

# New Forest Non-Native Plants Project

Volunteers' newsletter

January 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 extremely grateful for the enormous amount of help given by volunteers, particularly with the control of Himalayan balsam. This newsletter provides an update on the progress we are making and looks ahead to the future.

## Himalayan balsam

Himalayan balsam was introduced to the UK as an ornamental garden plant during the nineteenth century. It thrives



Himalayan balsam leaves in early summer



Himalayan balsam flowers and seed pods  
(Photo: Ashley Basil)

in damp areas along rivers. When its seed pods are ripe they 'explode' to release the seeds which can fall into a nearby watercourse to be carried downstream and form dense colonies of plants, often reaching 4 or 5 metres tall and out-competing our native wild flowers.

Himalayan balsam is listed in Part 2 of Schedule 2 of The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019. It is therefore unlawful to plant it in the wild or otherwise cause it to grow in the wild. Luckily it has short roots and is easy to pull up so balsam pulling can be very satisfying.

# Volunteer activity to control Himalayan balsam

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project has led volunteer work parties to pull Himalayan balsam since Summer 2009, focusing on the Lymington River and its tributaries (the Passford Water and the Mill Lawn Brook), the Cadnam River, the Avon Water and the Beaulieu River. Our volunteers are continuing to make a big difference and we are making good progress.



Last year 161 people volunteered with the Project to pull Himalayan balsam and generously gave 2,322.5 hours of their time, braving the heat and often having to cope with very muddy conditions, especially along the Lymington River where excellent progress has been achieved.

In addition to our 'regular' volunteers we had lots of help from corporate groups including staff from GE Aviation, as shown in the photo above. We are also grateful for help from HSBC, BDO, BT, The Phoenix Group, Southern Co-op Board members, SSE, the Chartered Institute of Ecologists and Environmental Management and the National Trust.



Staff from BT pulling balsam along the Avon Water on 10 July 2019

Staff from Forestry England and the New Forest National Park Authority also lent a hand.

Further balsam pulls have been arranged for Summer 2020. If you would like a copy of the programme for 2020, please ask Catherine Chatters (whose contact details are on the back page of this newsletter).



Balsam pullers at Paultons Park in 2019

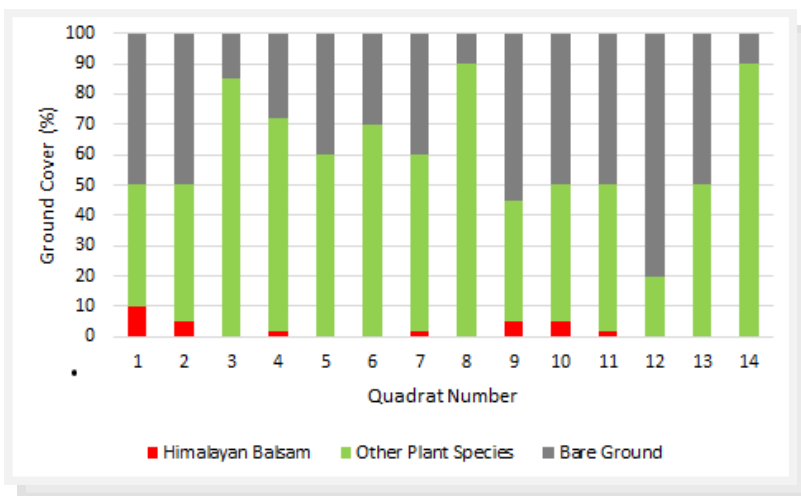
# More photos of Himalayan balsam pulls in 2019



# Monitoring the control of Himalayan balsam

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project receives funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund through the New Forest 'Our Past, Our Future' Landscape Partnership Scheme for the control of Himalayan balsam. To demonstrate the effectiveness of volunteer work parties to control Himalayan balsam, three sites were chosen for a baseline survey undertaken by students from Southampton University during summer 2015.

These three sites, along the Cadnam River, the Avon Water and the Lymington River, have been monitored by two students during 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Each year the students have recorded the percentage cover of Himalayan balsam, other plant species and bare ground in a number of quadrats at each monitoring site. The results are very encouraging.

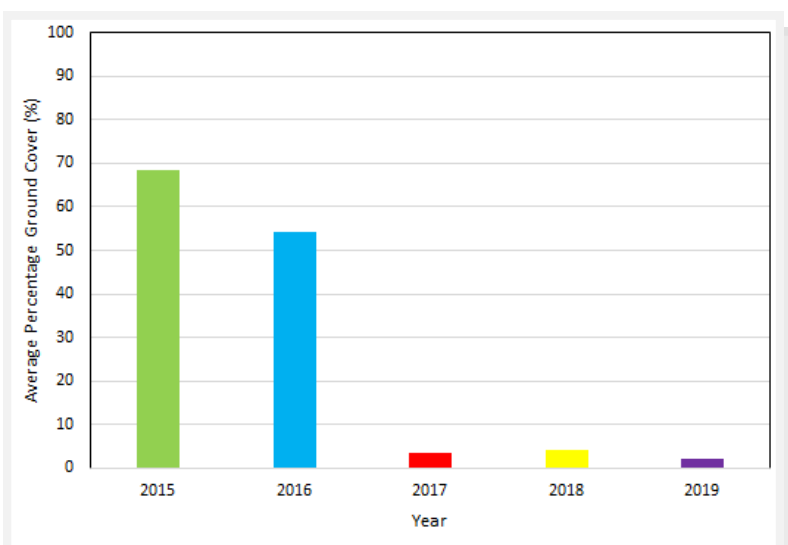


Percentage cover of Himalayan balsam, other plant species and bare ground in each quadrat at the monitoring site along the Cadnam River in 2019



Sophie Minns and Rachael Anderson of Southampton University, as shown in the photograph above, undertook the monitoring during summer 2019. Some of the results from their report are shown in the graphs on the left.

The monitoring has demonstrated that at all three sample sites there has been a huge reduction in the amount of Himalayan balsam, thanks to the hard work by everyone who has helped to pull balsam at these sites since work started here in 2016.



Percentage cover of Himalayan balsam at the monitoring site on the Cadnam River in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019

# We're grateful for all the help from volunteers

On the afternoon of Monday 25 November 2019 Jo Gore and Catherine Chatters hosted an event at Brockenhurst Village Hall to say 'thank you' to people who volunteered with the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project during 2019. Jo and Catherine gave a talk about volunteering activities during the past year and then everyone enjoyed a chat over a cup of tea and home-made cakes.

In addition to participating in Himalayan balsam pulling and other practical work parties, some of the volunteers who support the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project help in other ways, for example by welcoming people to training sessions hosted by the Project Officers.

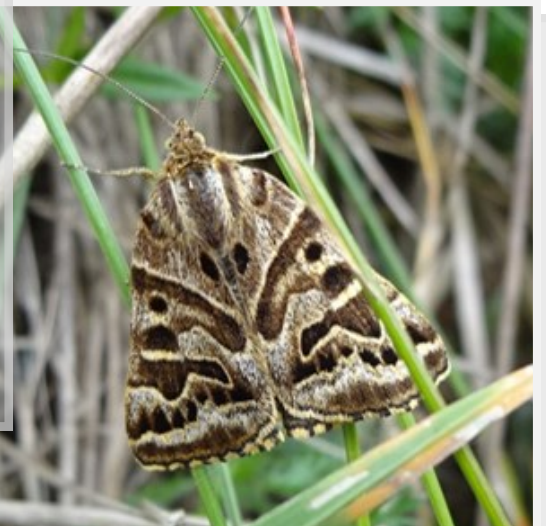
Jo and Catherine are grateful to everyone who supports the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project. The success of the Project depends on the huge amount of help given by the large number of enthusiastic and hard-working volunteers who give their time so generously. Thank you to you all!

## Wildlife seen during Himalayan balsam pulls

As well as knowing that you're helping to care for the environment, there are lots of other reasons for participating in Himalayan balsam pulls. Some volunteers come because they enjoy the chance to get a bit of exercise and spend some time in the fresh air in the company of like-minded people. Other people appreciate the opportunity to explore parts of the countryside that are not usually accessible and, of course, there's always the chance that you'll see some interesting wildlife. Here are some photos of wildlife seen during balsam pulls in 2019.



Scorpion fly seen on 20 May 2019 during a balsam pull along the Cadnam River



Mother Shipton moth photographed during a balsam pull along the Cadnam River on 20 May 2019

# Contact details

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Jo Gore, New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer, by flowering Himalayan balsam



Catherine Chatters, New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer, pulling Himalayan balsam (photo: 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*



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