

Non-Native Species Secretariat Newsletter *Issue 4 – Dec 2012*

Welcome

Welcome to the 4th edition of the Non-native Species Secretariat Newsletter.

A Lot Can Happen in 6 Years!

After 6 years in post as team leader of the Invasive Non-native Species policy team at Defra, Huw Thomas has moved on to become Head of Forestry policy and Trevor Salmon is his successor.



Since the launch of the GB Strategy in May 2008, we can look back on a very productive period. The strategy offered a clear sense of direction for policy areas and delivery bodies within the Administrations

themselves, businesses, conservation groups, land managers and other interested parties. Relevant interest groups have come together constructively around many aspects of the Strategy – whether it be the strong and internationally recognised “Be Plant Wise” and “Stop the Spread, Check – Clean – Dry” campaigns or to debate and seek resolution of difficult issues. A diverse range of activities and effort has become increasingly focussed in GB, including establishing infrastructure and processes like the GB Risk Analysis Panel and the GB NNSIP. Our rapid response to the finding of the “killer shrimp” is a clear example of something we could not have achieved before, and contingent planning for arrival of the Asian Hornet demonstrates our policy aims to become more pro-active than reactive to future threats. It has also been very exciting to see the sheer number of initiatives, projects and other activities that emerged without direct involvement of the Administrations or their delivery bodies.

The strong focus and common sense of direction in GB has also been of use beyond our borders. For example, a range of UK interests engaged in the European Commission’s Working Groups – from Government to its agencies to conservation and business sector interests. In a wider European context under the Bern Convention we have seen significant UK expert input to the development of its series of Codes of Conduct on invasive alien species.

This is undoubtedly a complex issue. European developments have the potential to significantly shape the approach across the EU but a strong and exemplary start has been made here. Our efforts have been repeatedly acknowledged and held up as an exemplar by international experts in many publications. I wish Trevor and the rest of the team every success and trust that he will enjoy the same level of engagement and support that I did from all those involved.

Huw Thomas (Defra)

A big thank you

I am sure that all that worked with Huw over the last 6 years will applaud all his efforts to establish a robust and respected strategy.

The infrastructure that he has been instrumental in putting in place and the influence that he has had within Europe has left us in a strong position to ensure that what results will be fit for purpose, proportionate and focussed on outcomes that take account of the UK’s approach.

I am sure that all of you will want to join me in thanking Huw of all his enthusiasm, pragmatism, and achievements in raising the profile of the INNS work, and wish him every success in his new post as Head of Forestry Policy.

Trevor Salmon (Defra)

Species Alerts!

Dikerogammarus haemobaphes

On 26th September 2012 reports of the Ponto-Caspian shrimp, *Dikerogammarus haemobaphes*, were confirmed at Tewkesbury and Bevere Bridge, River Severn and at sites on the Worcester-Birmingham Canal and Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal. These are the first confirmed records in Great Britain.



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Eradication of *D. haemobaphes* is not considered possible due to its distribution, the type of habitat in which it has been found and the lack of effective control methods. It is now more important than ever to follow good biosecurity practice and support the Check-Clean-Dry campaign to help slow the spread of this species, as has been done with *D. villosus*. Government and stakeholders continue to work together to improve biosecurity. For more information visit: www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry Suspected sightings should be sent, with a photo to: alert_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk

EU Developments

EU Developments on Invasive Alien Species Strategy

Niall Moore (Head of the Non-native Species Secretariat) is currently working in Brussels on a three month secondment with the European Commission to help support development of a draft legislative instrument on Invasive Alien Species. It is now anticipated that the draft instrument will be published in Spring 2013.

New Staff at NNSS

Verity Hunter has retired after three years of (among many other things!) organising meetings, workshops and the annual stakeholder forum. We all wish her a fantastic retirement and some peace after a very busy 3 years. Linda Raine, previously from Fera, has stepped into the fray and is taking over the mantle from Verity.

Lucy Cornwell, a recent MSc graduate with a background in citizen science, has also joined the NNSS for a short period to provide support while Niall is away. Lucy will be focussing on training and communications work for the NNSS.

Legislation Update

Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011

Scotland's new non-native species legislation came into force on 2 July 2012. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 amended the existing non-native species parts of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 by changing the release offences and adding new sections on keeping, notification and control. The provisions contained within the Act now enable Scotland to lead the way in adopting the internationally recognised 3-tiered approach to dealing with invasive non-native species and aim to:

- 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
- Ensure a rapid response to new populations can be undertaken; and,
- Ensure effective control and eradication measures can be carried out when problem situations arise.

More information can be found at <http://bit.ly/ScotGovNNS>

Catherine Murdoch (Scottish Government)

INNS Species Focus

American Skunk Cabbage

A long lived perennial, with thick fleshy rhizomes and yellow flowers, this plant is native to western North America. It was present in England in 1901 and first reported as an escape in 1947 in Surrey. The plant emits a strong odour like that of skunk and is widespread but general not common and is apparently increasing in lowland and semi-upland Britain. The normal pathway of spread is via horticulture and is widely planted in bog gardens, from which it can spread. Short distance dispersal is by seed and it has been known to spread tens of metres from the point of introduction.

The plant is highly invasive and has colonised species-rich, ecologically important wet woodlands in the New Forest area where its enormous leaves block out the light, enabling it to out-compete native plants such as marsh marigold, water avens, sedges etc. The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project has trialled the use of two herbicides to control American skunk cabbage and found 'Roundup Pro Biactive' to be more effective. However some of the skunk cabbage plants grow in such wet conditions that it has been impossible for our contractors to reach them and Catherine Chatters, New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer, is considering how to eradicate these remaining plants, safely and effectively.

Catherine Chatters (New Forest)

Information & Awareness Raising

Bristol Zoo

On 25th June the wildlife Minister, Richard Benyon, visited Bristol Zoo today to officially open a new Defra funded display highlighting the threats of invasive non-native species to GB waterways. The new feature includes three

tanks in the Zoo's aquarium, which are home to species that have established themselves in British waterways, such as killer shrimp, zebra mussels, marsh frogs, topmouth gudgeon, pumpkinseed and sunbleak fish. The tanks also house plant species such as skunk-cabbage, floating pennywort and New Zealand pygmy weed.



Defra copyright 2012

The new display is part of Bristol Zoo's involvement in the 'Check, Clean, Dry' and 'Be Plant Wise' campaigns - which encourage responsible behaviour to prevent the entry and spread of invasive non-native species in the wild.

Simon Mackown (Defra)

PlantTracker – Tackling Invasive Plants in GB with Citizen Science

PlantTracker is a free smartphone application, available for the iPhone and Android platforms, which enables 14 high priority invasive non-native plant species to be recorded in the field. The phone app is used to submit a record including a picture of the plant, a GPS fix on your location and some simple metadata. The app features a full photographic ID guide to help you identify the target plants successfully. Data goes to the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology's iRecord system for verification by expert botanists and from there to the NBN Gateway where it is accessible to the public. Maps of each species are available on the

PlantTracker website at:
<http://planttracker.naturelocator.org>. You can also upload records via the website.

PlantTracker is a unique partnership involving the Nature Locator team at the University of Bristol, the Environment Agency and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH).

For more information visit facebook at:
<http://www.facebook.com/NatureLocator> , or
Twitter: @NatureLocator

Dave Kilbey (Nature Locator)

Nearly 2000 non-native species established in Great Britain

A major new report, published in July, found that there has been a dramatic increase over time in the number of non-native species arriving in Britain. In the six decades from 1950, more than 600 non-native species have arrived. Overall about 15% of the species established in Britain are considered to have a negative impact.

The report entitled "Non-Native Species in Great Britain: establishment, detection and reporting to inform effective decision making" can be found at:
<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/downloadDocument.cfm?id=753> .

Research into the report was led by Dr Helen Roy of the NERC Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH). Additional experts, nominated by the Biological Records Centre volunteer schemes and societies, provided further information on many of the species. Of particular note was the involvement of the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI), who provided information for all the plant species (the largest group of established non-native species). Data on all the species can be accessed through the GB-NNSIP website at:
www.nonnativespecies.org

Barnaby Smith (CEH)

New approach to tackling invasive fish species.

The new 'Non-native Species Technical Advisor' Matt Brazier is leading a team of 30 Environment Agency Officers from across the country. The specialist team is trained and equipped to tackle our high priority invasive fish species; taking a strategic, risk based approach to invasive species management using innovative tools and techniques including pesticide treatment to contain and eradicate high risk sites.



Environment Agency Copyright 2012

The new approach delivers, through a combination of robust regulation, enforcement, management and eradication operations, and is already producing great results, with a number of successful localised eradications including topmouth gudgeon, fathead minnow, wels catfish and sunbleak, and high profile prosecutions under the Import of Live Fish Act. The team also provides a 'rapid response' mechanism to tackle new invasions quickly and effectively, in line with the Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy for GB.

This work will help us achieve and maintain favourable condition under the Water Framework Directive. It also has a wider potential, to tackle other aquatic invasive species including crustaceans, amphibians and invertebrates.

If you have any questions or would like to support this initiative contact:

matt.brazier@environment-agency.gov.uk

Matt Brazier (Environment Agency)

INNS Projects

Focus on the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) LAG

MVCP carry out a wide variety of countryside conservation and access projects throughout the boroughs of Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone in Kent. Projects include river restoration, practical land management, ecological surveying, community engagement projects and much more. Each year we treat the entire river Medway from its source to the tidal section and also the rivers main tributaries. We've surveyed for Water Fern on the River Beult and raised awareness of this plant in the local area, as well as delivering three training sessions for volunteers and other countryside professionals.

One of MVCP's projects is the large **Medway Catchment (and River Cray) Invasive Flora Control** Programme, a project for which Defra has provided Water Framework Directive funding. The project has been running for 10 years and in that time it has expanded from addressing only hotspot locations of Giant Hogweed to treating this plant and others, catchment wide. Today with Environment Agency, borough and parish council funding, landowner contributions and a new Defra grant the project covers over 200km of riparian habitat, has six target species and links with hundreds of landowners.



MVCP Volunteers and Camrass Canoeing –surveying for Water Fern © MVCP

MVCP volunteers help survey the rivers for invasive plants and in 2012 have been out on the water in a canoe looking for Water Fern.

Andrea Griffiths (MVCP)

Events

Future Events

Local Action Group Workshop – 29-30 January 2012

Freshwater Invasives – Networking for Strategy, 8 – 11 April 2013, Ireland,
www.finsconference.ie

18th International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species, 21 – 25 April 2013, Canada,
[ICAIS information, booking form and call for abstracts](#)

23rd SETAC Europe Annual Meeting, 12 – 16 May 2013, Glasgow,
http://glasgow.setac.eu/home/?contentid=570&pr_id=569

International Conference on Marine Bioinvasions 20 – 22 August 2013, Canada,
jebyers@uga.edu

For more information on any of these events see: www.nonnativespecies.org

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We are looking for contributions for the next newsletter. If you have any ideas please email:
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