

New Forest Non-Native Plants Project



Avon Water newsletter *April 2020*

Welcome

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project aims to stop the spread of invasive non-native plants in the New Forest area, particularly along river banks and in wetland habitats. Catherine Chatters and Jo Gore, the New Forest Non-Native Plants Officers, are helping landowners meet their responsibilities to stop the spread of giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam along the Avon Water. This newsletter provides an update on the progress we are making and looks ahead to the future.

Coronavirus

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is inevitably affecting the activities of the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project (NFNNPP). Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust is taking the situation very seriously. In response to Government advice we cancelled the event which had been planned for the evening of Thursday 19 March 2020 when the New Forest Non-Native Plants Officers, Catherine Chatters and Jo Gore, had intended to meet landowners and review progress to control Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed along the Avon Water.

As the meeting had to be cancelled, hopefully this newsletter will help to keep riparian landowners and land managers in touch with the Project.

The NFNNPP has secured funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund through the New Forest 'Our Past, Our Future' Landscape Partnership Scheme for Catherine and Jo to continue working on the Project until the end of September 2020. We had hoped to be leading volunteer work parties to pull Himalayan balsam from May 2020 but these have had to be cancelled. The situation will be reviewed by the Wildlife Trust at the end of May.

Catherine has contacted relevant landowners to let them know that funding has been secured for contractors to undertake giant hogweed treatment during 2020. Hopefully this will still go ahead but we will have to respond in the light of current Government guidance. The most important thing is that everyone keeps as safe as possible in these difficult and uncertain times.



Volunteers pulling Himalayan balsam along the Avon Water at Wainsford on a sunny day in June 2019

Himalayan balsam

Himalayan balsam was introduced to the UK as an ornamental garden plant in the early nineteenth century but has become very invasive and can out-compete native vegetation. It has colonised river banks in the New Forest area. Luckily it has short roots and is easy to pull up.



Himalayan balsam (photo: Ashley Basil)

During 2019 the New Forest Non-Native Plants Officers led groups of enthusiastic volunteers to pull up the Himalayan balsam growing along the banks of the Avon Water. Excellent progress has been made and the balsam has almost been eradicated at some sites where we've been working for the past few years.

Thank you to all the landowners who have welcomed the volunteers on to your land and provided car parking space. Your continued co-operation is so important to the success of the Project and is very much appreciated. Depending on the Coronavirus situation, we hope to be leading more volunteer work parties to pull up Himalayan balsam along the Avon Water during Summer 2020.



Photo above shows a keen volunteer pulling Himalayan balsam along the Avon Water on 12 June 2019.

Photo on the left shows volunteers at the end of a Himalayan balsam pull along the Avon Water at Gordleton Rise on 31 May 2019.



Himalayan balsam (continued)

Here is a selection of photographs showing some more people who kindly volunteered to help with Himalayan balsam control along the Avon Water during Summer and early Autumn 2019.

People enjoy volunteering to pull balsam with the NFNNPP as it is a great way to get some fresh air and exercise in the company of like-minded people whilst doing something useful to help the environment.



During 2019 a total of 161 people generously gave 2,322.5 hours of their time to help the NFNNPP with Himalayan balsam pulls in the New Forest area. Many of the volunteers were local residents from the New Forest and surrounding areas. Some of the other volunteers participated in corporate work parties as shown in the photos on the next page.

As well as helping to pull the Himalayan balsam along the banks of the Avon Water, the volunteers also participated in balsam pulls along the Cadnam River, the Beaulieu River, the Fleet Water, the Lymington River and two of its tributaries, the Passford Water and the Mill Lawn Brook.



Himalayan balsam (continued)

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Officers were delighted to welcome the corporate groups who helped to pull Himalayan balsam along the Avon Water during Summer 2019.



The photo on the left and the one below show staff from BT who helped with balsam pulling along the Avon Water downstream of Efford Bridge on 10 July 2019

Photo below shows corporate group from SSE who pulled balsam along the Avon Water on 19 June 2019



The photo on the right shows two members of staff from BDO who enjoyed pulling balsam along the Avon Water in the vicinity of South Sway Lane on 20 June 2019



Giant hogweed

Giant hogweed was introduced to the UK as a garden plant in the Victorian era but has invaded the countryside and has colonised the banks of the Avon Water. It is unlawful to plant it in the wild or otherwise cause it to grow in the wild. Although it is the landowner's responsibility to stop it spreading, the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project (NFNNPP) recognises that help is needed for effective control at the catchment scale.



Photos above and right were taken during June 2009 before the co-ordinated programme of herbicide treatment commenced along the Avon Water.

The NFNNPP has arranged another co-ordinated programme of herbicide treatment to be undertaken by professional contractors to control the giant hogweed along the Avon Water in summer 2020. We hope the treatment can be undertaken but obviously this will depend on Government advice relating to the Coronavirus situation.



The herbicide treatment undertaken during the past decade, together with manual control undertaken by some landowners, has dramatically reduced the population of Giant hogweed along the Avon Water. The Giant hogweed plant seen in the photo on the left, taken on 12 June 2019, is typical of the scattered plants that now occur.

Monitoring the success of control work

The photos below are reminders of the density of giant hogweed (left) and Himalayan balsam (right) at some sites along the Avon Water prior to the co-ordinated control work initiated by the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project.

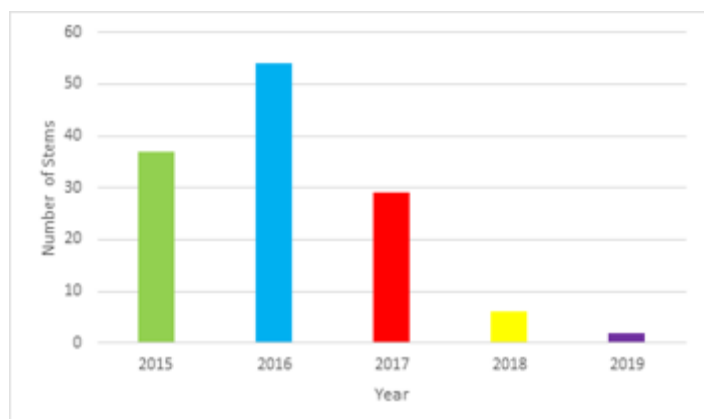


To assess the effectiveness of work undertaken using Lottery funding, students from University of Southampton carried out a baseline survey of Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed at sample sites along the Avon Water during 2015 and these sites have been monitored by students each summer in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.



The photos on the left show Dominika and Rebecca who undertook the baseline survey during 2015 and Sophie and Rachael who did the monitoring in 2019.

The monitoring has revealed substantial decreases of the invasive non-native species at all the sample sites. The graph below reveals the decrease in giant hogweed at one of the survey sites (please note that the apparent increase during 2016 is due to plants being mis-identified).



Thank you to the landowners who have welcomed the students on to their land. The monitoring has been of great benefit to the Project as well as giving the students valuable work experience.

Invasive Species Week

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project heled to promote Invasive Species Week during May 2019. This national initiative, organised by the Great Britain Non-Native Species Secretariat, aims to raise awareness about invasive non-native species and the problems they cause.

During Invasive Species Week Catherine visited garden centres and spoke to staff and customers to promote 'Be Plant Wise', a government campaign to encourage people to garden responsibly and ensure they don't dump garden waste in the countryside.



Photos above and right show staff at Southern Aquatics in Cadnam and at Everton Water Garden. Photo below shows customers at Romsey World of Water.



Invasive Species Week provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the invasive non-native plants which are now banned from sale.

Catherine also gave a talk at Redcliffe Garden Centre to alert gardeners to the problems caused by invasive non-native plants.

Awareness-raising events

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, which hosts the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project (NFNPP), is one of the partners in the New Forest 'Our Past, Our Future' Landscape Partnership Scheme. This is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and aims to conserve and restore landscapes and habitats and inspire a new generation to champion the area. In addition to providing resources for practical work, the NLHF provides funding which enables the NFNPP to raise awareness about invasive non-native plants.

Last year the NFNPP hosted awareness-raising sessions for Network Rail staff and contractors, Young Commoners and volunteers to help people recognise invasive non-native plants, understand the problems they can cause and find out how to control them.



The photograph above shows New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer Jo Gore with some of the participants identifying pictures of invasive non-native plants during the training session for Network Rail staff and contractors in March 2019.



Photo above: volunteers during the awareness-raising session on 6 November 2019. Many of these people helped with the control of Himalayan balsam along the banks of the Avon Water during Summer and early Autumn 2019.

Photo on right: three of the Young Commoners at the awareness-raising session held in Lyndhurst on 10 May 2019.



Awareness –raising events (continued)

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project attended the Wood Fair at Roydon Woods in June last year and had a display at a nature reserve open day at Lymington in September.



Photos show visitors to the NFNNPP displays at the Wood Fair (left) and nature reserve open day at Lymington (below).



Project shortlisted for CPRE Award

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project was selected as a finalist in the Community and Voluntary category of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England's Hampshire Countryside Awards 2019.

Photograph shows Nigel Atkinson, Lord Lieutenant for Hampshire, presenting a certificate to the Project Officers and volunteers Patsy Baverstock and Brian Matthews at the CPRE Hampshire Countryside Awards ceremony on 17 September 2019.



Photo credit: Jason Allen Photography

New Forest Non-Native Plants Project Forum

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project annual Forum meeting, held on Wednesday 4 March 2020, was attended by over 50 people. Patrick Heneghan introduced the event on behalf of the New Forest National Park Authority. Trevor Renals, the Environment Agency's national specialist on invasive non-native species, gave a fascinating presentation on the control of Creeping Water Primrose, putting the work of the Project into a national and international context. Jo Gore and Catherine Chatters then summarised the activities of the Project since its launch over a decade ago in May 2009. Thanks were expressed to everyone who has supported the Project.

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Catherine Chatters, New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer, pulling Himalayan balsam, photographed by Ashley Basil.



Hampshire & Isle of Wight
Wildlife Trust

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project is a partnership project hosted by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and supported by a number of organisations



Our Past, Our Future
Working together for the New Forest



All advice given by HIWWT is done so in good faith and every effort is made to ensure that it is accurate and appropriate however it is the sole responsibility of the landowner to ensure that any actions they take are both legally and contractually compliant. Therefore, HIWWT does not accept responsibility or liability for any losses incurred or arising from the advice we give.

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