

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.

Highlights – 2020

Our network of 428 rafts and 244 traps extends over 43 river catchments across northern Scotland. The most southerly raft is on the Tay reedbeds in the Firth of Tay (near Perth) and the most northerly raft is in Durness in Sutherland!



Last year 357 people adopted mink rafts and traps and gave their time to monitoring these. Together these volunteers contributed 2,628 days of time to this work. That's an amazing effort from everyone - the equivalent of employing 12 full time people to the project for one year!



We caught 169 mink in 2020. We caught most in Wester Ross (52) and Perthshire (29) – both locations on the boundary of our project area. These areas clearly play an important role in stemming the influx of migrating mink from the south.



Our native wildlife can suffer population declines as a result of mink predation - the water vole and ground nesting birds are particularly vulnerable.



Our mink control work is helping to protect these species and support their recovery and conservation.

Captures and clusters

A total of 388 mink have been caught and dispatched across the project area between March 2018 and March 2021. The below map shows all the capture locations from 2018 - 2020.

We've captured mink from 172 different locations – but some sites are more productive than others.

At 94 sites we've removed just a single mink, at 59 locations we've caught 2-4 animals (153 in total) and at 19 sites we have captured five or more animals (124 in total).

This means that just 78 locations account for 75% of the total mink captures.

However, all sites are important. Catching migrating mink each year is critical, so if you have a trap with no mink captures so far - please stick with it.

The chart shows the mink captures for 2018-2020 by month. The spring peaks corresponds with the time when many mink are transient and travelling widely searching for mates and breeding territories.

The summer/autumn peak is the time when family groups have emerged from the den and young mink start to leave the natal territory. These juvenile mink are easier to catch. Trapping success at both these times (pre- and post- breeding) will have the greatest impact on the overall mink population.

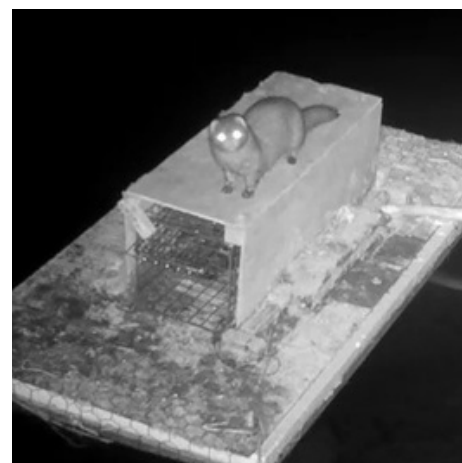
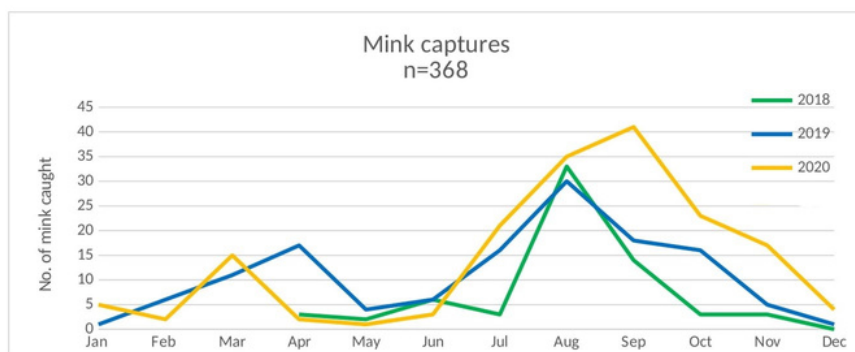
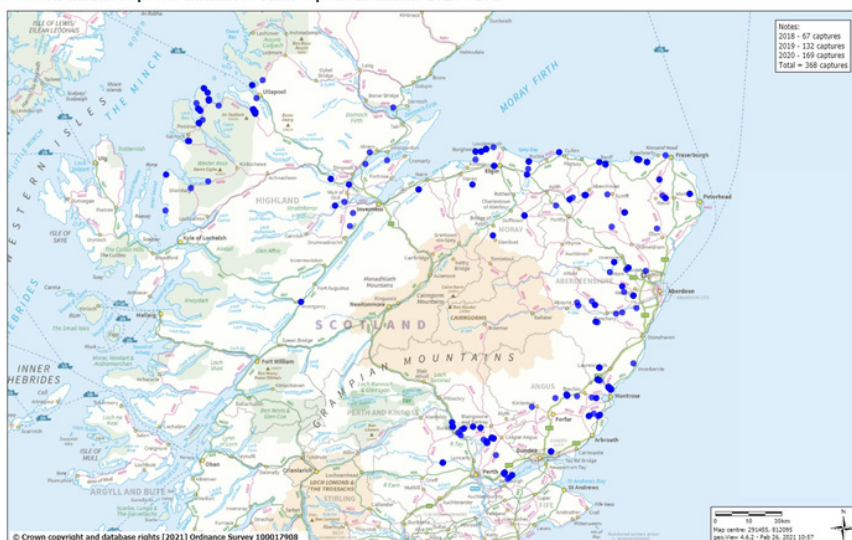
Stopping mink in their tracks – tips and tricks of the trade

American mink can be wily tricksters and trapping success can come down to a battle of wills between you and the mink. As the mink continues to evade capture you may need to adopt new trap tactics to try and outwit your target and win the day.

Despair not - project officer Karen has shared all her top tips for tempting those shy mink into your trap. Some of her scenting techniques are not for the faint hearted!

[Read the blog post](#)

Scottish Invasive Species Initiative - Mink Capture Locations 2018 - 2020



Mink moments



Double trouble in Dundee

Is this a record? Our project officer Mark was called to dispatch a mink in a trap near Dundee. On arrival he was shown this picture of the trap with a second inquisitive animal next to the raft. The first mink was swiftly dispatched and the trap re-set, but before Mark had reached the car, he was called back as the second mink had been captured too. One trap, two mink, 5 minutes. Beat that!

It seems the scent of the first mink was just too much for the second animal to resist.

Setting sail

Just another day at the office for these helpful volunteers from Ewe Canoe who headed out to a wee island just off-shore in Wester Ross to set up a mink trap with Skye and Lochalsh Rivers Trust.

Being semi-aquatic mink are excellent swimmers so are found in abundance around the coast, although they still need access to a freshwater source.



You're not a mink!

One of the reasons we only use live-capture traps is that occasionally we catch things other than mink. We've seen a pine marten, a polecat and a baby otter (pictured) enter our traps! All were released quickly back into the wild, safe and unharmed.

Putting the traps on floating rafts greatly reduces the risk of catching non-target species as not all animals fancy making the short swim to explore the raft.

Thank you

None of this would be possible without you, our volunteers. The time you put into monitoring rafts and traps over 2018, 2019 and 2020 equates to a staggering 50,320 volunteer hours - that would equate to around 11 full time people per year working on the Mink Project. When we say we couldn't do it without you, we really mean it.

Keep in touch



We are 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 email us; sisi@nature.scot

You can also sign up to receive the quarterly project newsletter via our website:
www.invasivespecies.scot