steòrnabhagh air 01851 705258. Tha fiosrachadh cuideachd ann an roinn nan Eileanan Siar de làrach-lìn SNH aig www.snh.org.uk.



Hebridean Mink Project

Bulletin August 2003



The 'Hebridean Mink Project' aims to eradicate the alien predator, American mink, from the Uists and to dramatically reduce their numbers in South Harris. The Project is being carried out in the interests of nature conservation, namely to protect threatened bird populations of international significance.

NEWS

◆ Trapping Update

By July the total number of mink caught had reached 268; 138 in Harris and 130 in the Uists. At a time of year when it is notoriously difficult to trap mink one key breakthrough has been the use of dogs to find den sites. Using this method the project has trapped six females and 17 kits at den sites since April. Five of these den sites were found in South Uist and one in North Uist. In the three months since April, 13 mink were caught in Harris and 33 in the Uists. Five of the Harris trappings were on the islands of Ensay and Killegray in the Sound of Harris, and eight on Taransay, as part of a large scale experimental study looking at the effect of culling on behavioural responses of remaining population.

◆ More Traps Ordered

A further 200 traps have been ordered. These differ from traps currently in use in that they are open at both ends giving the illusion of a tunnel. Other additions to the project include a dinghy to be used as a tender working alongside the powerboat in Harris and for use in inland lochs. Meanwhile in the Uists a canoe has been deployed to enable staff to search inland lochs and islets for den sites.

◆ Local Liaison

The second round of public meetings are planned to take place on Tuesday 30th September in Benbecula and on Thursday 2nd October in Leverburgh. These will include brief presentations by project co-ordinator, Sugoto Roy, followed by questions and discussion.

Eight people have expressed interest in becoming members of the local liaison group to disseminate information about the project to local communities. There is still scope for additional members and it is hoped that a meeting of the group can be arranged for sometime in late summer/early autumn.

Meanwhile representatives from the project are planning to offer talks to local schools in the Uists and Harris in the autumn. Any schools wishing to register an interest should contact Sugoto Roy on 01859 550327.

◆ The International Dimension

Representatives from the European Commission visited the project in May. Michael O'Briain of the LIFE Nature programme, a key funding partner of the project, and John Houston of Ecosystems Ltd, an advisor to the EU LIFE programme, were given a briefing on the work, including a tour of the Uists where they gained an appreciation of the logistics facing trappers and the scale of the project.

Meanwhile the second Progress Report to the Commission was compiled and is now being finalised by Scottish Natural Heritage.

Project co-ordinator, Sugoto Roy, is presenting a paper on the project to the European Congress of Mammalogy in the Czech Republic at the end of July, and a paper has also been submitted to the New Zealand Journal of Zoology.

◆ Student Research

PhD student, Alice Helyar, who is carrying out detailed mink research on Taransay, has been joined by MSc student, Susie Turpie from York. Susie is studying the characteristics of den sites found in both high and low mink density areas. The results of this work should enable the project to find and trap individuals at den sites more easily, a strategy that has proved to be very successful this summer.

◆ Population Mapping

Part of the project is to gather as much data as practical to enable the mink population spread to be mapped out. One approach being tried is the use of coloured indigestible chips hidden in bait and placed in 'likely mink areas'. If eaten, these are later found in scats (droppings), identifying the den and rest sites of the animal. This in conjunction with other methods will help to establish mink presence or absence on a regional basis and will also contribute to the assessment of mink population levels.

DNA studies carried out by Central Science Laboratory, the main contractor carrying out the mink eradication project, on mink scats collected on Taransay have shown it is possible to extract DNA from scats. So far however only Mitochondrial DNA has been extracted and not Genomic DNA, which is the type needed for genetic fingerprinting. If efforts to extract Genomic DNA are successful then this will be extremely useful in identifying individual animals and assessing the population sizes from different regions.

BACKGROUND

Mink are not native to the Western Isles or even to the UK. They pose particular threats to wild birds as they will eat eggs, chicks and adult birds from internationally important bird sites. The Uists include some of Europe's most important bird sites and these are afforded protection under the EC Wild Birds Directive in designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The UK is required by the Directive to protect the interests of SPAs. As well as posing a serious threat to wildlife, they also have a damaging effect, directly or indirectly, on crofting, fish farming, tourism and fisheries. The mink situation is very much a shared problem and it is in all our interests to find a solution. Unfortunately the only permanent solution is eradication through a programme of humane lethal control.

The Hebridean Mink Project is bringing more than £1.65m of European, public and other funding to the Western Isles. Partners include Scottish Natural Heritage, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The Scottish Executive, Central Science Laboratory, Western Isles Enterprise and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, and the project is part funded by the EU LIFE Nature Fund.

For further information about the Hebridean Mink Project or to report mink sightings, please contact the project manager, Sugoto Roy, on 01859 550327 (s.roy@csl.gov.uk) or Scottish Natural Heritage in Stornoway on 01851 705258. Information is also posted on the Western Isles section of the SNH website at www.snh.org.uk.