



Pròiseict Mionc Nan Eilean Siar

Fiosrachadh – An Cèitean 2005



Tha e mar amas aig 'Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar' am beathach gallda, am mionc Aimearaigeach a sgrìos bho na h-Uibhistean agus àireamhan nam beathach a lughdachadh anns na Hearadh. A' beachdachadh air glèidhteachais nàdair, tha am pròiseict, a tha a-nise anns a' bhliadhna mu dheireadh, a' gabhail àite airson àireamhan eòin de bhrìgh eadar-nàiseanta a dhìon.

NAIDHEACHDAN

◆ **Fiosrachadh**

Tha an àireamh de mhionc air a dhol sìos gu mòr ann an Uibhist a Tuath agus Beinn a Bhaoghla. Bha oidhirp glacaidh teann anns a' Mhàirt agus a' Ghiblean am bliadhna 'sa agus tha seo air 80% lughdaichte de mhionc fhaicinn anns an sgìre an taca ris an uiridh. Tha seo a' sealltainn gu bheil na mionc air an sgrìos gu soirbheachail. Tha na mionc a tha air fhàgail a-nise nas sgaipte. Thàinig còig luchd-obrach a Seòmar Obrach Saidheans Meadhanach rè an àm seo airson a obair a dhèanamh air a' phròiseict còmhla ri còig luchd-obrach sealach eile a chaidh am fastadh airson an àm seo. Tha luchd-glacaidh na Hearadh an dràsta a' toirt a-mach trapadh teann ann an Caolas na Hearadh. Tha e coimhead coltach gun coilean a' phròiseict sgrìosadh nam mionc ris an uair.

◆ **Rannsachadh PhD**

Tha Alice Helyar a-nis air crìochnachadh sgrùdadh air riatanas àrainn na mionc agus am modh. Tha an sgrùdadh ag innse far an lorgar mionc, agus tha e mu thràth air a bhith na chuideachadh. Bidh a' mhòr chuid den gharaidhean nam mionc air an lorg ann am fàs-bheatha ghoirid, le iomadach slighean a-steach annta. Bidh iad cuideachd ri lorg ann an àitean creagach agus far am bheil feur searbhachd, faisg air a' chosta agus far am bi àirde ìosal.

◆ **A' Sgaoileadh na Teachdaireachd**

Rinn Suguto Roy, manaidsear a' phròiseict, agus Albert Thompson, oifigear a' phròiseict, còmhradh ri Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Uibhist a Tuath anns am Faoilleach, a' toirt a-steach a h-uile sealladh den pròiseict. Dh'innis Alice Helyar don luchd-èisdeachd aig Co-labhairt Chomann nam Mamalan ann an Southampton, mu dheidhinn an obair a thug i a-mach anns na garaidhean 'sa Mhàirt. Rinn Johnny Birks bho Urras na Fiadh-bheatha Vincent, còmhradh ris an luchd-glacaidh nuair a choinnich e riutha, agus dh'innis e mu dheidhinn an eòlas aige fhèin a thaobh rannsachadh beathaichean beaga feòil-theach.

◆ **A' tòmhais a' bhuidh**

Thathar a cumail sùil air sluagh eòin-mara ann an Uibhist a Tuath, Beinn a Bhaoghla agus Na Hearadh a h-uile bliadhna airson meas a dhèanamh air a' bhuidh a th'orra leis a bhì a' toirt a' falbh nam mionc agus inbhe na h-eòin a tha air an dìon. Thathar cuideachd a' toirt a-mach sgrùdadh iasgach fìor-uisge gus faighinn a-mach dè bhuidh a th'air air bradan agus breac leis a bhì a' toirt as nam mionc.

◆ **Obair san àm ri teachd**

Bidh John Houston a' tadhail air a' phròiseict anns na seachdainean a tha a' tighinn mar pàirt de Phrògram LIFE EU. Bidh barrachd sireadh le coin a' dol air adhart bhon dràsta gu meadhan An t-Iuchair, a' cur cuideam air àitean far nach robh trapan agus àitean a bha air mapa Alice. Bidh oidhirp glacaidh trom a' dol air adhart a-rithist aig deireadh an t-samhraidh gu toiseach an foghair.

CÙL-FHIOSRACHAIDH

Chan eil mionc dùthchasach dha na h-Eileanan an Iar no fiù do Bhreatainn. Tha iad gu h-àraid cunnartach do dh'eòin fhiadhaich oir ithidh iad uighean, iseanan agus eòin mhòra bho làraich chudthromach eòin eadar-nàiseanta. Tha na h-Uibhistean nan dachaigh do chuid de na h-eòin is cudthromaiche san Roinn Eòrpa agus tha iad seo air an dìon fo Òrdugh Eòin Fhiadhaich na Roinn Eòrpa le Àitean Sònraichte Dìona (SPA). Tha e mar uallach air Breatainn nan làraich seo a dhìon a thaobh riaghailtean na Roinn Eòrpa. A bharrachd air glèidhteachais nàdair, tha droch bhuidh aig a' mhionc air croitearachd, iasgach, tuathanachas èisg agus turasachd. Tha suidheachadh a' mhionc na dhùilgheadas do mhòran agus tha e mar ghnothach dhuinn uile freagairt fhaighinn air a' cheist. Gu mì-fhortanach an aon fhreagairt buan a th'ann 's e am beathach a sgrìos. Tha 'Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar' a' toirt còrr air millean trì fichead 'sa còig mìle not dè dh' airgead Eòrpach, poblach agus eile do na h-Eileanan an Iar. A sàs anns a' phròiseict tha na buidhnean a leanas: Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba, Comann Riaghail Dìon nan Eun, Riaghaltas na h-Alba, Seòmar-obrach Saidheans Meadhanach, Iomairt na Eilean Siar, agus Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Tha airgead bho stòras airgead nàdarra Eòrpach LIFE a' toirt taic dhan pròiseict.

Airson barrachd fiosrachaidh mu Phròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar no ma chì sibh mionc an àite sam bith, cuir fios gu neach-stiùiridh na pròiseict Suguto Roy air 01859 550327 (s.roy@csf.gov.uk) no gu Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba ann an Steòrnabhagh air 01851 705258; www.snh.gov.uk

Bu chòrr dha ceasnachaidh nam meadhanan a dhol gu Calum Macfarlane, SNH, air 01463 723106 (calum.macfarlane@snh.gov.uk)

Bu chòrr dha ceasnachaidh nam meadhanan airson Gàidhlig a dhol gu Màiri Gillies, SNH, 01463 723134 (mairi.gillies@snh.gov.uk)



Hebridean Mink Project

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

NEWS

◆ Progress report

There has been a steady reduction in the numbers of mink in North Uist and Benbecula. Intensive trapping during March and April this year has shown an approximate 80% decline of mink in the area compared to the previous year, which gives a clear sign that mink are being eradicated successfully. The remaining population of mink is becoming more and more fragmented. Five Central Science Laboratory staff and five casual staff were employed during this intense period. Harris trappers are currently trapping in the Sound of Harris and when completed this will be the most complete sweep ever carried out. Complete eradication of the non-native species is very likely to be achieved within the remainder of the project.

◆ PhD study

PhD student Alice Helyar has completed her analysis on the habitat requirements of denning mink and their behaviour, which has highlighted likely denning areas in the Western Isles as a whole and has helped to locate den sites. Mink dens are mainly found in short simple vegetation types and have several entrances. They are also found in rocky areas and acidic grasslands, close to the coast and in areas of low altitude.

◆ Spreading the message

The HMP's project manager Suguto Roy and Uist mink officer Albert Thompson presented a talk to the North Uist Community Council in January, covering all aspects of the project and answering questions. Alice Helyar presented her den site work in a talk to the Mammal Society Easter Conference in Southampton in March which was well received. Dr Johnny Birks from the Vincent Wildlife Trust visited the project to give a talk to trappers and described his own research on small carnivores.

◆ Measuring the effects

To assess the effects of mink removal on the status of protected bird species, annual monitoring of breeding sea bird populations are being undertaken on North Uist, Benbecula and Harris to provide an assessment of changing bird status as control proceeds. Concurrent surveys of freshwater fisheries have also been established to investigate the effects of mink removal on trout and salmon.

◆ Future work

John Houston will visit the project in the coming weeks on behalf of the EU LIFE Programme where he will give a briefing on the work. More dog searches will be implemented from now until mid-July, concentrating on untrapped areas and areas highlighted by Alice's maps. Another blitz will be prepared for the dispersal season in late Summer – early Autumn.

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 nationally important 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 Protected Areas (SPA's). The UK is required by the Directive to protect the interests of SPA's. As well as posing a threat to wildlife, mink also having 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 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 (the local authority), 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, Suguto 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.

Media enquiries should be directed to Calum Macfarlane, SNH, on 01463 723106 (calum.macfarlane@snh.gov.uk)

Gaelic media enquiries should be directed to Mairi Gillies, SNH, on 01463 723134 (mairi.gillies@snh.gov.uk)