

Non-Native Species Secretariat Newsletter Issue 1 - August 2011

Welcome

This newsletter is aimed at a broad audience and is designed to promote better sharing of information and greater awareness of the latest developments concerning invasive non-native species (INNS) and to encourage partnership working. Furthermore this newsletter provides an opportunity for local groups to share experiences of tackling the INNS problems in their area.

We are looking for contributions for the next newsletter. If you have any ideas please email: nnss@fera.gsi.gov.uk.

News Alert

'Invasive shrimp' arrives in GB

Dikerogammarus villosus is an invasive non-native shrimp that has spread from the Ponto-Caspian Region of Eastern Europe. It is a voracious predator of other aquatic invertebrates and can radically alter the species composition of freshwater ecosystems.



D. villosus was first found in GB at Grafham

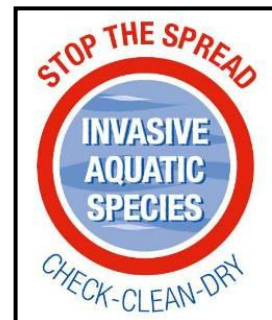
Water, Cambridgeshire in early September. It was subsequently recorded at Cardiff Bay and Eglwys Nunydd reservoir in south Wales in late November 2010. So far, an extensive monitoring programme led by the Environment Agency has yet to detect the shrimp at any new sites. We do not know how the shrimp got to GB, but it can be spread in the ballast water of ships, and Environment Agency tests have shown that it can survive for up to 15 days on damp surfaces such as waders and watersports equipment. Good biosecurity is essential to reduce the risk of spreading the shrimp. Anglers and boat users at Grafham Water and South Wales have acted swiftly to adopt the new biosecurity measures.

In line with the GB strategy on INNS and our rapid response approach, the Environment Agency is coordinating the operational

response to the invasive shrimp through a Task Group which includes officials from Defra, Welsh Government, CCW and Natural England. Further information, including biosecurity guidance, can be found at: www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/killershrimp.

Check, Clean and Dry Campaign

Gold medal Olympic rower and London 2012 ambassador, Ben Hunt-Davis joined Environment Minister Richard Benyon on Monday 28th March to launch the *Check, Clean, Dry* campaign. The campaign encourages everyone who works or enjoys leisure time in the aquatic environment to follow biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of spreading invasive species and diseases. The aim is to increase awareness of the ease by which people can unwittingly spread INNS as they move between different bodies of water such as rowing lakes. Individual organisms, eggs, larvae and plant fragments can be carried on equipment, clothing and footwear so all water users are being asked to take 'Check, Clean and Dry' - simple steps to help prevent spread of the species to healthy waterways. Minister Benyon said:



"Aggressive species from across the world have the potential to reach Britain and cause real damage and even wipe out some of our native wildlife. We all have a duty to stop this from happening, and all those that use the water for recreation and sport can do their bit by heeding the advice to Check, Clean and Dry their boats and gear..."

The campaign has been delivered by working with stakeholder partners, government agencies, as well as landowners, water users and conservation groups. Their role is critical in spreading the campaign messages. For more information and to find out how to help go to:

www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry.

EU Invasive Alien Species Strategy

The European Commission has been actively progressing its work to develop a Strategy on IAS for the EU, and this now forms a target in its recently published Biodiversity Strategy for the EU. UK interests, both Government and non-Government, have taken an active part in 3 Commission Working groups and have led on the development of four out of nine specific task papers which have now been published at: http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/ias/librariy?l=/general_information/working_prevention/final_working_groups&vm=detailed&sb=Title . More information can be found here: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/index.cfm?pageid=211> .

INNS Species Focus

Sucker Punch

At the beginning of 2010 a license was granted for the release of the psyllid *Aphalara itadori* for the control of Japanese knotweed. This was the first time the release of an exotic natural enemy for the control of a weed has been officially approved in the EU.

Japanese knotweed is one of the most damaging invasive weeds in the UK, Europe and North America. Growing up to a metre a month, it can push through tarmac and concrete as well as displace native species. It was recently estimated to be costing the GB economy over £160 million per year and its impact on the environment is equally intimidating. This is why natural or biological control is being attempted. Amongst over 200 insects and fungi tested, the sap-sucking psyllid was identified by CABI scientists as being a knotweed specialist and extensive testing has shown that it cannot maintain a population on anything other than the target plants.



The first phase of the release was carried out under license in 2010 in a small number of locations. The late frosts that year hindered

the project but the additional data generated confirmed lab results and the Phase II releases took place in Spring 2011. For further information see: <http://www.cabi.org/default.aspx?site=170&page=1017&pid=5589> .

Reporting & Identification The Non-native Species Information Portal

The Non-Native Species Information Portal (NNSIP) has been developed to act as a 'hub' for information about NNS in Britain and stakeholders are encouraged to help populate the database. The aim is to enable more comprehensive, up to date reporting of NNS and the analysis of species populations and distributions. Currently over 100 detailed fact sheets of individual species can be accessed. This number will reach over 300 when the Portal is launched fully in October this year. The Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, along with the British Trust for Ornithology and Marine Biological Association have been developing and populating the Portal for two years under contract to Defra. Many other interested parties have been populating the database with species populations and distributions across GB.

There is also an 'Alerts System' within the Portal which provides a means of on-line reporting of possible new NNS arrivals.

The Portal is accessible to anyone so please get involved and help create a dynamic and up to date database to inform policy and action across GB. Try out the Portal for yourself at: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/factsheet/index.cfm> .

The Portal also contains a system called RISC, which seeks records from the public on certain species. If you see these INNS please report it to 'RISC' by using the weblink given in the extract below.

Recording Invasive Species Counts

The RISC (Recording Invasive Species Counts) project has been developed to increase participation in recording INNS and to encourage greater understanding of them. It builds on the Harlequin Ladybird project (<http://www.harlequin-survey.org/>) which has



been successful, primarily because of the involvement of the public and volunteers in registering sightings, and is contributing to our understanding of the distribution and ecology of an INNS from the moment of arrival.

RISC runs the survey in association with the relevant national recording schemes and societies for the fourteen selected species. Recorders who spot one of the



species are asked to upload a photo of their sighting, which is then checked and verified by the relevant recording society, along with other standard information about the record. Sightings and photos can be uploaded at: www.nonnativespecies.org/recording where further information and fact sheets can also be found. Details of the 14 species can be found on the website.

Invasive Species Compendium

The Invasive Species Compendium is a global, online, encyclopaedic reference work, consisting of species data sheets, recent research findings and notes from conferences. It was developed by CABI, with the support of an international consortium including Defra and was launched in June 2011.

It was designed as a tool for policymakers, researchers, resource managers and extension workers (i.e. those who train farmers & conservationists) in the areas of agriculture and the environment. The Invasive Species Compendium will be a gateway to research and management information about invasive species, allowing users to prepare training courses and information resources, identify research needs, advise decision-makers and support risk analyses.

The Invasive Species Compendium is freely available to all on an open access basis and will be maintained and regularly updated. For further information, please see: www.cabi.org/isc .

Legislation & Guidance

The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 2nd March 2011 and received Royal Assent on 7th April 2011, when it became the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act and can be accessed at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2011/6/contents/enacted> . The provisions contained within the Act enable Scotland to lead the way in adopting the internationally recognised 3-stage approach to dealing with invasive non-native species and aim to:

- 1) prevent the release and spread of non-native animal and plant species into areas where they can cause damage to native species and habitats and to economic interests;
- 2) ensure a rapid response to new populations can be undertaken; and
- 3) ensure effective control and eradication measures can be carried out when problem situations arise.

The Act makes changes to the release offences in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and adds new sections on keeping, notification and control.

Horticultural Code of Practice

A revised Horticultural Code of Practice covering England and Wales was issued by the Secretary of State and the Welsh Ministers in March of this year. It provides advice and guidance on the responsible use, control and disposal of invasive non-native plants, for people using plants in the horticultural trade, gardening or related activities. It aims to provide much simpler advice than the original code of practice that was launched in 2005, but is backed up by more detailed guidance on particular aspects in a dedicated area of the Non-native Species Secretariat's website at: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/index.cfm?pageid=299> .

Following an update to the Government Buying Standards for Horticultural Services, compliance with the code of practice is now mandatory for those tendering for contracts for government departments.

Management & Events

NNS Local Action Groups

A number of diverse partnership initiatives around the country, referred to as “Local Action Groups” (LAGs), have risen to the challenges set out in the GB Strategy and are developing or implementing local action to tackle the INNS problem - often on a county or river-catchment basis. Government is keen to support these initiatives and guidance and other resources, including a map providing information on those that have registered their details with the GB NNS Secretariat can be found here:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/index.cfm?sectionid=26> .

On 25th and 26th January 2011 the Non-native Species Secretariat (NNSS) organised the second LAG workshop which was funded by Defra at Preston Montford Field Centre, Shrewsbury.



For further information see:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/index.cfm?pageid=330> .

In each Newsletter we will include a short article from different LAG's so they can share their experiences of tackling INNS in their local area. We begin with the Norfolk project.

Focus on Norfolk

The Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative (NNNSI) was launched in September 2008 by the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership. It aims to promote and support the prevention, control and eradication of invasive, alien species in Norfolk.

It was decided that the NNNSI should initially focus on invasive aquatic and riparian plants including Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and New Zealand pygmyweed. To plan effective control of these species requires up-to-date and detailed information on their distribution, so the NNNSI issued a ‘Call for Data’ to a wide range of individuals and bodies

that might hold records of these species. These new records supplemented those already in the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service database. These data helped develop a ‘Status Report and Action Plan’ which sets out a strategic approach to reducing the impacts of these species between 2009-2013.



This report has generated a lot of activity on the ground in Norfolk, with many projects now underway to control and eradicate these species at strategic sites. One of the NNNSI's flagship projects is the eradication of floating pennywort from the River Waveney. To help involve more volunteers in efforts to remove invasive plants, and to raise awareness of the issues, the NNNSI has also held a ‘Day of Action’ to control invasive species in 2009 and 2010.

The NNNSI has also held public displays, the most recent of which took place at the Royal Norfolk Show on the 29th and 30th June 2011. The NNNSI has also been active in promoting the ‘Be Plant Wise’ campaign and more recently the ‘Check, Clean, Dry’ bio-security campaign. An Annual Norfolk Non-native Species Stakeholders’ Forum has given a wide variety of stakeholders an opportunity to learn more about the worst invasive non-native species in Norfolk, the work being done to control these species and future threats.

The scope of work supported by the NNNSI has broadened since it launched. The NNNSI Co-ordinator is now also involved in projects to conserve the native white-clawed crayfish and prevent further declines in water vole populations by trapping mink, although the main focus of the Initiative's work remains on aquatic and riparian plant species.

The Forum

The forum is an annual event organised by the Secretariat, involving presentations, workshops and feedback sessions.

The forum provides an opportunity for discussion of strategic NNS issues and is a means of engaging stakeholders in the development of non-native species policy and



objectives. The event encourages debate and helps to facilitate information exchange. The Eighth Stakeholder Forum on NNS was held in Edinburgh on 18th May 2011 and key outputs from the meeting will be published on the NNSS website later this summer.

Future Events

30-Aug-2011 - The 11th International Conference on the Ecology and Management of alien plant invasions.

14-15-Sept-2011 – Marine Invasive Species Identification Workshop, Scottish Marine Institute, Oban.

21-Sept-2011 - Keeping up to date with non-native species.

13-Oct-2011 - Invasive Non-Native Species in Scotland - 1st Annual Workshop Meeting.

21-Nov-2011 - BIOLIEF 2011 - 2nd World Conference on Biological Invasions and Ecosystem Functioning.

More events at: www.nonnativespecies.org

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The next issue will be published later this year.