

Otter Survey Summary - Glengarriff, Co. Cork

Survey Details

Surveyor: John Deasy

Date: 11/04/2019

Time: 1130 - 1700

Weather: Hazy sunshine, cloud 8/8, wind F1 SE, dry, visibility good

Tide (Castletownbere): HW 09:35 LW 16:02 Neap - 3 days

Methodology

The otter survey was undertaken following methodology outlined in *'Ecological Surveying Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes'* (NRA, 2009). Evidence of otter (live animals, spraints, prints, resting places) was searched for along the coastline from the 'Bamboo Park' in the east to west of Glengarriff pier including the outlet of the Reenmeen West River into Glengarriff Harbour and the small islets around the pier including Bush, Friar's and Bark islands. The southern side of Bark Island was not accessible due to dense vegetation and steep shoreline. Evidence of otter, if present, was recorded and photographed and the position recorded using a Garmin eTrex 10 GPS/GNSS receiver.

Results

- Desktop review

A number of records of otter exist on the National Biodiversity Data Centre database for the inner part of Glengarriff Harbour near the pier, including records of sightings of live animals (Table 1).

Table 1: Records for otter held by the National Biodiversity Data Centre for inner Glengarriff Harbour.

Date	Grid Reference	Evidence	Notes	Record Type
30/06/1980	V929563	Spraint and Mucous	Potential holt in tree roots (near bridge over Glengarriff River)	Otter Survey of Ireland 1982
12/02/2017	V932562	Live animal	-	Casual Record
03/06/2015	V931560	Live animal	-	Casual Record
12/06/2015	V936564	Live animal	-	Casual Record
12/06/2015	V937564	Live animal	-	Casual Record

- Field Survey

The results of the field survey are presented in Table 2 overleaf.

Table 2: Results of field surveys for otter around Glengarriff pier undertaken on 11th April 2019.

ID No	Easting (ITM)	Northing (ITM)	Location	Feature	Notes	Photos
1	493790	556725	Mainland	Spraint	Count of 5 spraints on boulder at edge of Reenmeen West River upstream of bridge over N71.	121654, 121659 and 121722
2	493782	556416	Mainland	Spraint	Multiple spraints on tuft of red fescue (Fish scales, crab fragments, mucous). Access to undergrowth beyond.	122808, 122822
3	493793	556415	Mainland	Potential holt	Tunnel into soft sediments overlying bedrock under tree roots.	123335, 123400 and 123414
4	493797	556393	Mainland	Spraint	Count of 4 old spraints on patch of red fescue and sea pink.	123715, 123838
5	493550	556492	Mainland	Spraint	Count of 1 old spraint on fishing gear pier.	125249, 125253
6	493505	556409	Mainland	Potential temporary resting place	Eroded depression in soft sediment under Rhododendron bush.	130720
7	493519	556412	Mainland	Spraint and temp. resting place	Multiple spraints on bank under Rhododendron with worn paths to sea. Fish bones and crab fragment contents. Worn path to intertidal.	131601, 131732, 132100 and 132138
8	493537	556407	Mainland	Spraint	Count of 7 spraints.	-
9	493531	556406	Mainland	Spraint and resting place	Large accumulation of spraints (fish bones, crab fragments) under dense Rhododendron cover. Paths leading to dense undergrowth and to intertidal.	132907, 132923 and 133059
10	493534	556352	Mainland	Spraint	Large accumulation of spraints (fish scales, bones and crab fragments) on concrete beam on pier under main concrete slab of pier next to new galvanised steps.	133704
11	493398	556341	Mainland	Spraint	Multiple spraints (fish bones, scales and crab fragments) on rock outcrop.	132907

ID No	Easting (ITM)	Northing (ITM)	Location	Feature	Notes	Photos
12	493391	556341	Mainland	Spraint and temp. resting place	Multiple spraints (fish bones, scales and crab fragments) near rock outcrop and salt marsh vegetation.	135527, 135533
13	493353	556337	Mainland	Spraint	Count of 5 spraint (mainly crab fragments) on rock outcrop.	140133
14	493645	556399	Bush Island	Spraint and couch	Multiple spraints, couch in grass and paths into dense undergrowth.	151046, 144229, 144539
15	493645	556399	Bush Island	Spraint	Count of 3 spraints.	144804
16	493650	556391	Bush Island	Spraint	Count of 2 spraints on tuft of grass.	144323
17	493564	556189	Friar's Island	Spraint	Multiple spraints on shoreline with path into dense bracken.	151059, 151108
18	493556	556191	Friar's Island	Spraint, couch and drying place	Multiple spraints on area of well flattened bracken.	151334, 151351
19	493536	556191	Friar's Island	Spraint and temp. resting place	Multiple spraints and worn ground on bank feature under dense Rhododendron. 'Well' feature adjacent.	151546 to 152031
20	493653	556089	Bark Island	Spraint	Count of 6 spraints on grassy tuft on west side of shoreline and path into dense Rhododendron growth.	153359, 153406
21	493700	556090	Bark Island	Spraint and temp. resting place	2 piles of multiple spraints and three well worn shallow depression hover features in dense Rhododendron.	153758 to 154058
22	493342	556346	Mainland	Spraint and temp. resting place	Large hollow c. .5m diameter and 1 m deep in sediment shoreline with multiple fresh spraints on small cobble at entrance.	163923, 163947 and 164013

Summary

An otter survey was undertaken in inner Glengarriff Harbour on the 11th April 2019 on an ebbing tide from mid to low tide. Weather conditions were suitable and the preceding days had been dry meaning any recent otter evidence was unlikely to have been washed away.

No live animals were observed during the course of the survey. While not unexpected as otters are mainly active during the dusk and night time, there have been a number of sightings of live otter in inner Glengarriff Harbour (Table 1) and a sighting of an otter was made east of Bush Island during a bird survey for MWP on 28th January 2019 by David Rees.

There was abundant evidence of otter presence across the study area.

- Holts

One potential holt (ID 3 in Table 2) was recorded at the eastern end of the study area along the shoreline near the 'Bamboo Park'. This feature consisted of a tunnel into soft sediments overlying the bedrock on the shoreline under a tree. Additional otter evidence (spraints) was recorded close by.

No other holt features were recorded within the study area including on the islets offshore of the pier during this survey.

- Couches and Potential temporary resting place

Numerous couch and temporary resting place features were recorded across the study area. Notably, these features were found in the immediate vicinity of the pier;

1) On the shoreline/ area of scrub/rhododendron behind the ticket office for the Garnish Island ferry (ID 7 and 9 in Table 2),

2) On the shoreline west of the pier (ID 22 in Table 2)

In addition couch and temporary resting place features were recorded on all three islets just offshore of Glengarriff pier. The evidence suggests that these areas are regularly used as feeding and resting areas. Disturbance levels were low at all three islands with only evidence of a small garden shed and mooring at Bark Island (the furthest from the pier) indicating it is infrequently visited by humans.

- Spraints and Sprainting Sites

Spraints and sprainting sites were frequently recorded within the survey area, often in association with the other features above. Spraints were also found on the pier structure.

In summary, inner Glengarriff Harbour is highly suitable for otter. The evidence suggests that otter are active in all parts of the inner harbour including on the pier and temporary resting places recorded very close to the pier. Features that make the area suitable for otters includes two rivers, the Glengarriff and the Reenmeen West entering the bay to the west and east of the pier,

respectively. In addition, there is abundant suitable foraging habitat and numerous areas for otters to rest and shelter with dense woodland and scrub coming right down to the intertidal zone at many locations across the study area and harbour. Furthermore, uninhabited islets with dense undergrowth just offshore of the pier (particularly Friar's and Bark Islands) provide ideal habitat for otters to feed and rest on without disturbance.