

**Aims:**

To look at and use a real method for surveying for the invasive American mink.

You will need:

- A mink monitoring raft.
- Nearby river/burn location which is easily and safely accessed.
- Some expert help!

Background:

The mink raft is a low-tech piece of monitoring equipment used to monitor for the presence of the non-native American mink.

It consists of a clay pad set on a floating wooden raft. If an animal walks over the clay it leaves its tell-tale footprints. As the mink is a semi-aquatic animal having the clay on a floating raft reduces the number of other animals likely to walk on it.

Sourcing a mink raft:

Mink monitoring is a survey activity that many local fishery trust organisations and some wildlife organisations undertake on rivers and lochs - especially where there may be important breeding birds or water voles present.

To do this activity we'd recommend getting some expert help. Get in touch with your local fishery trust and see if they can lend you a monitoring raft and come out and help you set it up. A list of fishery trusts/boards in Scotland can be found here: <http://fms.scot/trust-contacts/>

Setting up a mink raft:

When siting a raft, the location selected should be easily accessible, safe and ideally with room to pull the raft onto the bank for inspection.

Rafts can be located on a sheltered corner of a river, on a burn or in a pond or loch. They should be tethered securely to a tree or stake so they don't float away.

Ideally the raft should be set in typical mink habitat – rough grassland, scrub land, connected watercourses and nearby farmland (good source of favourite food of rabbits). If you've got someone along to help, they'll advise on a good location.

Checking the raft:

A raft would normally be checked every 1-2 weeks for footprints if it was part of an active monitoring scheme but you can check more often if you like.

To do this you pull the raft from the water (if possible), remove the tunnel and inspect the clay pad for footprints. If you've got footprints try and identify them and/or take a photo (with a coin in for scale) and then smooth over the clay and re-set the raft. Watch a video on [checking a mink raft](#).

Handy notes:

You can read more about monitoring mink rafts here: <https://www.invasivespecies.scot/mink-control-project>

The group may be keen to check the raft regularly! You can check more often than every 1-2 weeks but don't visit so often that animals don't get a chance to visit and leave prints!

You can identify any prints you find using this handy [footprint identification guide](#)

If you can't find any expert help and are very keen, you can have a go at building a mink monitoring raft yourself – or you could ask a group like a local Men's Shed to see if they could build one for you. Instructions on [how to build a mink raft](#).

Do more:

Have a go at our [animal prints quiz](#) or set a footprint trap ([Activity 5.4](#)) to look for prints in different places.