



Scotland's rivers, burns, lochs and pools support many iconic Scottish species like Atlantic salmon, osprey and otter, as well as the endangered freshwater pearl mussel and Eel. Non-native Invasive species are a growing threat to the environment and the services it provides. The Scottish Invasive Species Initiative will ensure that we can protect Scotland's natural landscape from the negative impacts of INNS, not only for the benefit of the local communities but also for visitors

The Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI) is an exciting and ambitious 4-year partnership project set up to tackle invasive non-native species alongside rivers and watercourses in northern Scotland and is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) are a significant threat to our countryside, our native wildlife, our economy and in some cases directly to our health. By working at a local level with volunteers and communities, and by trialling innovative management techniques, we aim to put in place sustainable long-term solutions to invasive species management.

There are a number of Invasive species found within the Beaulieu catchment, these include Himalayan balsam, Japanese Knotweed and American Mink.

These invasive species are known for growing alongside watercourses, on burn sides and riverbanks. These plants produce large numbers of seeds every year, which are spread by humans, by wind and by water. Seeds spreading down the river is a frequent problem and new populations of plants are often found downstream of original growing sites.

The American mink (*Mustela vison*) is a well-known invasive non-native species. It spread throughout the country following escapes from fur farms in the latter half of the 20th century. Being an opportunistic predator, often killing more than they require for food, mink have had a devastating effect on our native wildlife. In particular ground nesting birds and water vole populations are vulnerable to predation by this avid hunter. The mink is a semi-aquatic mammal with rich, usually dark brown fur, which belongs to the "Mustelid" family. It occupies both freshwater and saltwater habitats and follow waterways, lake edges and coasts.

The aim of the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative is to control mink across the project area, this is done by using mink monitoring rafts to establish if mink are present in an area then once detected mink are trapped and humanely dispatched. The mink monitoring raft was designed by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust and is used to detect the presence of

mink. The raft floats on the edge of river or burn, and mink, being inquisitive creatures, will investigate and go through the wooden tunnel. Inside the tunnel is a clay pad, on which the mink (or any other creature) will leave its paw prints. When the tell-tale prints of a mink are found we know they are present in that area. At this stage a live capture trap is installed in the tunnel to catch the mink which is then humanely dispatched.



Mink on a monitoring raft. (A. Macallum)

The Ness and Beaully fisheries trust, alongside Beaully Eco-group are seeking volunteers of all ages and abilities to assist in the control of these species within the Beaully and Inverness area. Full training, PPE and equipment is provided with the option of gaining a formal qualification in Outdoor first aid and pesticide training.

If you would like to volunteer for the project and get involved please contact Chris Daphne at the trust office, Tel. 01463 783505 or by email chris.nbft@gmail.com

More information can be found at www.invasivespecies.scot