

MINK TRACKS

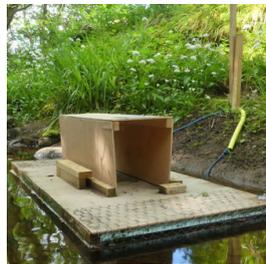
A project update from the **Scottish Invasive Species Initiative**

A huge thank you to all volunteers who are monitoring mink rafts and running mink traps across our project area as part of our Mink Control Project. We wanted to update you on our progress and how your individual effort is contributing to something much bigger.

2022 Highlights

Last year 283 volunteers gave their time to monitor mink rafts and traps. This led to a total of 395 rafts and 154 traps deployed across the project area.

In total volunteers contributed over 2,150 days of their time - equivalent to 10 full time employees working on the project for one year!



395
mink rafts



154
mink traps



283
volunteers



81
mink
caught



This collective effort led to 81 mink captures in 2022. Many of these captures (38% or 31 mink) were in the River Tay catchment. Tayside is a key boundary area for the project and these captures help to prevent mink migrating from the south into other areas of the project.

2021 Highlights

Thank you to the 318 volunteers who monitored 434 rafts and 229 traps in 2021. Mink captures were higher in 2021, with 108 mink caught in total.



434
mink rafts



229
mink traps



318
volunteers



108
mink caught

We hope the lower capture numbers in 2022 are a sign that mink populations are declining in the project area. Lower densities of mink will mean reduced predation rates and less pressure on our vulnerable native wildlife - particularly ground nesting birds and water voles - helping to protect these species and support their recovery.

Project Extension

We are delighted to announce that our application to the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot, has been accepted. This award enables us to extend the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative for another three years and continue our American Mink Control Project.



This award also allows us to expand our staff network and boost efforts in our mink control project. As we increase staff capacity we will be looking to fill any gaps in the network - improving our monitoring and trapping coverage and reaching into new areas.

But to do this - we need your help! If you have previously monitored a raft and would like to set one up again, do get in touch. And if you know someone who would like to volunteer please send them our way!

Sourcing mink rafts

To increase our coverage, not only do we need more people - we also need more mink rafts!

In preparation for expanding our network we have been working with local Men's Sheds and Wood Recyclability to improve our supplies. This allows us to source equipment locally and support some fantastic community initiatives.

Thanks to Brechin, Cromarty Firth, Peterculter and Stanley Men's Sheds who have all worked with us over the years.



James and Brian, from Stanley Men's Shed, building rafts for the Tay and Esks catchments

Remoti devices - a high tech solution



We are now regularly using 'Remoti' devices to help monitor mink traps. These are fitted to our live-capture traps and, when triggered, immediately alert our staff and volunteers by phone signal. This allows for rapid response and more efficient trap maintenance.

These devices are especially useful in remote places or locations that are tricky to access daily, as without them traps must be visited every 24 hours. Remoti's are also really helpful for volunteers monitoring multiple traps in different locations.

Mink moments



Mink on the Lossie

We've recently had a flurry of mink captures on the River Lossie in Moray - all following a sighting from members of the public. After this reported sighting in November, local volunteers and staff took action and were able to remove four breeding adults in only three months. A great success story showing the importance of reported sightings - and a quick response! - for trapping success. Read more [here](#).

You're not a mink!

Our mink traps are set on floating rafts and unbaited to minimise by-catch, but occasionally someone's curiosity gets the better of them and we find an unexpected visitor - and this is exactly why we always use live-capture traps.



Notable visitors last year included a young otter (of similar size to a mink so able to fit into a trap) and a very curious young pine marten which hung around afterwards checking out our volunteer. Watch [this video](#) to see the pine marten being safely released and investigating the trap before running off to climb some nearby trees.

Thank you

None of this would be possible without our incredible volunteers, together monitoring a network of hundreds of mink rafts and traps across northern Scotland. Since the Initiative began in 2018, our mink volunteers have contributed an astonishing 86,660 hours - equivalent to around 12 full time employees working every year of the 5 year project. Thank you so much for your help tackling this invasive species and protecting our native wildlife!

Keep in touch



We're on social media, so tag us into your posts and keep us up to date with how your raft / trap is doing and share your photos. If you want to get in touch directly you can email us at sisi@nature.scot or contact your local Project Officer.

You can also sign up to the SISI project's quarterly newsletter via our website:
<https://www.invasivespecies.scot/>

This project is funded and supported by the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, NatureScot and the National Heritage Lottery Fund.