REF.	ACTIONS	PARTNERS (lead partners in bold)
30.1	**Determine extent of spread of American mink.**	**AU** / **SNH** / SEPA / NESBReC
30.1.1	Assess and collate existing data to identify the 'known' distribution of American mink.	**AU** / **SNH** / SEPA / NESBReC
30.1.2	Establish the current levels of American mink control taking place across the Dee catchment.	
30.1.3	Identify areas where there is either ineffective mink control, or no mink control taking place.	
30.1.4	Conduct surveys for American mink, where distribution is unknown, in order to establish baseline data on American mink presence and distribution across the Dee catchment. From this, the impact of changing/increased mink control activities can be monitored, allowing adaptive management to guide mink control strategies.	
30.2	**Control and remove American mink where appropriate.**	**SNH** / SEPA / **AU** / Landowners / FWAG / DDSFB / Cairngorms water vole conservation project partners / N.E. Scotland water vole conservation project partners
30.2.1	Develop initiatives to control and remove American mink from the catchment in a systematic manner (to concentrate in particular on areas of high importance for water vole conservation).	**SNH** / SEPA / **AU** / Landowners / FWAG / DDSFB / Cairngorms water vole conservation project partners / N.E. Scotland water vole conservation project partners
30.2.2	Provide appropriate training in legal and humane mink control (and provide equipment where both appropriate and necessary)	
30.2.3	Ensure that appropriate measures are taken to monitor the possible movement of American mink back into the Dee catchment from surrounding areas.	
30.3	**Promote awareness and education**	**SNH / DDSFB / Cairngorms LBAP**
30.3.1	Provide information to landowners on: - Mink presence on their land - Appropriate and effective mink control strategies - Effective, legal and humane mink control	**SNH / DDSFB / Cairngorms LBAP**
30.3.2	Raise public awareness of the presence of American mink in Dee catchment and the problems created by invasive non-native species.	

Acronyms are listed in the centre of this Action Card

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american mink 30 SPECIES

OBJECTIVE 30. Control American Mink in the Dee catchment.

BACKGROUND

The American mink is an invasive, non-native mammal species that occurs in the Dee catchment. The species is considered to be largely responsible for the decline of water vole populations, and is the main threat to their future. American mink may also threaten upland birds such as widgeon, teal, dipper, dotterel and grouse as well as salmonid fish.

Water voles are native to the UK and were once abundant, but are now undergoing a catastrophic national decline. At least 94% of sites occupied by water voles in the 1950s are no longer occupied. However, the Scottish uplands, and the Cairngorms National Park in particular, hold nationally important breeding populations of water voles. The water vole is listed as a UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority species.

ISSUES

- As generalist predators, American mink predate a wide range of species (e.g. water vole, Atlantic salmon, wigeon and bird eggs), and as such are a threat to the biodiversity of the River Dee catchment.
- Specifically, American mink are the largest single threat to water vole populations in upper Deeside. Water vole numbers have declined by >94% since the 1950's and American mink are also thought to be responsible for up to 80% of Atlantic salmon parr predation.
- American mink are found throughout the entire length of the River Dee catchment.
- Although American mink control is already undertaken on some areas of the Dee catchment, the there is great variation in the level of control, i.e. the length of time it is carried out each year, the number of traps and type of trapping regime used.

EXISTING / RECENT INITIATIVES

- Research carried out by Aberdeen University, Scottish Natural Heritage and North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) since 1998, has investigated the distribution, habitat requirements and population dynamics of mink within the Dee catchment. Research at Aberdeen University on American mink dispersal, genetics and distribution is ongoing.
- North East Scotland Water vole conservation project began in 2004 in order to conserve water vole populations in Aberdeenshire. American mink control and training of fishing ghillies, gamekeepers and volunteers in legal and humane mink control has been an integral part of this project. It has also played a key role in raising awareness of the need for effective mink control across the region.
- The Cairngorms Water Vole Conservation Project was set up in March 2006 as a partnership project between the Cairngorms National Park Authority, Scottish Natural Heritage and the University of Aberdeen. The main objective of this project is to conserve water vole populations over a large area where natural population processes still take place, through the humane control of mink and raising awareness. To do this, a 'mink free' zone will be created, surrounded by a ring of monitoring rafts, tracking and catching any incoming mink. Along with this, water vole surveys will be carried out to monitor the progress of the project and also to identify previously unknown populations. The project will seek the support and active participation of local organisations, landowners and communities, to ensure mink monitoring and trapping is self-sustained in the long term - providing a management solution for mink in the Cairngorms National Park which will outlive the project.
- Both Cairngorm and North East LBAPs cover the Dee catchment and are involved in American mink control through Water Vole conservation projects.
- The Cairngorms Park Plan addresses similar issues.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Aberdeen University

Dee District Salmon Fishery Board

Cairngorms water vole conservation project partners

Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

Landowners

North East Scotland water vole conservation project partners

North East Scotland Biological Records Centre

Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Scottish Natural Heritage

Further copies can be downloaded at www.theriverdee.org. For further information contact the Dee Catchment Officer c/o The Macaulay Institute, Craigiebuckler, Aberdeen AB15 8QH Telephone: 01224 498200 email: info@theriverdee.org

deecatchment partnership

ACTIONS REQUIRED

- Development and implementation of catchment wide, appropriate and effective American mink control strategies.
- Where American mink control is already undertaken; provision of further training, leading to increased legal and humane control throughout the River Dee Catchment.
- Where mink control is not currently undertaken; raising awareness of American mink presence and the need for control measures.
- Provision of information and training, in American mink control, to all landowners.
- Further research on American mink ecology in the River Dee catchment, including, home range size, dispersal distances and genetic variations between catchments.

LEGISLATION

See Action Pack Annex for information sources

- Eradicating alien species where they have a demonstrated negative impact is an agreed goal of the Convention for Biological Diversity.
- Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) makes it illegal to release American mink into the wild or to allow its escape from captivity.
- The Destructive Imported Animals Act (1932) makes it illegal to keep American mink without a licence.
- The Rabies Order (1974) controls the importation of American mink into the UK.
- WEWS Act.

GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

See Action Pack Annex for information sources

- Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) mink control leaflet (www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/vertebrates/leaflets.htm)
- The Game Conservancy Trust (GCT) mink raft (www.gct.org.uk)
- Dee District Salmon Fishery Board (013398 80411)
- Cairngorms Water Vole Conservation Project www.cairngorms.co.uk/parkauthority/projects/projects.php?project_id=27 (Project Officer: 01479 870570)
- North East Scotland LBAP Water Vole Conservation Project (01224 318611)
- Cairngorms LBAP leaflet on non-native species.

BENEFITS TO PROTECTED SPECIES

The following specially protected species will benefit from the Actions:

- Water vole *Arvicola terrestris*



Water vole (Jamie Urquhart)

30 SPECIES

RELATED ACTION CARDS

15. Effects of land management on river flow

20. Lowland wetlands

21. Upland wetlands

23. Wet and riparian woodland

AU University **DDSFB** Dee District Salmon Fishery Board **CLBAP** Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan **FWAG** Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group **NESBReC** North East Scotland Biological Records Centre **SEPA** Scottish Environment Protection Agency **SNH** Scottish Natural Heritage

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