



Pròiseict Mionc Nan Eilean Siar

Fiosrachadh – An t-Samhainn 2004



Tha e mar amas aig 'Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar' am beathach gallda, am mionc Aimearaigeach a sgrìobh bho na h-Uibhistean agus àireamhan a' bheathaich a lughdachadh anns na Hearadh. A' beachdachadh air glèiteachais nàdair, tha am pròiseict, a tha a-nise anns an treas bliadhna, a' gabhail àite airson àireamhan eòin de bhrìgh eadar-nàiseanta a dhìon.

NAIDHEACHDAN

◆ Aithisg Adhartais

Tha an àireamh de mhionc ann an Uibhist air lughdachadh gu mòr. Tha sinn a' faicinn lughdaichte de 92% an taca ris a' bhliadhna an-uiridh ann an Uibhist a Tuath agus Beinn a Bhaoghla an deidh oidhirp glacaidh teann anns an Lùnasdal agus anns an t-Sultain am bliadhna seo. Tha e foilleasach gu bheil mionc air an sgrìobh gu soirbheachail anns na h-àitean seo. Chan eil mionc sam bith a-nis ri lòrg air Eilean Tharasaigh agus tha e coltach gu bheil àireamhan eòin a' tòiseachadh a' dol an àrda. Anns na trì mìosan a chaidh seachad cha robh mionc sam bith air an lòrg air taobh a tuath Caolas na Hearadh, ged a bha glacaidh teann air a' mhòr-chuid de na h-eileanan. Tha 9 coin air an cleachdadh an dràsta airson na mionc a' lòrg, dhà anns na Hearadh agus 7 anns na h-Uibhistean. Tha iad an uairsin air an glacadh le innealan-glacaidh agus air am màrbhadh anns an dòigh àbhaisteach, iochmhòr.

Chriochnaich Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba an aithisg air a' phròiseict a tha a-nis aig a' Choimisean Eòrpach, a chuidich a' phròiseict tro mhaoineachadh airgid an EU LIFE Nature Fund.

◆ Rannsachadh PhD

Tha obair-làraich an rannsachaidh a-nis anns a' mhios mu dheireadh agus a' crìochnachadh le sgrùdadh beag. Tha seo a' toirt a-steach a' glacadh mionc air taobh an ear na Hearadh, gan comharrachadh agus an uairsin gan leigeal às. Rinnear an aon rud air 30 eileanan a bha astar math air falbh bhon chosta agus cuideachd faisg air a' chosta, a bha meudan eadar dhealaichte. Bidh ribeachan air an cuir anns na h-àitean seo a-rithist agus bidh na mionc a bhios air an glacadh air am màrbhadh. An dràsta ge ta, bidh gluasad gach beathach air an clàradh eadar na costaichean agus na h-eileanan.

Seallaidh an obair seo dè cho cudthromach 's a tha na h-eileanan ann a bhith a' cumail slugh saideal a dh'fhaodadh briodadh ann an àitean a tha mu thràth air am fuadachadh. Cuidichidh seo le co-dhùnaidhean mu dheidhinn ciamar a bhios glacaidh anns na h-eileanan air an gabhail os làimh anns an àm ri teachd.

A bharrachd air an seo, bidh aithisg sgrìobhte air sgrùdadh riaghailt biadh, rannsachadh mu eòin agus tomhas suidheachadh na garaidhean.

◆ Acfhainn agus luchd-obrach

Bu mhat leis a' phròiseict taing a thoirt dha na sia luchd-obrach bhon State Veterinary Service (SVS) a Defra (Department for Food and Rural Affairs) a chuidich rè àm sgoilidh anns An Lùnasdal agus An t-Sultain. A thuilleadh air a' chuideachadh seo, bha a h-uile trap ann an Uibhist a Tuath agus Beinn a Bhaoghla air am fosgladh airson aon seachdainn a bharrachd. Leis an oidhirp seo, tha lughdachadh àireamh nam mionc am bliadhna seo nas cudthromaich agus nas misneachail.

◆ Tachartasan Ionadail

Bho chionn ghoirid, bha Pròiseict Mionc Nan Eilean Siar aig ceithir taisbeanaidhean àiteachais ionadail eadar-dhealaichte air feadh nan Eilean Siar anns An t-Iuchar agus anns An Lùnasdal: anns na Lochan, na Hearadh, Uibhist a Tuath agus Beinn a Bhaoghla agus Uibhist a Deas. Bha taisbeanadh postair aig gach stàile agus bha riochdairean ann bho Phròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar airson freagart cheistean sam bith agus airson deasbad a dhèanamh air a' chuspair. Ghabh daoine pàirt ann an iomadh chuir seachad agus farpais. Bha 40-75 duine aig gach taisbeanadh agus bha cothrom math aig a' phobal ionnsachadh barrachd mu dheidhinn a' phròiseict agus airson barrachd mothachaidh a thogail mu dheidhinn.

Chaidh comataidh ceangal air a chumail ann an Lianacleit, Beinn a Bhaoghla air 8mh latha den t-Sultain far an robh deasbadan air cuspairean cudthromaich, a' gabhail a-steach am buaidh a th'aig na trapan, Uibhist a Deas agus an dàrna ire.

◆ Obair anns an àm ri Teachd

Tha sinn a' leantainn oirn a' cur barrachd trapan ann an Uibhist a Deas agus tha sinn an dùil agus an dòchas gun lean agus gun leadaich an oidhirp glacaidh mar a rinn e ann an Uibhist a Tuath agus Beinn a Bhaoghla.

Chaidh aithisg a dhèanamh air na goireasan eile a tha feumach airson cuir as dha na mionc a th'ann an uibhist a Deas. A' cleachdadh fiosrachaidh co-ionann, bidh an cosgais airson cur as dha na mionc ann an Leòdhais agus taobh tuath na Hearadh (an dàrna ire) air an tomhais.

◆ Troimh-chèile Cosgais nam Mionc

Bha 'sgeulachd' bho chionn ghoirid anns na pàipearan mu dheidhinn cosgais glacaidh gach mionc ann am Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar. Thàinig seo an dèidh daingneachadh gun deach dìreach ochd bheathach an glacadh ann an trì mìosan ann am meadhan an t-sàmhradh.

Bhiodh fios aig a h-uile duine a tha an sàs anns a' phròiseict gu bheil e uamhasach duilich mionc sam bith a ghlacadh anns an t-sàmhradh. Mar seo, tha e a' toirt misneach gun na trapearan agus gun a' phròiseict fhèin gu bheil mionc sam bith air an glacadh. Airson seo, tha ochd mionc a' dèanamh diofar mòr dhan an sgrìobh gu lèir gu h-àraid seachd gu bheil àireamh slugh air an lughdaichte mu thràth.

'S e am buidseat uile airson Pròiseict Mionc nan Eilean Siar £1.65m airson còig bliadhna. Chan eil an suim caochlaideach agus chan eil e an crochadh air an slugh tha làthair aig an fìor thoiseach no àireamh na mionc a tha air an glacadh aig àm sam bith. Tha e a' sealltainn dhuinn dlùth-chùram na h-obrach ann a bhith a' cur às do bheathaichean, gu h-àraid a' dol thairis air an fhearainn fad na bliadhna, a chuid bu mhòtha le bhith a' coiseachd air an talamh agus a' cumail sùil air gach trap a h-uile latha.

Anns an ìre thràth, mar eisimpleir, chaidh barrachd airgead a' chosg air acfhainn agus luchd-obrach agus a' treanadh na bha air a' glacadh na mionc. Tha a' cruinneachadh fiosrachaidh agus a' sgoileadh gun a' phobail daor agus cuideachd a' toirt ùine fhada. 'S e mi-threòraich uamhasach a th'ann a chantainn gu bheil aon a-mach a fìhead not sa bhuidsead air a chleachdadh an àrda ann an aon a-mach a fìhead san ùine tha a' phròiseict a' gabhail.

Chan eil e saor a bhith a' cur as dha beathachean, ach bhiodh an cosgais nas àrd nam biodh mionc air fhàgail air an fhearainn agus nam bagairt dha 'n fiadh-bheatha dùthchasach againn fhìn. Tha a h-uile coltas ann gu bheil a' phròiseict ag obrachadh ged tha an àireamh iosal den fheadhainn a tha air an glacadh. 'S e am mionc a bhios nas dorra a ghlacadh – am fear mu dheireadh.

CÙL-FHIOSRACHAIDH

Chan eil mionc dùthchasach dha na h-Eileannan an Iar no fiù do Bhreatainn. Tha iad gu h-àraid cunnartach do dh'eòin fhiadhaidh oir ithidh iad uighean, iseanan agus eòin mhòra bho làraich chudthromach eòin easar-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 Ordugh Eòin Fhiadhaich 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 èisg agus turasachd. Tha suidheachadh a' mhionc na dhuilgheadas do mhòran agus tha e mar ghnòthach dhuinn uile freagart fhaighinn air a' cheist. Gu mì-fhortanach an aon fhreagart buan a th'ann 's e am beathach a sgrìobh.

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 sas anns a' phròiseict tha na buidhnean a leanas: Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba, Comann Riaghailt Dion 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 Sugoto Roy air 01859 550327 (s.roy@csl.gov.uk) no gu Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba ann an Steòrnabhagh air 0185170258.

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 Mairi Gillies, SNH, 01463 723134 (mairi.gillies@snh.gov.uk)



Hebridean Mink Project

Bulletin November 2004



The Hebridean Mink Project, now in its third year, 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

◆ Progress report

There has been a dramatic reduction in mink numbers in Uist. Intensive trapping in August and September this year has shown a 92% decline in North Uist and Benbecula compared with the previous year. This is a clear sign that mink are being eradicated successfully in these areas. The Isle of Taransay off Harris is now believed to be completely clear of mink and indications are that bird numbers there are beginning to recover. In the last three months no mink have been found on the north side of the Sound of Harris, despite intense trapping taking place over a large amount of the islands. Nine dogs, two in Harris and seven in the Uists, are being used to locate mink den sites. Traps are then placed around the sites to catch the resident mink, which are then killed humanely by the usual method.

The interim report on the project has now been finalised by Scottish Natural Heritage and forwarded to the European Commission, which has part-funded the project through the EU LIFE Nature Fund.

◆ PhD study

The field work of the PhD study is now in its final month and is finishing with a relatively small scale experiment. This involved trapping mink in the east coast of Harris. These animals were then tagged and released. The same approach of catching, tagging and releasing, was taken on 30 islands, varying in size and distance along this coast. These areas will be trapped again, and the mink caught will be culled, however the movements of each animal between coasts and islands will be recorded.

The results from this work will show how important offshore islands are in maintaining small, satellite mink populations from which animals can recolonise cleared areas. This will inform decisions about how islands should be tackled in future.

In addition to this work, there will also be a report on dietary analysis, bird surveys and den site measurements for a paper which will be submitted later this year.

◆ Staffing and equipment

The Project would like to thank the six members of staff from the State Veterinary Service (SVS) of Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) who helped out during the dispersal period in August and September. With their assistance, every operable trap in North Uist and Benbecula was employed and hotspot areas were trapped for a further week. This additional trapping effort makes this year's reduction in the number of mink caught even more significant, and more encouraging.

◆ Local shows

The Hebridean Mink Project has recently made appearances at four local agriculture shows around the Western Isles throughout July and August; South Lochs Show, Harris show, North Uist Show and the Benbecula/South Uist Show. A poster presentation was set up at each stall and members of the HMP were there to answer questions and discuss the project. Members of the public took part in various activities ranging from a 'collapsible trap assembly competition' to a 'guess the skull competition'. Each stall was well attended with 40-75 people visiting at each show, which presented a great opportunity to open up the project to better public awareness.

On the 8th of September, a Liaison Committee meeting was held in Linaclete, Benbecula. Several important issues were discussed, including the quality of trap placement, South Uist and phase II.

◆ Future work

We are continuing to deploy more traps in South Uist and hope to continue there the intensive drive that has already been done in North Uist and Benbecula.

A report has been written on the additional resource needs required to achieve eradication in South Uist. Using similar information, the approximate cost of removing mink from North Harris and Lewis (phase II) will also be calculated.

◆ 'Cost per mink' red herring

A 'story' about how many pounds it costs to catch each mink in the Hebridean Mink Project recently did the rounds in some of the press. It followed confirmation that eight animals were caught by the project over a three month period in mid summer.

As anyone who has been involved in mink trapping will know it is notoriously difficult to catch any mink at all during the summer, indeed previous efforts didn't even bother trying. So the fact that any mink at all are being caught by the project during this time is a credit to the trappers and to the project generally. And even eight mink can make a significant difference to the overall eradication effort when the population has already been drastically reduced.

The total budget for the Hebridean Mink Project is £1.65m over five years. This figure is not variable and is not dependent on the population present at the outset, nor the number of mink caught over a given period. It reflects the labour intensive nature of species eradication, particularly in the terrain being covered, year round and mostly on foot, by the Hebridean Mink Project and the fact that all traps are checked at least daily.

Different stages in the project are more or less expensive than others. In the early stages for example, more money was spent on procurement of equipment and recruitment and training of staff, than on trapping mink. The gathering and sharing of information, and the development of new tracking and trapping techniques can also be costly and time consuming. It is completely misleading therefore to suggest that one 20th of the budget is always used up in one 20th of the project timescale.

The cost of species eradication is high, but the cost of leaving mink present to wreak havoc on our native wildlife is immeasurably higher. Catching small numbers is in fact a good indication that the project is taking effect and populations are reducing significantly. The hardest mink to catch will be the last one.

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, they 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 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 (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, 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.

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)