

# Beyond the banks: Navigating the waters of mink monitoring and control 2018-2023

**Karen Muller**

Scottish Invasive Species Initiative

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**Scottish Invasive Species Initiative**



# Understand your foe!

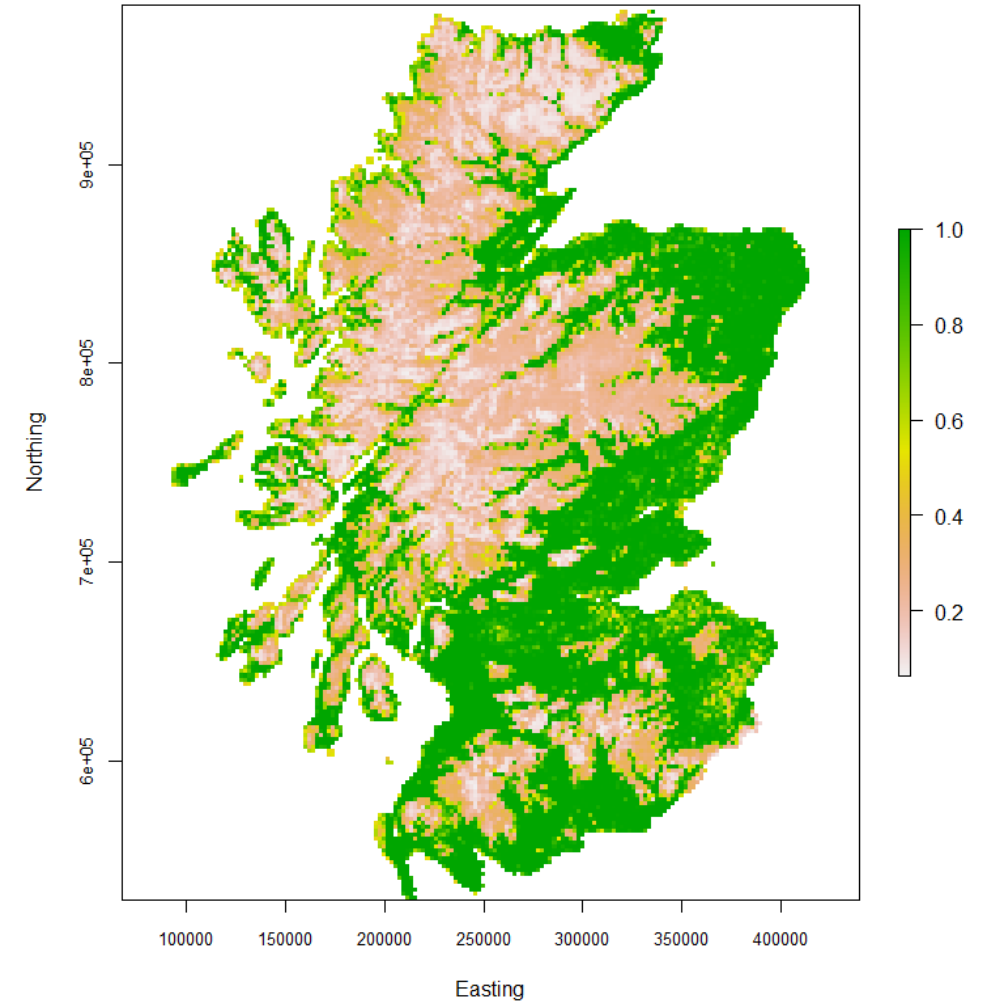




- American mink is a voracious and effective predator
- Impacts on native fauna – particularly water voles and ground nesting birds
- Widespread but often present at low population density
- Fantastic colonisers – two seasonal migration periods travelling long distances seeking breeding territories
- Resilient to control – young mink at low density have higher reproductive rates and success



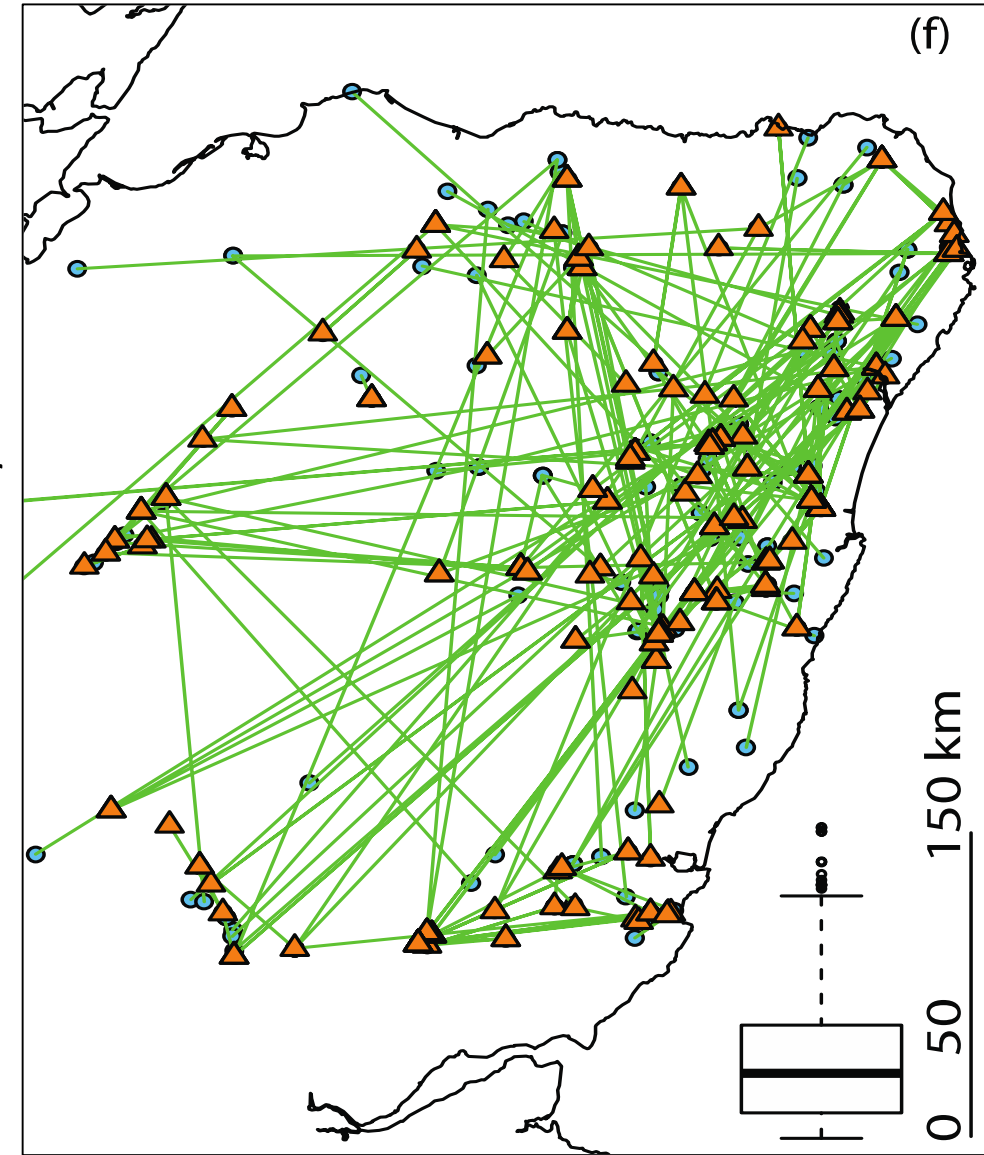
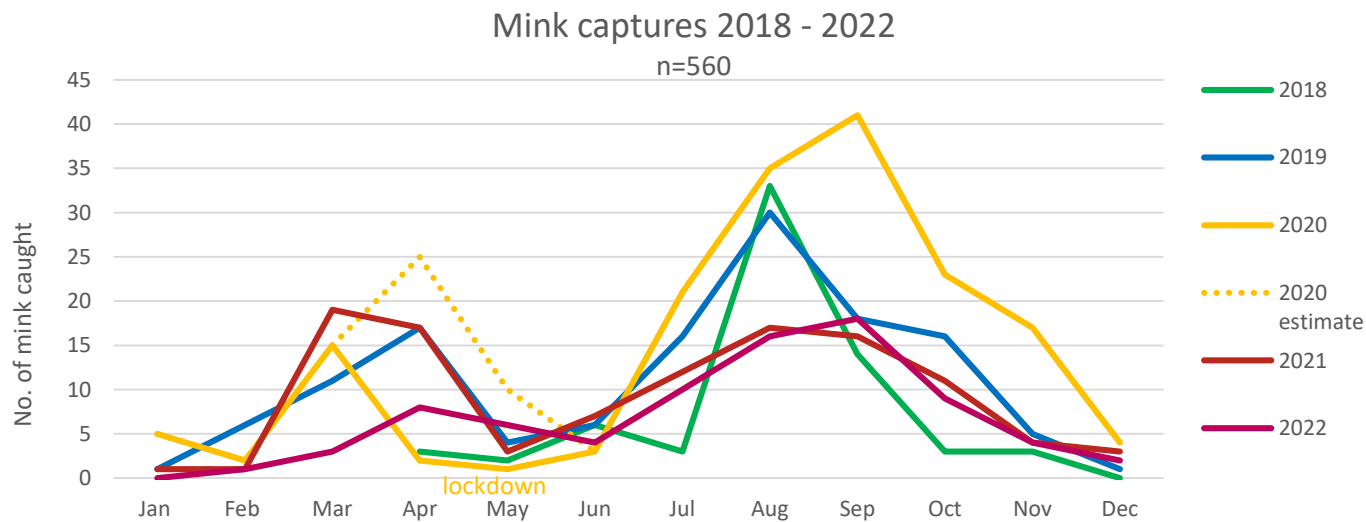
# Habitat suitability varies across the landscape – so we target effort to areas most likely to produce and attract mink



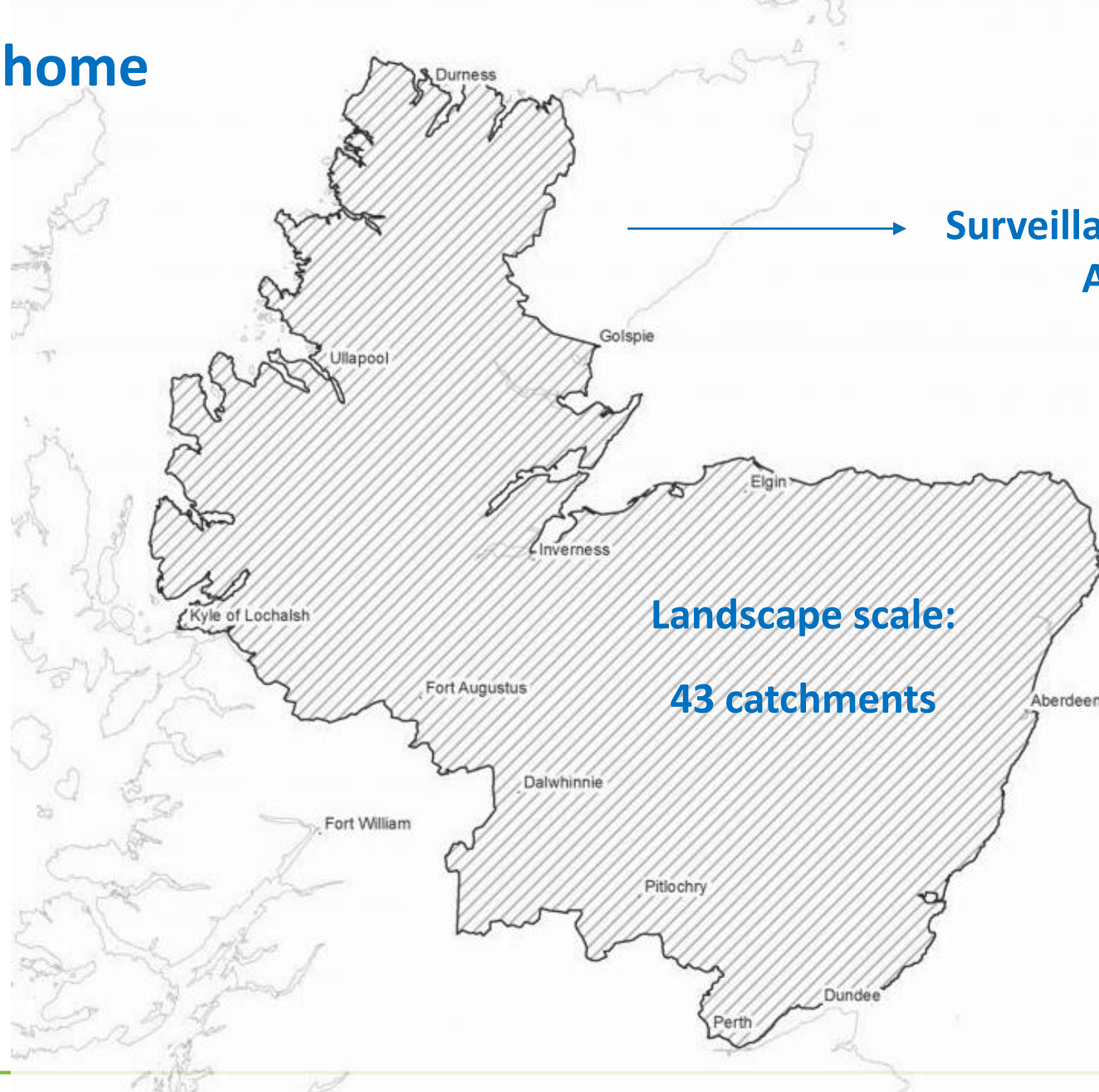


# Mink on the move!

- Seasonally mobile – mean natal dispersal of 20km (20% will move >80Km to breeding territories)
- Two main periods of migration when most catchable –
  - Early spring (seeking breeding territories)
  - Late summer / early autumn (dispersal of young of year)
- Less active / less catchable in winter and when with young in summer



# Go big or go home



**Surveillance & Response  
Approach**

**Landscape scale:  
43 catchments**

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## Stopping mink in their tracks



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## Mink raft monitoring





## Mink trap monitoring and dispatch





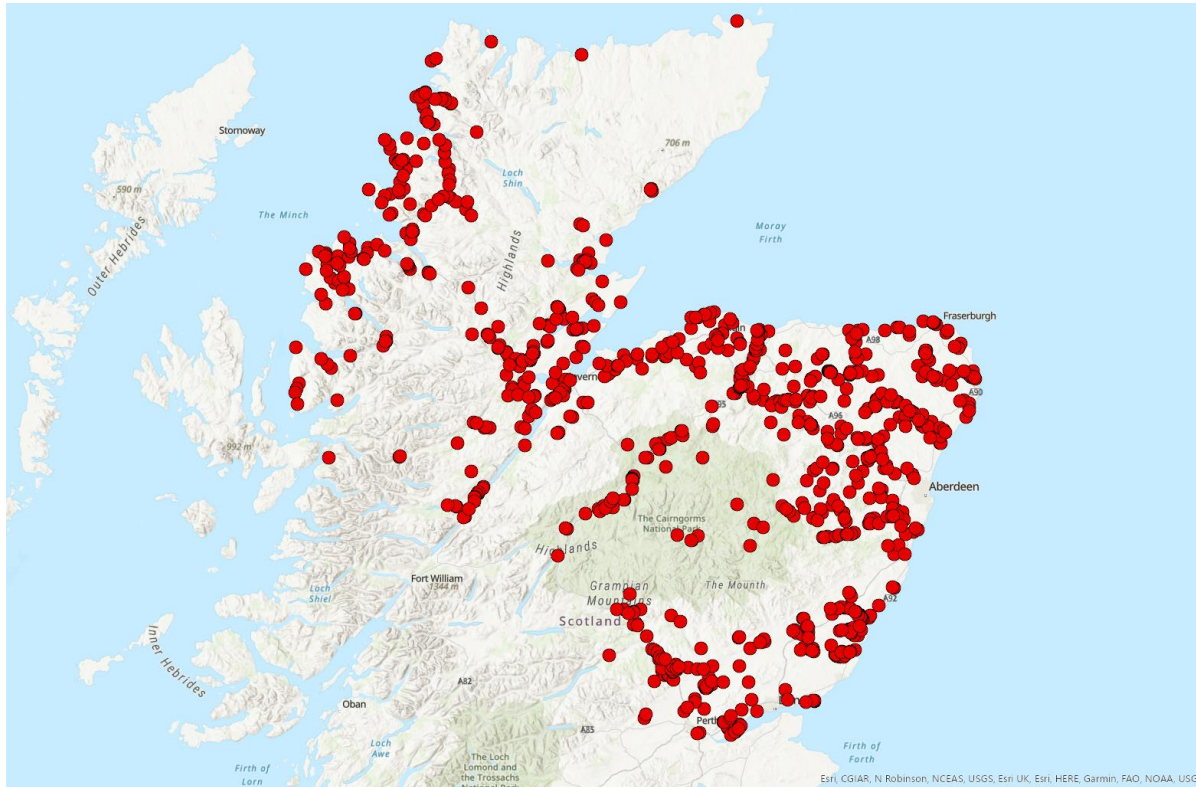
Live capture traps –  
to let the good guys  
get away!



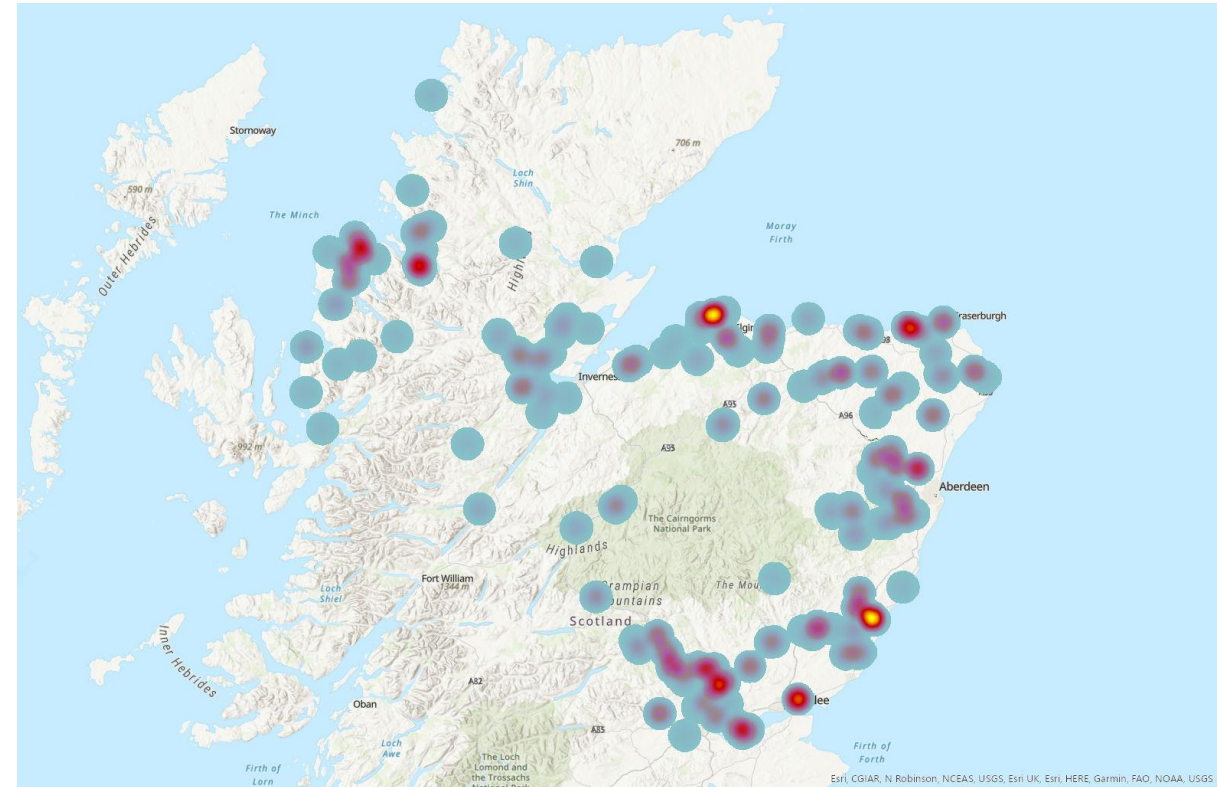


# The monitoring network

Maximum traps – 245  
Maximum rafts – 428



Heat map  
Captures 2018-2023





# THANK YOU!

## Mink control - 2018 - 2023



- 29,500 km<sup>2</sup> area covered
- Maximum rafts: 428
- Maximum traps: 245
- **43 catchments**

- 206 volunteers 2023
- 283 volunteers 2022
- 318 volunteers 2021
- 357 volunteers 2020
- 335 volunteers 2019
- 195 volunteers 2018
- **590 mink despatched**

- 6,665 volunteer hours 2023
- 15,052 volunteer hours 2022
- 21,289 volunteer hours 2021
- 18,396 volunteer hours 2020
- 21,788 volunteer hours 2019
- 10,136 volunteer hours 2018
- **93,325 volunteer hours total**



# Technology – Supporting People

Use of Remoti units to support volunteers & reach tricky areas



Use of trail cams to retain volunteers & monitor tricky areas





# Academic partnerships

- Linking our practical work, data and academic partners (University of Aberdeen)
- PhD study ‘How many mink is too many mink?’ - understand the relationship between mink populations and their impact on water voles to find the threshold of ‘*too many mink*’  
<https://invasivespeciesscot.home.blog/2023/08/01/the-big-question-how-many-mink-is-too-many-mink/>
- Looking forward: A better understanding of the impact of our mink control – a time to challenge ourselves and make improvements





# No time to rest on the laurels



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# Thank you for listening

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