



Pròiseict Mionc Nan Eilean Siar

Fiosrachadh - An t-Sultain 2003



Tha e mar amas aig 'Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar' am beathach gallda, am mionc Aimearaigeach a sgrìobh na h-Uibhistan 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 Ùr Air A' Ghlacadh

San Damhair, bha 362 mionc air an glacadh; 191 anns Na-Herradh agus 171 anns na h-Uibhistan. Anns na trì mìosan bhon t-luchar, bha 49 mionc air an glacadh anns na-Herradh agus 46 anns na h-Uibhistan. Tha coin fhathast air an cleachdadh airson na làraich shaobhaidhean a' lorg. Se buaidh mhath a tha seo airson oidhirp a' ghlacaidh. Tha na mionc an uairsin air am marbhadh anns an dòigh abhaisteach, iochmhor.

Tha tòrr glacadh air a bhith ann bho dhìofar àiteannan tron àrainn ghlacaidh. Tha beathaichean air an glacadh air fad cladach a deas na-Herradh le seallaidhean anns na-Herradh agus anns na h-Uibhistan. Tha an glacadh de beathaichean fireanta sgus boireanta a' leantainn an t-aòn phàtrair, leis a' mhòr chuid den ghlacadh a' tachairt rè na dàirean anns a' Ghearran agus rè na h-àmanan sgaolaidh anns an Lùnasdal. Tha pàtranan a' fuireachd an aòn rud airson na h-Uibhistan agus na-Herradh ged a bha soirbheachd na b'fhearr aig na h-Uibhistan tron na mìosan Shamhraidh. Tha àireamh beathaichean air an glacadh anns an t-luchar, an Lùnasdal agus an t-Sultain air tuiteam gu 46% bhon uridh. Mar seo tha e foilleasach gu bheil àireamh nam beathaichean a' dol sìos.

Tha dà ATV a-nise air an cleachdadh anns na h-Uibhistan. Tha iad seo a' toirt taic do dhaoine a tha a' glacadh nam beathaichean le bhith a' cumail sùil air na h-innealan glacaidh.

◆ Luchd-Glacaidh Ùr

Tha dithis ùr a-nise ag obair a' glacadh mionc, le eòlas aca air an seorsa pròiseact a seo. Bidh iad ag obair airson dà bhliadhna anns na h-Uibhistan, a' toirt àireamh nan luchd-glacaidh 11 (le dà neach-amhairc). Tha dithis eile air an toiseachadh pàirt ùine.

◆ Coinneamhan Phoblach

Bha an dàra sreath de choinneamhan poblach air an 30mh latha den t-Sultain ann am Beinn a Bhaghla agus air an dara latha den Damhair san t-Òb. Tha a' chòrr den fhiosrachadh gu bhith air an sgaolaidh nuair a bhitheas a' chiad sreath de choinneamhan deiseal. Tha na coineamhan seo a' dol a thoirt a-steach foillseachadh gu bhuidheannan mar chomataidhean nan lasgairan, sgoiltean agus pàrtaidhean eile aig a bheil ùgh ann an seo. Aig an àon àm tha coineamh na buidheann

◆ Foillseachadh do Chòmhdhail Eorpach

Rinn co-òrdanaiche a' phròiseict, Dr Sugoto Roy foillseachadh mun Phròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar don Chòmhdhail Eòrpach Eòlas nam Mamailean ann am Poblach na Czech anns an lùchair a thainig air adhart uamhasach math. Thainig Dr Roy an taic an luchd-rannsachaidh às a' Phòlainn, Fionnlan, An Danmhairc, An Eadailt agus à Eirinn a tha an sàs ann am pròiseactean mionc agus gnè eile mar seo. Tha e an dràsda a' cur an sàs rannsachadh bhon deasc aige còmhla ris an luchd-rannsachaidh seo.

◆ Rannsachadh PhD

Tha Alice Helyar a' leantainn oirre leis an rannsachadh mionaideach air sluaigh agus modh airson pàirt den Phròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar. Mar pàirt den seo tha sluaigh na mionc air Taransaigh air an tuairmse eadar 20 agus 25 beathach. Tha seo air an lughdaichte a-nise gu dìreach còig beathach. Tha seo a' tachart seachd gu bheil iad a' cleachdadh làraichean agus tha pàtranan gluasaidh na mionc air an sgrùdadh. Tha rannsachadh coltach ri seo a' dol a thòiseachadh an ceartair ann am pàirt eile den làrach sgrùdaidh air taobh deas an Tairbeart. Tha an sluaigh ann an tòrr àiteannan air an tuairmse, tha iad a' cumail cunntas air làraich agus tha an sluaigh air an siotaich ann an ìre dhìofar airson sealltainn ri modh na beathaichean a tha air fhàgail. Tha obair cuideachd air toiseachadh airson sgrùdadh a dheanamh air dè tha air fhàgail d'en creach nam mionc a tha iad a' lorg anns na h-àiteannan.

◆ Buaidh a' Phròiseict

Tha Urras lasgairan nan Eilean Siar a' cruinneachadh fiosrachaidh eìsg a' chiad bhliadhna ann an rannsachadh a tha iad a' deanamh còmhla ris an HMP. Tha am fiosrachadh air a chruinneachadh bho aiteannan air taobh a-muigh agus taobh a-staigh àrainn phròiseict na mionc. Tha a chuid de 'n làraich seo ann an làraich sgrùdadh PhD agus airson gu bheil beathaichean air an toirt as anns an àm ri teachd bithidh stoc nan eìsg nas fhèarr. Thoir seo, còmhla ri fianais bidhe-tùs tuairmse cheart air milleadh eaconomach a tha na mionc a' deanamh air stoc na h-iasg. Aig a' cheart àm tha cunntas a tha air a dheanamh a h-uile mìos de churrag a' sealltainn dhuinn gu bheil barrachd acca ann far a bheil mionc air an glacadh an taca ri aiteannan far nach eil mionc air an glacadh.

◆ Deuchannan Le Coin

Rinn dithis bhuill bh'on glèidhteachas na sìtheann tadhail air a' phròiseict le *German Short Haired pointer* agus *English setter*. Ged nach robh na coin seo air an treanadh airson obair mionc, bha iad air an nochdadh gu faireag fàileadh bhon phòiseact. Bha iad an uairsin air an toirt gu dìofar àiteannan feadh na h-Uibhistan agus na-Herradh airson na mionc a lorg. Tha buil na deuchainn air cuideachadh steidhich an dòigh as freagairraich na coin a chleachdadh airson buaidh a thoirt don ghlacaidh. Mar seo tha dà chù *gun-shy* ri fhaighinn airson cuideachadh a thoirt don phròiseict.

◆ Aithisg air a chur do Roinn Eorpa

Tha an dara aithisg adhartas air a chrìoch le Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba agus air a chuir air adhart don Coimisean na Roinn Eorpa. Tha na h-athaisgean air Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar air duileagan làrach-lìn (www.snh.org.uk). Fhreagar an EU gu bheil 'luchd-ionadail a tha a' glacadh na mionc air an co-bhoinn ri eòlas Seòmar-obrach Saidheans Meadhanach agus tha feum an co-lorg saidheantachd ann an àrainn a' phròiseict ag obair gu math agus tha iad ag obair còmhla ri cheile airson co-lorg innteach a dheanamh.' Se buaidh mhath a tha don bhuidheann a' phròiseict agus rinn Bruno Julien, ceann an aonad, co-dhunadh gun robh 'luach dearbhach fiùghail' aig a' phròiseict.

CÙL-FIOSRACHAIDH

Chan eil mionc dùthchasach dha na h-Eileanan an Iar no fiù do Bhreatainn. Tha iad gu h'àraid cunnartach do dh'eòin fhìadhaidh oir ithidh iad uighean, iseanan agus eòin mhòra bho làraich chudthromach eòin eadar-nàiseanta. Tha na h-Uibhistan nan dachaigh do chuid de na h-eòin is cudthromaiche san Roinn Eòrpa agus tha iad seo air an dìon fo Ordugh Eòin Fhìadhaich na Roinn Eòrpa le Àitean Sònraichte Dìona (SPA). Tha e mar uallach air Breatainn na làraich seo a dhìon a thaobh riaghailtean na Roinn Eòrpa. A bharrachd air glèidhteachais nàdair, tha droch bhuaidh aig a' mhionc air croitearachd, iasgach, tuathanachas eìsg agus turasach. Tha suidheachadh a' mhionc na dhùilgheadas do mhòran agus tha e mar ghnòthach dhuinn uile freagart fhaighinn dhan cheist. Gu mì-fhortanach an aon fhreagart buan a th'ann se am beathach a sgrìobh.

Tha 'Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar' a' toirt còrr is millean trì fichead 'sa còig mìle not dè dh' airgead Eòrpach, poblach agus eile do na h-Eileanan an Iar. A sas anns a' phròiseict tha na buidheana a leanas: Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba, Comann Rìoghal Dion nan Eun, Riagaltas na h-Alba, Seòmar-obrach Saidheans Meadhanach, Iomairt nan Eilean Siar, agus Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Tha airgead bho stòras airgead nàdarra Eòrpach LIFE a' toirt taic dhan phròiseict.

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 Sugoto Roy air 01859 550327 (s.roy@csi.gov.uk) no gu Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba ann an Steòrnabhagh air 01851 705258.



Hebridean Mink Project

Bulletin November 2003



Safeguarding our Wildlife

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 October the total number of mink caught had reached 362; 191 in Harris and 171 in the Uists. In the three months since July, 49 mink were caught in Harris and 46 in the Uists. The use of dogs to locate den sites has continued as a highly effective boost to the trapping efforts. Mink located in this way are killed humanely by the usual method.

There have been a large number of captures and these have been scattered throughout the trapping area. Animals are again being caught along the south coast of Harris and there have been sightings in both Harris and the Uists. Captures of females and males tend to follow similar patterns, with peak number of captures occurring during the ruts in February, and during dispersal periods in September. Patterns remain seasonally similar for the Uists and Harris, although this year the Uists have had a greater success over the summer months. There has been a drop of about 46% in the number of animals caught in the months July, August and September this year compared with last year. This is a clear indication that there are fewer animals.

Two ATVs are now in use in the Uists to enable trappers to check traps more efficiently.

◆ New Trappers Appointed

Two new trappers, each with previous experience of the project, have been appointed on two-year seasonal contracts for the Uists, bringing the total number of trappers to 11, plus two foremen. A further two trappers have been appointed on a casual basis.

◆ Public Meetings Held

The second round of public meetings was held on 30th September in Benbecula and on 2nd October in Leverburgh. The completion of these two rounds of meetings signals the start of the second phase of information dissemination. This will involve presentations offered to groups such as fisheries committees, schools and other interested parties. Meanwhile a meeting of the project's Local Liaison Group is being planned for December.

◆ Presentation to European Congress

Project co-ordinator, Dr Sugoto Roy, gave a presentation about the Hebridean Mink Project to the European Congress of Mammalogy in the Czech Republic in August, which was well received. Dr Roy also made contact with researchers from Poland, Finland, Denmark, Italy and Ireland who are involved in mink/invasive species projects, and is currently setting up desk-based collaborative studies with some of these researchers.

◆ PhD Study

Alice Helyar continues to carry out detailed population and behavioural research as part of the Hebridean Mink Project. As part of this, the mink population on Taransay was estimated in July, from mark-recapture studies, at between 20 and 25 animals. This has since been reduced in stages to around a current estimate of five animals and results on changes in den site use and movement patterns are currently being analysed. A similar study is about to begin in another part of the study site South of Tarbert. The population in several areas has been estimated, den sites have been identified and recorded, and the population will be culled in several stages to look at the behaviour of the remaining individuals. Work has also begun to identify and examine prey remains from mink scats found in the field.

◆ Effects of the Project

The Western Isles Fisheries Trust is collecting its first year's fish stock data in a collaborative study with the HMP. Data is being collected from areas within and outside of the mink project area. Some of these sites fall within the PhD study site and as animals are removed in the near future, changes to fish stocks should be directly measurable. This, in conjunction with any dietary evidence would give an estimate of economic damage done by individual mink to fish stocks. Meanwhile monthly counts of lapwing indicate a consistently high number of the birds within the areas where mink are being trapped compared to untrapped areas.

◆ Dog Trials

Two members of the game conservancy visited the project with a German Short Haired pointer and an English setter. Though not specifically trained for mink work, these dogs have been exposed to mink scent glands from the project. They were then taken to several areas in the Uists and on Harris to seek out mink areas. Results from these experiments have assisted in establishing the most appropriate way to utilise the versatility of dogs in the trapping effort. As such, two gun-shy dogs will soon be available to the project to assist in maximising the trapping effort.

◆ Report sent to Europe

The second Progress Report has now been finalised by Scottish Natural Heritage and forwarded to the European Commission. The reports are posted on the Hebridean Mink Project web pages on the SNH website (www.snh.org.uk). In response, the EC noted that "The combination of employing local people as trappers, supported by the experience of Central Science Laboratories and the use of scientific results within the project area appears to be working well and is combining to produce some interesting results." This is a great boost to the project team and in conclusion the Head of Unit, Bruno Julien, noted that the project had 'considerable demonstration value'.

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.