



## NORFOLK NON-NATIVE SPECIES INITIATIVE

### CO-ORDINATOR'S PROGRESS REPORT: 8 July 2011 – 6 December 2011

#### 1. Introduction

This report provides a brief summary of the actions of the Non-native Species Initiative Co-ordinator from 8<sup>th</sup> July 2011 up to the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2011. It seeks to: record the progress that has been achieved; identify any obstacles or difficulties that have been encountered; and highlight some priorities for the next few months. For ease of reference, the report has been organised according to the strategic aims of the Initiative's Action Plan.

#### 2. Recent Highlights

Highlights since the last meeting of the Steering Group have included:

- Helping to establish Norfolk's first white-clawed crayfish Ark site: The native white-clawed crayfish is threatened with extinction within the next 50 years. This is primarily due to competition with introduced species of crayfish, and infection with the exotic diseases which they also carry. To help ensure the survival of the white-clawed crayfish in the longer term organisations are being encouraged to establish 'Ark' sites. These are areas where white-clawed crayfish can live and breed naturally, away from any threats. 'Ark' sites for the white-clawed crayfish have already been created successfully elsewhere in the UK, including Suffolk. In Norfolk we still have some remaining populations of healthy white-clawed crayfish, with one of the largest being on the River Glaven. Unfortunately this population is threatened by signal crayfish, which have established in a tributary of the river. In September 2011 300 white-clawed crayfish were successfully translocated from the River Glaven to a nearby river, which despite having large stretches of ideal crayfish habitat, was found not to contain any at the current time. However, there are historical records of white-clawed crayfish being present on the river. It is too early to confirm whether the project has been successful, and the 'Ark' site will be subject to ongoing monitoring for a number of years.
- Floating pennywort eradication project: The River Waveney Floating Pennywort project completed its 2011 work programme in mid-November. The contractor has reported finding significantly less of the weed during the 2011 field season, as compared with 2010, demonstrating the effect that the project is having. Additional funding brought in to the project through RINSE should ensure that the current level of effort can be maintained, and help to achieve the target of eradication by the end of 2012.
- Secured additional funding from Defra for a number of WFD related projects: In July 2011 the NNNSI was invited to submit proposals to Defra for projects that will help deliver 'good ecological status' on Norfolk's waterbodies which are affected by invasive non-native species. A total of 14 project ideas were submitted, and subsequently approved. Projects included a survey of IAS on the River Waveney, promotion of the *Check, Clean, Dry* campaign in the Broads, a trial of the use of dye as a tool to eradicate submerged *Crassula helmsii* and the development of IAS recording packs for RiverCare groups across Norfolk.
- Successful outcome for the RINSE bid: At the end of November 2011 we were informed by the EU Two Seas Interreg Secretariat that the RINSE (Reducing the Impacts of Non-native Species in Europe) bid had been successful. RINSE is an ambitious project,

involving nine organisations in the UK, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. The project includes three core work packages:

- Targeting & prioritisation
- Training & Awareness Raising
- Field Trials & Demonstration Projects

The project will lever a significant amount of additional funding to support the activities of the NNNSI until September 2014, and will form a major part of the project's programme of work over this period. This is a very exciting development for the NNNSI and Norfolk County Council, who as Lead Partner have an opportunity to shape and direct this high-profile project, which totals in excess of 2.5 million Euros.

### **3. Priorities for the Next Four Months**

Priorities for the next four months include:

- Implementation of RINSE;
- Implementation of Defra funded WFD projects;
- Planning of field work and Community Action Days for 2012.

### **4. Summary of Progress**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b><i>Aim 1: Mechanisms are in place to detect the arrival of new invasive non-native species and prevent their spread.</i></b>	
1.1 Develop a "black list" and horizon scanning methodology for Norfolk.	This activity is included within the 'Targeting & prioritisation' RINSE work package.
1.2 Implement the process for identification of appropriate actions using a risk-based toolkit at sites infested with the Initiative's priority species.	Due to the pressures of other work, this action has been delayed. NBIS have provisionally agreed to carry out this work.
<b><i>Aim 2: Up-to-date, comprehensive and accurate information is available on the distribution and status of riparian/aquatic invasive non-native species</i></b>	
2.1 Further develop and expand the centralised database of non-native species records and map distribution using GIS.	Records continue to be submitted by members of the public and field staff from a variety of organisations. As a part of the RINSE project we now have funds to develop two Apps to record invasive species in the field. One of these will be for un-trained members of the public, the other for more experienced field workers who will already be familiar with a range of invasive species. An invitation to tender for the project to develop the Apps is currently being developed, and this should be issued in early 2012. The Apps should be ready for field-testing in mid-2012.
2.2 Carry out a survey of invasive non-native plant species in selected North Norfolk AONB rivers (with a particular focus on chalk rivers).	A survey of the River Stiffkey was carried out in Summer 2011 by a Masters student from UCL, who was also carrying out a study to assess the quality of habitat for white-clawed crayfish.
2.3 Organise at least one training session per year for key stakeholders on invasive non-native plant identification.	No further progress has been made since the previous Progress Report. A series of training sessions will be held with RiverCare

	volunteer groups in 2012.
2.4 Carry out a 'Citizen science' survey of key invasive species in the Broads.	Following comments from the Steering Group on the draft survey form, a final version was produced in August 2011. 2,000 copies of the leaflet have been printed, and distributed to a range of locations across the Broads including pubs, boat hire centres, angling shops and tourist information centres. The survey was also promoted in the 2011 issue of 'Tern', produced by Norfolk Wildlife Trust. The online recording component of the survey has proven to be extremely popular, and is by far the most common method used to submit records.
2.5 Carry out a survey on the distribution and status of giant hogweed on the River Yare.	The NNNSI Co-ordinator and a volunteer carried out a waterborne survey of the affected stretch of the river in April 2011. A further survey will be carried out in April 2012.
<b>Aim 3: Invasive non-native species are eradicated or controlled at sites of strategic importance.</b>	
3.1 Aid the WMA in the eradication of giant hogweed on the River Nar.	No further progress since last Progress Report. Unfortunately the funding application to help ensure the continuation of this project beyond 2011 was unsuccessful, although some follow up spraying should still be carried out.
3.2 Control and significantly reduce giant hogweed along a 21 kilometre stretch of the River Yare, between Cringleford Bridge and the RSPB Reserve at Strumpshaw Fen.	Following the survey that was carried out in April 2011, a contractor was engaged to spray priority sites. Although the abundance of giant hogweed on the affected stretch has been greatly reduced, significant patches still remain and this work will continue in 2012.
3.3 Control and significantly reduce Himalayan balsam along the upper reaches of the River Wensum SSSI.	During Summer 2011 a contractor was used to cut the Himalayan balsam at badly affected sites around Lenwade and Lyng. Groups of volunteers have been removing the plant at sites closer to Norwich.
3.4 Eradicate floating pennywort from the Broads and adjacent river catchments.	The first Floating Pennywort Steering Group of 2011 was held on 27 <sup>th</sup> May 2011, with work in the field commencing from mid-May. Steering Group meetings were held every 1-2 months for the duration of the field work in 2011. By November 2011 the extent of the infestation of the plant on the River Waveney has been reduced even further from 2010 levels, ensuring that the project remain on track to eradicate the plant by the end of 2012.
3.5 Eradicate Himalayan balsam from Swannington Upgate Common SSSI (on a tributary of the River Wensum SSSI).	Clearance by volunteers was carried out in the Summer 2011. This was organised in collaboration with Natural England. One pond at this site was also found to contain the invasive aquatic weed <i>Crassula helmsii</i> . This has now been sprayed with herbicide, but requires ongoing management.
3.6 Aid BA and Somerleyton Estate in intensively controlling and reducing rhododendron at Fritton Lakes Country Park,	During Winter 2010/2011 the Somerleyton Estate cleared a large amount of <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> from the area

<p>in order to open up woodland and waterside areas.</p>	<p>surrounding Fritton Lake. This has been done using a combination of volunteers and forestry contractors. The habitat in the area is much improved, and areas of reed bed are beginning to return.</p>
<p>3.7 Test new approaches/methods to control <i>Crassula helmsii</i> at Richard Waddingham's ponds in Briston.</p>	<p>'Hot foam' was applied to one of the ponds infested with <i>Crassula helmsii</i> at Briston in October 2011. This is an innovative method to control invasive weeds, which uses heat contained in the organic foam to kill the plants. Initial results are promising; with almost complete death of the plant. A follow up visit was carried out in December 2011 to hand pick any remaining patches. Monitoring of the site will be carried out as a part of the annual UCL surveys of the ponds in this area.</p>
<p>3.8 Eradicate <i>Crassula helmsii</i> from Wickhampton and Halvergate Marshes.</p>	<p>No further progress since the last report. A full survey of the extent of <i>Crassula helmsii</i> in the area should be carried out in the near future. This will help plan future control of the plant in this area.</p>
<p>3.9 Eradicate parrot's feather from Sutton Garden Centre drains and ponds.</p>	<p>Despite the programme of work being completed in 2010, and a survey in early 2011 revealing no visible parrot's feather on the site, new growth has recently been found in certain areas. Spraying of these patches will be carried out in early December 2011. <i>Crassula helmsii</i> is also present on the site, and is being controlled using a combination of both herbicide and dye as a part of further field trials to find the most effective way to control this species.</p>
<p>3.10 Eradicate <i>Crassula helmsii</i> from Filby Broad.</p>	<p>The programme of works was completed in June 2011. This comprised using a combination of herbicide treatment and removal of contaminated soil using a 360 digger. Although some small patches have been found, eradication is still considered achievable.</p>
<p>3.11 Control <i>Crassula helmsii</i> at Winterton-Horsey Dunes SSSI/SAC.</p>	<p>No further progress. Work should be carried out in the near future.</p>
<p>3.12 Eradicate Japanese knotweed in the River Wensum SAC.</p>	<p>Following the initial treatment of the infested areas in 2010, follow up treatment was carried out in September 2011. This included spraying a newly discovered patch of Japanese knotweed near Swanton Morley. Sites will be re-visited in 2012, and re-treated if necessary.</p>
<p>3.13 Take part in FWAG or NE 'farm walks' to actively encourage uptake of Option HR4 in new Higher Level Stewardship schemes and make landowners aware of any existing obligations to control invasive plants (<u>Target: At least two walks per year</u>)</p>	<p>No further progress since last Progress Report.</p>
<p>3.14 Organise a technical seminar for practitioners, on best practice control and eradication methods.</p>	<p>In September 2011 the Co-ordinator ran a seminar for WMA staff on a range of invasive species issues, including: the impacts of invasive species, the main problem species that the staff are likely to encounter, tips on</p>

	identification and advice on methods of control. The Co-ordinator also brought live samples of some species so the staff could see them 'in the flesh'.
3.15 Facilitate projects to establish new, and conserve existing, ark sites for white-clawed crayfish in Norfolk.	Following months of careful planning, the NNNSI helped to establish the first Ark site for white-clawed crayfish in Norfolk in September 2011. More than 300 crayfish were transferred from the River Glaven to the site, where they were placed in a stretch of river containing optimal habitat. Monitoring is planned for the next four years, which should indicate whether the project has been a success.
3.16 Oversee the Mid-Norfolk, Broads and Waveney American mink control projects.	The NNNSI Co-ordinator has continued to monitor and manage the contractors carrying out work for the Broads Mink and Mid-Norfolk Water Vole Conservation Projects. As a part of the RINSE proposal, the NNNSI requested additional funds to expand the Mid-Norfolk Water Vole Conservation Project on to the River Wissey, and a tender document will be produced for this contract in the near future. The NNNSI Co-ordinator chaired the last Mink Projects Steering Group Meeting in October 2011, with the next meeting scheduled for February 2012.
<b><i>Aim 4: Awareness of the risks and problems posed by non-native species is raised amongst a range of key target audiences.</i></b>	
4.1 NNNSI newsletter produced and distributed on a quarterly basis (in electronic format).	The last Newsletter was distributed to stakeholders in December 2010. Due to pressures of other work, the next Newsletter has been delayed, but will be published imminently (early December 2011).
4.2 NNNSI web page updated on a quarterly basis.	The NNNSI Twitter page has continued to be updated, and the Facebook page has continued to attract more followers. The NNNSI has also produced several short articles to be included in the new Norfolk County Council Biodiversity Monthly eBulletin.
4.3 Press releases written and sent out; radio interviews given; articles for local magazines produced ( <u>Target</u> : At least three articles/radio interviews per year).	Recent aerial photographs taken by Mike Page illustrated the extent to which Himalayan balsam has invaded areas of fen around Rockland and caused a large amount of media interest. The NNNSI was involved in two pieces for local TV news on the plant. The Co-ordinator was interviewed on site for each of these.
4.4 Talks to local groups delivered ( <u>Target</u> : At least two talks per year).	Since the last Progress Report, the Co-ordinator has spoken at a number of events, including an adult education workshop which was run in collaboration with Norfolk Wildlife Trust.
4.5 NNNSI display exhibited at county events and shows, including the Norfolk Show, Wild about Norfolk, and Wild about the Wensum ( <u>Target</u> : Presence maintained at a minimum of five events per year).	The NNNSI has had displays at two events since the last Progress Report, including Wild about Norfolk. The Initiative has already been asked to attend a large number of events in 2012, so this target will be exceeded over the

	period of the next Work Plan.
4.6 Launch Garden Centre Accreditation scheme, to reward those retailers who act responsibly to prevent the further spread of invasive aquatic plants.	Due to the pressure of other commitments this has been delayed. Work should commence in December 2011.
<b><i>Aim 5: A broad range of partners engaged in projects to control and eradicate invasive non-native species, and significant additional funding secured.</i></b>	
5.1 Non-native Species Stakeholders' Forum held once a year (Target: At least 70 participants at each Forum, representing a minimum of 20 organisations).	The last Forum was held on 24 <sup>th</sup> May 2011 at the Abbey Conference Centre, Norwich. Feedback on the event was universally positive, with an overwhelming demand for a similar event in the future. The next Forum should be held in May 2012, and may be combined with the RINSE Forum.
5.2 Organise 'Community Action Days' at a number of locations within the Broads (Target: At least five Action Days held, involving at least 50 people).	Two 'Community Action Days' were held in 2011. The first at Rockland Broad in June (in collaboration with the RSPB) and the second in Norwich on 16 July (in collaboration with the Marlpit RiverCare group). Both these events focussed on the removal of Himalayan balsam.
5.3 Work with Acle High School to run an education programme on invasive species in the Broads.	As outlined in the previous Report, this action cannot be completed in the current Work Plan period. However, other activities have been undertaken to engage with secondary school students, with the NNNSI Co-ordinator running two workshops at the 6 <sup>th</sup> Form Biodiversity Conference on 5 <sup>th</sup> July at the Castle Museum, Norwich. The NNNSI Co-ordinator is also involved with the new INSTINCT European project, which should develop new educational materials for 14-16 y.o. that will highlight the impacts of invasive species.
5.4 Work with partners to develop and submit the RINSE proposal to the Interreg Two Seas Programme.	The completed application form for the project was submitted in July 2011, with Norfolk County Council acting as the Lead Partner in the bid. In November 2011 we were informed that the bid had been successful, and implementation of the project is now underway.

### ***Other activities***

- In November 2011 the NNNSI Co-ordinator was asked by the Environment Agency to take on a 'mentoring role', to help support the development of new IAS Local Action Groups elsewhere in the UK. Defra has made some funding available to support the Co-ordinator in this role, which is shared with the Project Officer from the New Forest Invasive Plants Project. As a part of this role the Co-ordinator is helping to organise a workshop in London to support other groups in writing their bids for the 2012 round of WFD funding. The Workshop will be held in February 2012, which will tie in with the opening of the next application window in January 2012.
- In October 2011 the NNNSI Co-ordinator hand pulled water primrose from an infested pond near Watton. This is the second year that the weed has been removed, and despite there being a slight reduction in the volume of weed, there was still a significant amount. It is hoped that the use of a more stable boat in 2011 will help ensure a more thorough clearance of the weed, though the site will need to be monitored in 2012 and more removal arranged as necessary.

- The NNNSI Co-ordinator has been working with Norwich City Council and Natural England to design a project to eradicate *Crassula helmsii* from areas of Mile Cross Marsh, where it particularly threatens the adjacent Sweetbriar Marsh SSSI. A project brief has now been produced and will be sent to potential contractors in the very near future.

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06/12/11