

Motivating volunteers to control Himalayan balsam in the New Forest area

A report by
The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project



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1. Introduction

Volunteers play a very important role in the successful control and eradication of Himalayan balsam in the New Forest area. Himalayan balsam plants have shallow roots and are relatively easy to pull-up, making them suitable for control by hand-pulling by volunteers.

As well as playing an important role in the practical control of Himalayan balsam by hand-pulling, volunteers can perform a useful role in a) identifying the location of Himalayan balsam, b) monitoring the effect of control work and c) acting as 'river champions' to patrol the catchment and liaise with the Project Officer and landowners/managers.

The control of Himalayan balsam appeals to a diverse variety of volunteers drawn from a wide age range. Many volunteers develop a sense of 'commitment' to a particular watercourse or catchment and are keen to participate in the control of Himalayan balsam for a number of years.

Successful control and eradication of Himalayan balsam by volunteers at the catchment scale is dependent on a number of factors. A co-ordinated, strategic approach to control work is necessary to ensure that effort by volunteers is not jeopardised by seed shed from uncontrolled populations of balsam further upstream. It is necessary to motivate people to join the volunteer work parties and, ideally, to encourage their continued participation.

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer was interested to ascertain what motivates people to volunteer to participate in balsam-pulling work parties. During January 2013 a questionnaire was devised and sent to fifty people who had volunteered to pull balsam during summer 2012. This report summarises the results of that survey.

2. The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project

Recognising the need for invasive non-native plants to be eradicated at the catchment scale, the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project (NFNPP) was set up in 2009 to provide advice, encouragement and practical help to landowners and land managers to control invasive non-native plants in the New Forest area, particularly along watercourses and in wetland habitats.



Figure 1 – location of The New Forest

The NFNPP is hosted by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) and funded by a partnership of local and national organisations. A full time project officer is employed by HIWWT to liaise with landowners, raise awareness of the problems caused by invasive non-native plants and arrange for practical control work to be undertaken. The work of the NFNPP helps implement at the local level The Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain which recognises that effective partnership working is critical to the successful control and eradication of invasive non-native species.

Control and eradication of invasive non-native plants in the New Forest is a priority due to the area's high ecological and landscape importance. This is reflected in the designation of the New Forest as a National Park. A large proportion of the National Park is recognised as being of national nature conservation importance through designation as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Substantial parts of the New Forest National Park are regarded as being of international ecological importance through designation as Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas under the relevant EC Directives and as wetlands of international importance under the terms of the Ramsar Convention held in Iran in 1971.

3. Himalayan balsam

Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* is an invasive non-native species in Europe. It is native to the western Himalayas and was introduced to Britain in 1839 as an ornamental garden plant. It is the tallest annual plant in Britain, capable of reaching a height of 4 metres. Himalayan balsam thrives in damp areas and has escaped from gardens, rapidly colonising river banks. The distinctive, large pink flowers appear in early summer.



Himalayan balsam flower and seed pods
(Photo: Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat GBNNSS)

When the seed pods mature they 'explode' releasing the seed up to a distance of approximately 7 metres. If the seeds fall into a nearby watercourse they are carried in the water and can colonise suitable habitat downstream. Himalayan balsam can grow in dense stands that suppress the growth of native wildflowers. In autumn the balsam plants die back, leaving river banks bare of vegetation and liable to erosion.



This photograph, taken on the west bank of the Lymington River in The New Forest during 2010, demonstrates that Himalayan balsam is capable of growing to a height of 4 metres and forming dense stands which suppress the native vegetation
(Photo: David Aylieff-Sansom Middle of The Road Photography)

Himalayan balsam is included in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence under section 14(2) of this Act to plant Himalayan balsam in the wild or to otherwise cause it to grow in the wild.

Although the responsibility for stopping the spread of invasive non-native species such as Himalayan balsam rests with individual landowners, co-ordinated control at the catchment scale is necessary if Himalayan balsam is to be eradicated. Eradication at the catchment scale will realistically only be achieved if landowners are given encouragement and practical help. The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project plays a pivotal role in co-ordinating control at the catchment scale and giving support and assistance to riparian landowners.

4. The role of volunteers in the practical control of Himalayan balsam

Himalayan balsam has short roots and, in most situations, is easy to pull up by hand. It poses no hazards to human health (unlike giant hogweed which is another invasive non-native plant being eradicated by the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project) and is therefore an appropriate species to be controlled by volunteers.



Himalayan balsam has short roots and is easily pulled-up by volunteers

Many volunteers repeatedly return to participate in balsam-pulling work parties as they find it enjoyable and satisfying, particularly when dense areas of relatively tall balsam plants are tackled. Once pulled-up, the balsam plants can be piled into heaps to rot down *in situ* resulting in a sense of achievement.

5. Sources of volunteer help

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project has attracted help from a wide range of volunteers including:-

- Members of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
- Other conservation organisations including The New Forest Area Conservation Volunteers, Hampshire Conservation Volunteers, the Forestry Commission's 'Two Trees' Conservation Team, Natural England's National Nature Reserve volunteers
- Youth organisations, eg 'Beavers'
- Local schools and colleges
- Local businesses
- Local fishing clubs
- Local residents

Other sources of volunteers include the charity 'Headway', which supports people who have suffered head injuries. Staff employed by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust lead work parties for disadvantaged people, people in minority groups and youngsters who are 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' and balsam-pulling can be a suitable activity for these groups of volunteers.



Local businesses are a useful source of volunteers. Here staff from 'Arco' take a rest from pulling Himalayan balsam in the New Forest area



Members of the Forestry Commission's 'Two Trees' Conservation Team



Students from the local secondary school helped to pull Himalayan balsam along the Lymington River



Service-users of 'Headway' (a charity which supports people who are recovering from head injuries) participated in Himalayan balsam-pulling work parties in the New Forest area



Young volunteers helping to pull balsam on a work party led by staff from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
(Photo: Sophie Curtis, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust)



Local residents pulled Himalayan balsam along the Lymington River

6. Recruiting volunteers

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project utilises a variety of techniques to recruit people to join volunteer work parties:-

- Work parties are advertised in the 'Events Programme' which is distributed to members of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.
- Full details of work parties can be accessed via a link from the Project web page on the Wildlife Trust's website.
- The Project Officer sends full details of work parties each Spring to people who have volunteered in previous years or who have expressed an interest in participating in a work party.
- Work parties are promoted via the local media, for example newspapers and magazines and local radio.
- Parish Council newsletters are useful vehicles for letting local people know about volunteer work parties in their area.
- Talks to Parish Councils, local residents' societies and other organisations such as the Women's Institute can encourage people to join a volunteer work party.
- Posters can be displayed (eg in local shops, post offices and public houses and on community notice boards) to promote volunteer work parties in the local area.

7. Motivation of volunteers

Questionnaire survey during January 2013

During January 2013 The New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer prepared a questionnaire and sent it to fifty volunteers who had participated in Himalayan balsam-pulling work parties to discover what had prompted them to join a work party and what motivates them to participate in balsam pulls. The questionnaire also asked what they most enjoyed about balsam pulls and what they least enjoyed.

The questionnaire was designed to capture people's personal responses as the Project Officer considered that a 'tick box' approach would be too biased towards her own pre-conceived ideas and not allow people the freedom to satisfactorily express their own opinions.

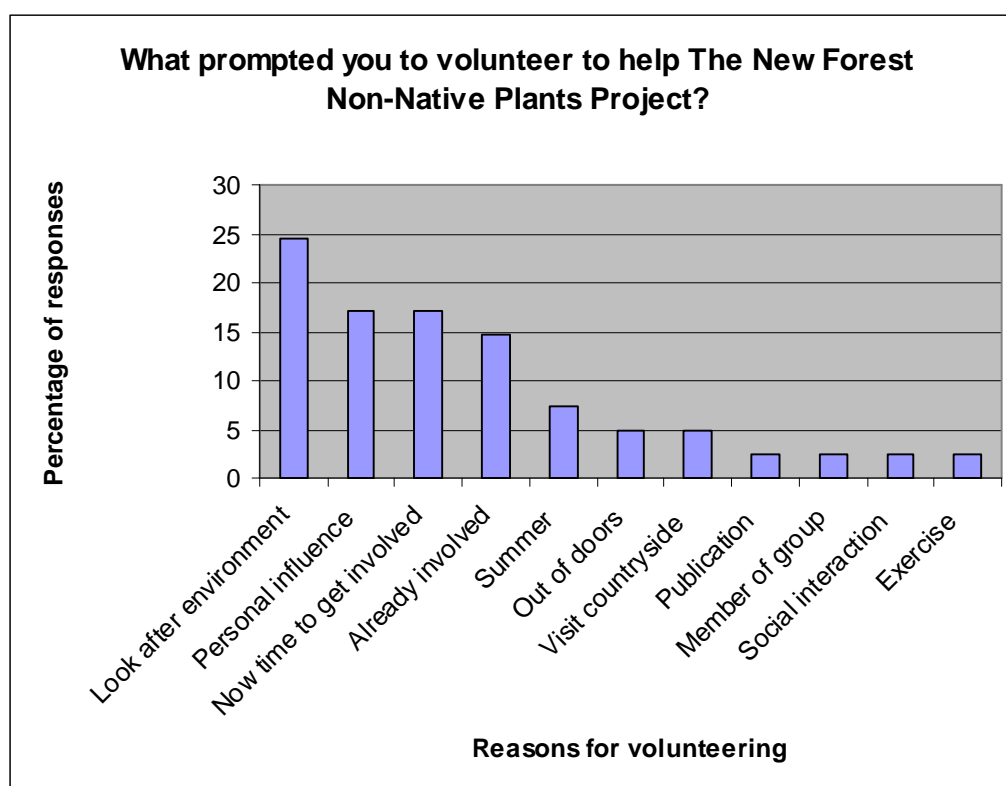
Twenty-nine completed questionnaires were returned (a return rate of nearly 60%). Some questionnaires had been completed by one person on behalf of themselves and their spouse.

The responses were collated by the Project Officer.

The first question asked people 'what prompted you to volunteer to help the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project?' A total of 41 separate responses were given to this question. The responses were analysed by the Project Officer and grouped into 11 categories as follows:-

Question 1: What prompted you to volunteer to help the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project?		
Total number of responses = 41		
	Number of responses	Percentage
Desire to look after the environment	10	24.39
Personal influence ie influenced by project officer or an existing volunteer	7	17.07
Now have the time to get involved	7	17.07
Member of a group that is already involved with balsam-pulling	6	14.63
Work parties occur during the summer months	3	7.31
Desire to do something out of doors	2	4.87
Opportunity to visit certain areas of countryside	2	4.87
Influenced by a local publication	1	2.43
Member of a group encouraged to get involved with balsam-pulling	1	2.43
Social interaction	1	2.43
Exercise	1	2.43

The responses to the first question are shown graphically below:-



The most frequent reason given for volunteering to help the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project related to a desire to look after the environment. People expressed this in a variety of ways including:-

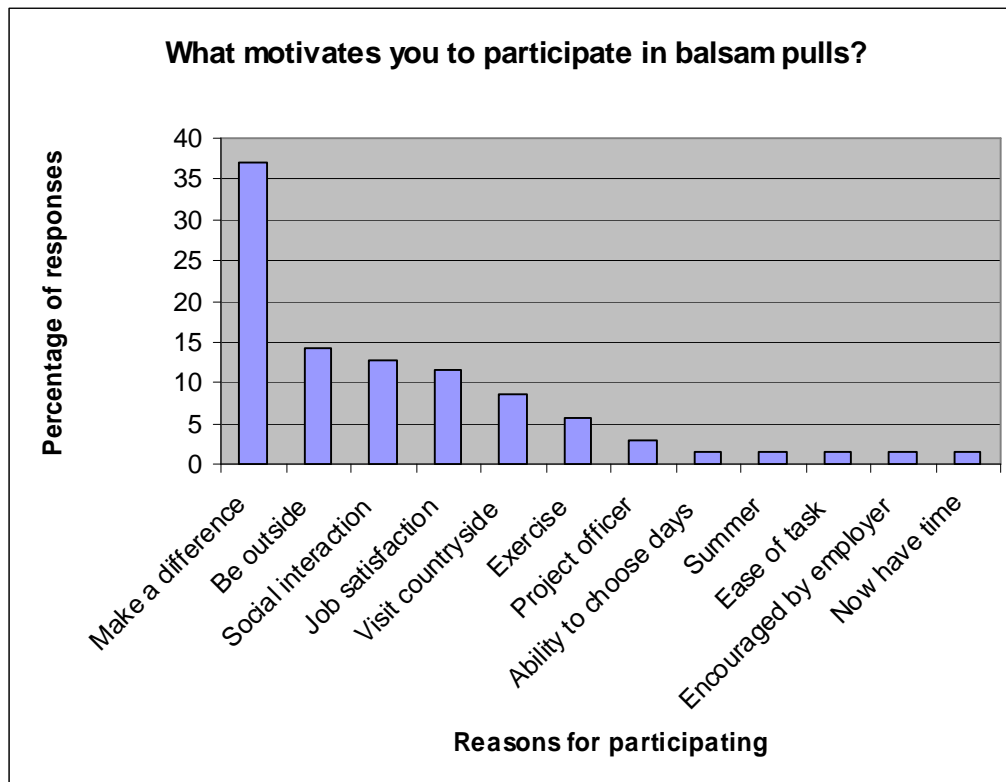
- Benefitting the local area / local environment (2 responses)
- Benefitting wildlife (2 responses)
- Love of the New Forest (2 responses)
- Putting something back in the New Forest area (1 response)
- Making a difference to the environment (1 response)
- An interest in conservation (1 response)
- Interest in protecting the Lymington River (1 response)

The second most frequent reason for volunteering to help the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project was 'personal influence'. One respondent had been influenced by an existing balsam-pulling volunteer. Six other responses related to the influence of the project officer; people had volunteered because they had heard a talk given by the project officer, or knew the project officer personally or had met the project officer whilst leading a volunteer work party and had been persuaded to get involved.

The second question asked people 'what motivates you to participate in Himalayan balsam pulls?' A total of 70 separate responses were given to this question. The responses were analysed by the Project Officer and grouped into 12 categories as follows:-

Question 2: What motivates you to participate in Himalayan balsam pulls?		
Total number of responses = 70		
	Number of responses	Percentage
Opportunity to do something useful/worthwhile/benefit the local environment/make a difference	26	37.14
Desire to be outside and to do something different	10	14.28
Social interaction	9	12.85
Job satisfaction	8	11.42
Opportunity to visit certain areas of countryside	6	8.57
Exercise	4	5.71
The project officer	2	2.85
Ability to choose which days to participate	1	1.43
Work parties occur during the summer months	1	1.43
Ease of the task	1	1.43
Encouraged by employer to participate in a voluntary capacity	1	1.43
Now have the time to get involved	1	1.43

The responses to the second question are shown graphically below:-



The most frequent reason given for being motivated related to an opportunity to do something useful / worthwhile / benefit the local environment / make a difference. People expressed this in a variety of ways including:-

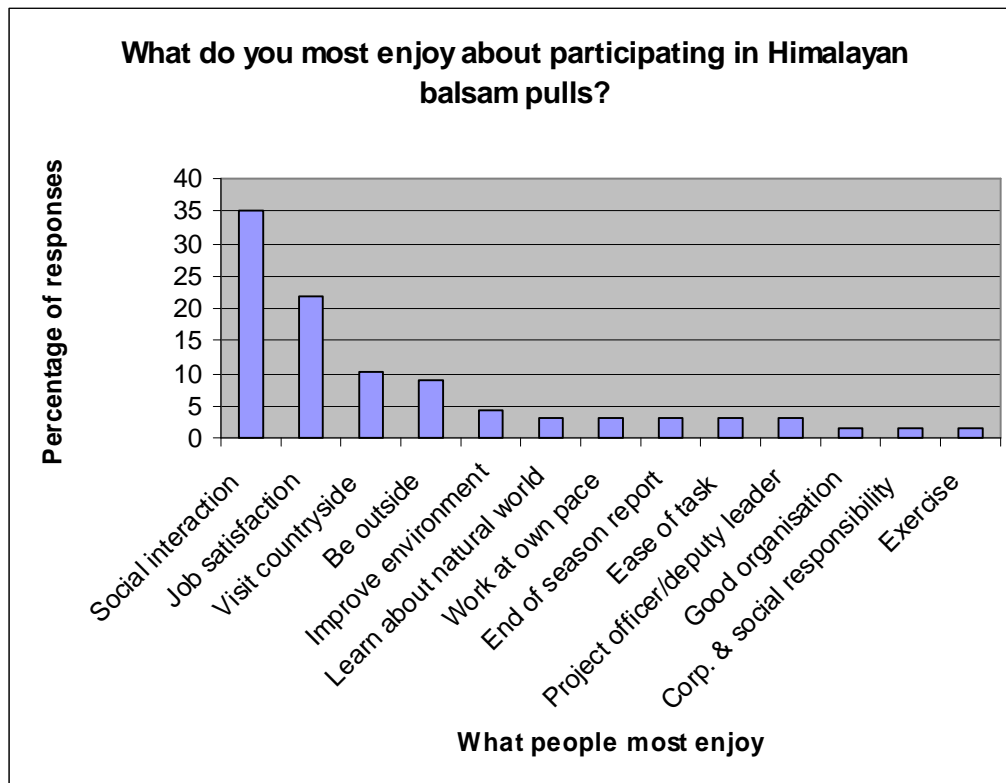
- Being involved in a worthwhile project (3 responses)
- Knowing that my contribution is making a difference to the local environment (2 responses)
- Being of benefit to the local natural environment (1 response)
- Keen to get rid of invasive non-native plants (1 response)
- I have the thought of our native wildlife being overrun by invasive species (1 response)
- Like to help in eradicating Himalayan balsam from the New Forest stream and rivers (1 response)
- Lively interest in protecting the Lymington River (1 response)
- Concern for the Cadnam River (1 response)
- Actions speak louder than words and can make a difference (1 response)
- I'd not like to see native plants crowded out of their habitats (1 response)
- Helping the environment (1 response)
- Interest in conservation and preserving the natural British flora and fauna (1 response)
- Opportunity to put something back into the local community (1 response)

- Sense of making a difference in a small way (1 response)
- I feel that my contribution makes a difference and is valued (1 response)
- I want to do something useful with my time (1 response)
- Being involved and feeling I am doing something useful (1 response)
- Opportunity to give something back to an area I love (1 response)
- The more we pull the more our native plants survive (1 response)
- I love the variety and complexity of native plant communities and I think it's worth working to maintain them (1 response)
- Eradicating a non-native plant from a sensitive landscape which already finds itself under huge pressures (1 response)
- To make a contribution to eliminating an environmental problem for the local area (1 response)
- Can make a one-off contribution as part of a bigger project (1 response)

The third question asked people 'what do you most enjoy about participating in Himalayan balsam pulls?' A total of 68 separate responses were given to this question. The responses were analysed by the Project Officer and grouped into 13 categories as follows:-

Question 3: What do you most enjoy about participating in Himalayan balsam pulls?		
Total number of responses = 68		
	Number of responses	Percentage
Social interaction	24	35.2
Job satisfaction	15	22
Opportunity to visit certain parts of the countryside especially those with no public access	7	10.2
Opportunity to be outside and do something different	6	8.82
Opportunity to improve the environment	3	4.4
Learning about the natural world	2	2.94
Ability to work at your own pace	2	2.94
The progress report at the end of the season	2	2.94
Ease of the task	2	2.94
Project Officer / deputy leader	2	2.94
Good organisation	1	1.47
Opportunity to highlight corporate and social responsibility of employer	1	1.47
Exercise	1	1.47

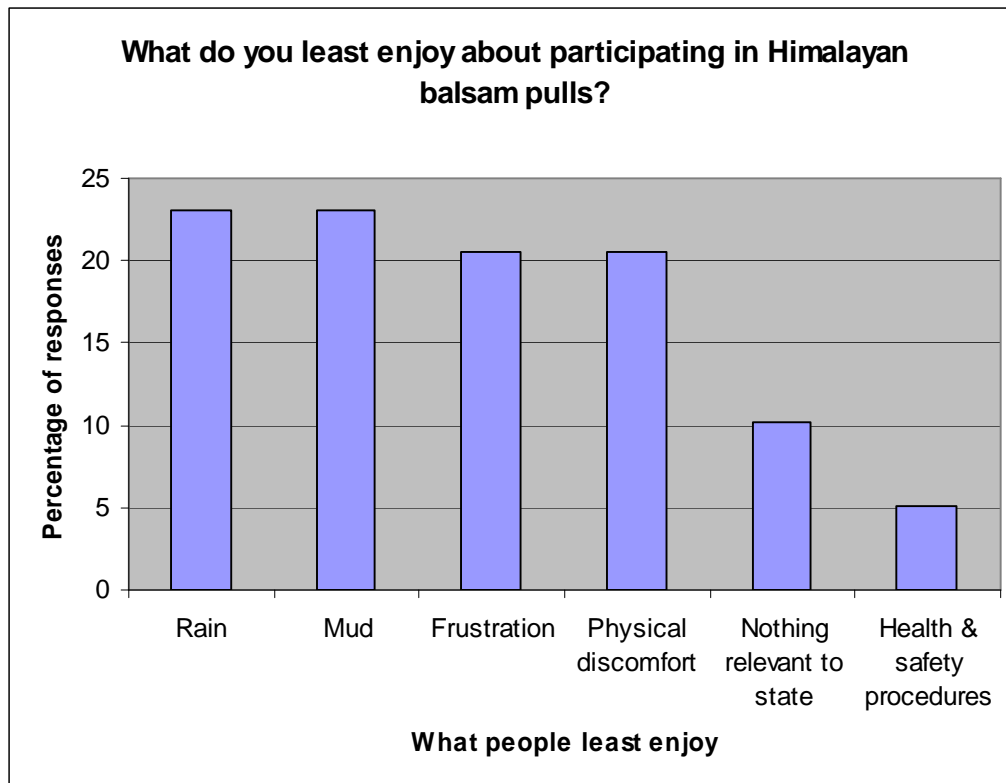
The responses to the third question are shown graphically below:-



The fourth question asked people 'what do you least enjoy about participating in Himalayan balsam pulls?' A total of 39 separate responses were given to this question. The responses were analysed by the Project Officer and grouped into 6 categories as follows:-

Question 4: What do you least enjoy about participating in Himalayan balsam pulls?		
Total number of responses = 39		
	Number of responses	Percentage
Rain	9	23
Mud	9	23
Frustration	8	20.5
Physical discomfort	7	17.9
Nothing relevant to state in response to this question	4	10.2
Health and safety procedures	2	5.1

The responses to the fourth question are shown graphically below:-



The high number of responses relating to rain and mud probably reflect the fact that the previous balsam-pulling season (2012) was characterised by a period of very high and prolonged rainfall in the UK. However many balsam work party sites are intrinsically wet and muddy, regardless of the weather conditions of that particular year.

People's responses relating to rain and mud include the following comments:-

- Rain! Nothing like as enjoyable when it's wet
- Working in heavy rain
- On your knees in the rain for hours!!!!
- Falling over in the mud!
- Some of the areas are quite wet and muddy but that's where the plants are (!) and any risks/issues are well explained and understood
- Getting stuck in mud
- Slipping over in mud

The responses grouped in to the 'frustration' category include:-

- Not being able to reach balsam growing in inaccessible places (2 responses)
- Not being able to pull balsam growing on land not currently included in the project (1 response)

- Returning to areas where balsam was not pulled properly or where re-growth has occurred from heaps left on the ground (1 response)
- Not finding any balsam on sites which were cleared in previous year (1 response)
- Some of the areas (in 2012) were too wet to venture in and perhaps the event should have been cancelled (1 response)
- As a new volunteer finding the work sites (1 response)
- Need to ensure you don't miss even the smallest shoot (1 response)

Responses falling into the 'physical discomfort' category include getting tired, aching muscles from bending over, insect bites and nettle stings.

It is interesting to note that whilst some people find it frustrating to return to a work site and find no balsam to pull, other volunteers consider this to be a source of satisfaction.

It is also interesting to note that 4 of the 29 completed questionnaires had nothing relevant to state in response to this question.

Maximising motivation – lessons learnt from the survey

The results of this survey can be used to maximise motivation of volunteers in a number of ways.

Role of the leader

Many people who have volunteered to pull Himalayan balsam in the New Forest area have returned repeatedly to participate in work parties, indicating that they find it enjoyable and rewarding. However sometimes balsam-pulling can feel like a rather daunting task, so it is important for the work party leader to be enthusiastic and friendly towards the volunteers. Little things can make a big difference. For example it is a good idea for the work party leader to carry biscuits and cartons of soft drinks for a mid-morning rest.

It is helpful at the beginning of a work party for the leader to give the volunteers an indication when there will be a mid-morning break and when everyone will stop for a picnic lunch. Many volunteers find the camaraderie during the lunch break particularly enjoyable although it is important for the leader to be sensitive to, and respectful towards, those volunteers who prefer to sit quietly during the breaks.

Understanding the need for the work

Volunteers feel motivated when they know the reason for the work party and how their work fits into the 'bigger picture'. It is therefore important at the start of the work party for the leader to explain why the work is needed and how it contributes to the overall programme of Himalayan balsam control in that particular river catchment.

Organising a variety of tasks

Some volunteers feel most enthusiastic when they can tackle the challenge of an extensive, dense area of Himalayan balsam plants but do not feel so keen when they are having to search for the occasional balsam plant in an area where work parties have been held in previous years and where the balsam population has been significantly reduced. Conversely other volunteers are delighted when they find very few plants, in the knowledge that their hard work in previous years has been successful.

Some volunteers enjoy going to different locations to pull Himalayan balsam on a variety of watercourses with different groups of people. Conversely other people find satisfaction in returning regularly to the same stream or river with the same small team of volunteers and seeing the gradual eradication of the balsam population along a single watercourse.

It is therefore important for the leader to organise a variety of tasks to provide satisfaction for the volunteers.



Volunteers remaining enthusiastic even when they have to contend with Himalayan balsam plants that are 4 metres tall!

(Photo: Ashley Basil)

Motivating volunteers in challenging weather conditions

Extreme weather conditions can affect volunteers' enthusiasm and it is important for the work party leader to be aware of the impact of cold, wet weather or particularly hot conditions. If necessary, agreement should be reached at the start of the event to work for a shorter period than usual, perhaps finishing at lunchtime. It is important to advise volunteers to bring appropriate food, drink and clothing to suit the weather conditions likely to be encountered.



Volunteers will continue to feel motivated, even in challenging weather conditions, if they act on advice to bring suitable clothing, food and drink

Investing in volunteers

Investing in volunteers helps people feel valued, and hence more motivated. The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project has invested in volunteers by providing first aid training for the 'river champions' who lead small teams to patrol the rivers.

Showing appreciation

Volunteers feel motivated when they know that their work has been appreciated by the work party leader. It is a good idea for the leader to take photographs of the volunteers during the work party and to send them the photographs with a short 'thank you' message via e-mail as soon as possible after the work party.

Volunteers feel motivated when they know that their participation is appreciated by the landowners whom they are helping. A number of landowners in the New Forest wanted to show their appreciation for the hard work undertaken by volunteers and offered to provide afternoon tea at the end of the balsam-pulling work parties on their land.



Volunteers enjoying afternoon tea provided by a landowner following a balsam-pull in the New Forest. Gestures like this really help volunteers feel valued and appreciated.

The volunteers who helped to pull Himalayan balsam in the New Forest during 2011 developed a real sense of commitment to particular rivers and a genuine 'community spirit' amongst the volunteers was evident. They requested a barbeque to celebrate the end of the balsam-pulling season and the Project Officer arranged for this to be held at a local pub.

The following year the Project Officer invited the volunteers to a bring-and-share supper in a village hall at the end of the season and used the occasion as an opportunity to give a short presentation about the work of the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project, to up-date the volunteers on the success achieved and to look ahead to the following season. Feedback after this event indicated that volunteers appreciated the opportunity to hear how their hard work had contributed to the overall success of the Project.

Challenges to motivating volunteers

The need for flexibility in wet weather

The total rainfall for the UK during 2012 was 1,330.7mm, just 6.6mm short of the record set in 2000, making 2012 the UK's second wettest year since records began in 1910. Twice the average amount of rain fell in the UK during June 2012, making it the wettest June on record. The uncharacteristically wet summer of 2012 was a challenge to The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project. River levels rose significantly and on some days the heavy rain resulted in flooding which made it impossible for work parties to be held at the scheduled locations.



The Lymington River before the heavy rains during Summer 2012.....



.....and the same location a few days later when the flooding forced the Project Officer to find an alternative, drier, location for the volunteer work party at short notice.



The flooding here along the Lymington River forced the Project Officer to cancel the work party scheduled for students from Brockenhurst College during June 2012 as no suitable alternative site could be identified within walking distance of the College.



Flooding can disrupt volunteers' plans for travelling to the scheduled work site



Flexibility is needed when flooding prevents volunteers reaching the work site

The need for flexibility in planning work parties

At the start of a balsam-eradication project it is relatively easy to identify areas for volunteers to pull Himalayan balsam and to plan and advertise events well in advance of the balsam-pulling season. However, after a few years of balsam-pulling at a particular location it becomes increasingly difficult to predict how many balsam plants will germinate. The situation might arise where a balsam-pull has been planned but there are insufficient balsam plants there the following summer to justify a volunteer work party. It is therefore necessary for the work party leader to check the site a few days in advance and, if necessary, find an alternative site. If the volunteers can not be contacted prior to the task (to inform them of the new location), it is necessary to identify an alternative work site relatively close to the original site so that volunteers can meet up at the original location and then drive a short distance to the alternative site.

The need to ensure the health and safety of volunteers

The health and safety of volunteers is paramount when organising and leading volunteer work parties especially as the majority of the work parties involve practical work near water courses. It is important to ensure that volunteers are covered by appropriate insurance. It is important for the project officer / leader to ensure that all volunteers accord with relevant health and safety requirements, for example listening to health and safety briefings at the start of the work party; this can be a challenge, especially when some volunteers will have heard the briefing on a number of occasions and may want to 'skip' the briefing.



Ashley Basil, a work party leader, whose enthusiasm has inspired and motivated volunteers to tackle the dense, tall growth of Himalayan balsam along the Lymington River

(Photo by David Aylieff-Sansom of Middle of the Road Photography)

Conclusions

The experience of The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project demonstrates that volunteers drawn from a wide variety of sources and ages are motivated to contribute towards the successful control and eradication of Himalayan balsam at the catchment scale. Volunteers play an important role in practical control work as well as surveying populations of Himalayan balsam and monitoring the effectiveness of control measures.

People are often motivated to participate in balsam-pulling work parties due to their desire to look after the environment and 'make a difference' to their local area. The influence of the project officer or an existing volunteer can be an important factor in prompting people to join a work party. Having participated in a work party many people decide to continue their involvement because they enjoy the social interaction with the other volunteers; job satisfaction is also a major reason why people develop a long-term commitment to balsam-pulling.

The Project Officer's role is critical in keeping volunteers well motivated, especially on challenging terrain or in wet weather conditions. A flexible approach is required by the volunteers and the Project Officer.

The Project Officer needs to ensure that health and safety is dealt with responsibly when leading volunteer work parties.

Successful eradication is dependent on a co-ordinated and strategic approach to ensure that areas controlled by volunteers are not contaminated by seed shed from plants growing further upstream.

A strong commitment to partnership working between the Project Officer, volunteers, landowners, land managers and professional contractors combined with a strategic, co-ordinated approach to control can eradicate Himalayan balsam effectively at the catchment scale.



Acknowledgements

The New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer acknowledges the help given by the many volunteers who have worked enthusiastically to eradicate Himalayan balsam from the New Forest area.

Thank you to the volunteers who completed the questionnaires.

Thanks to those people who have agreed to their photographs being reproduced in this report. The name of the relevant photographer or the source of the photograph is acknowledged beneath each picture. All other photographs have been taken by Catherine Chatters (New Forest Non-Native Plants Officer).

Grateful thanks to the many landowners and land managers for their co-operation and the support that they have given to the Project Officer.

Thanks to Ruth Kernohan (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust) for preparing the map used in this report.

References

The Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2008

Annexe 1 – Responses to the questionnaires sent to volunteers during January 2013

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Annexe 1

Responses to the questionnaires sent to volunteers during January 2013

What prompted you to volunteer to help the NFNNPP?

Desire to look after the environment (total 10)

Love of the New Forest (2)

An interest in conservation (1)

Putting something back in the New Forest area (1)

Interest in protecting the Lymington River (1)

Benefitting wildlife (2)

Benefitting the local area / local environment (2)

Making a difference to the environment (1)

Desire to do something out of doors (total 2)

Doing something outside (2)

Influenced by local publication (total 1)

Advert in a local publication (1)

Personal influence (total 7)

Influence of the project officer (eg knew the project officer / heard a talk by the project officer / 'collared' by the project officer) (6)

Influence of an existing balsam-pulling volunteer (1)

Member of a group already involved with balsam-pulling (total 6)

Continuation of existing involvement with Forestry Commission Two Trees Conservation Team balsam-pulling work parties or as a Forestry Commission Volunteer Ranger (6)

Member of a group encouraged to get involved with balsam-pulling (total 1)

Member of WI (1)

Opportunity to visit certain areas of countryside (total 2)

Opportunity to gain access to areas of countryside (especially privately-owned land) (2)

Social interaction (total 1)

Meeting like-minded people (1)

Exercise (total 1)

Exercise (1)

Now have the time to get involved (total 7)

Time available since retiring (4)

Fitted availability (3)

Work parties occur during the summer months (total 3)

Work parties occur during the summer months (3)

What motivates you to participate in Himalayan balsam pulls?

Opportunity to do something useful/worthwhile/benefit the local environment/make a difference (total 26)

Being of benefit to the local natural environment (1)

Keen to get rid of invasive non-native plants (1)

I hate the thought of our native wildlife being overrun by invasive species (1)

Like to help in eradicating Himalayan balsam from the New Forest stream and rivers (1)

Lively interest in protecting the Lymington River (1)

Concern for the Cadnam River (1)

Actions speak louder than words and can make a difference (1)

I do not like to see native plants crowded out of their habitats (1)

Helping the environment (1)

Interest in conservation and preserving the natural British flora and fauna (1)

Knowing that my contribution is making a difference to the local environment (2)

Opportunity to put something back into the local community (1)

Sense of making a difference in a small way (1)

I feel that my contribution makes a difference and is valued (1)

I want to do something useful with my time (1)

Being involved and feeling I am doing something useful (1)

Being involved in a worthwhile project (3)

Opportunity to give something back to an area I love (1)

The more we pull the more our native plants survive (1)

I love the variety and complexity of native plant communities and I think it's worth working to maintain them (1)

Eradicating a non-native plant from a sensitive landscape which already finds itself under huge pressures (1)

To make a contribution to eliminating an environmental problem for the local area (1)

Can make a one-off contribution as a part of a bigger project (1)

Job satisfaction (total 8)

Working with a group means that you soon see amazing results for your efforts (1)

My efforts show an immediate effect (1)

Noticed (native plants) returning where balsam has been controlled; this is evidence of a worthwhile project (1)

The sight when you return to a site you worked on last year and see very few balsam...result!!!! (1)

Opportunity for work satisfaction at the end of the task (1)

It's a task where one can see results fairly quickly (1)

Feeling a sense of achievement in completing the pulling tasks (1)

Work is on a catchment scale, well organised and methodical so it seems worthwhile (1)

Desire to be outside and to do something different (total 10)

Provides a change from normal everyday routine and indoor work (4)

Being in the fresh air (4)

It is enjoyable being outside (1)

I enjoy conservation tasks (1)

Opportunity to visit certain areas of countryside (total 6)

Social interaction (total 9)

Opportunity to spend time with a friendly group of people (3)

Great fun as all the other volunteers are very friendly (1)

Meeting like-minded people from all walks of life and sharing experiences and interests (3)

Doing something useful with other people (1)

Opportunity to meet other enthusiasts and have friendly conversation whilst working (1)

Ability to choose which days to participate (total 1)

Work parties occur during the summer months (total 1)

Good time of year to work outdoors (1)

Exercise (total 4)

Ease of the task (total 1)

The project officer (total 2)

Enthusiasm of the project officer (1)

A good leader who organises the work well and who is very good with the great variety of volunteers the project attracts to it (2)

Encouraged by employer to participate in a voluntary capacity (1)

Now have the time to get involved (total 1)

Keen to use some of my spare time in volunteering for a wildlife based organisation since retiring (1)

What do you most enjoy about participating in Himalayan balsam pulls?

Opportunity to improve the environment (total 3)

Opportunity to work together to return our environment back to the native flora (1)

Improving the environment (1)

Being able to make a difference to local river banks etc (1)

Opportunity to be outside and do something different (total 6)

The opportunity to be working outdoors (2)

Opportunity for a total change from day job (1)

The joy of being out in the Forest (1)

Mostly working in fabulous locations (1)

Being in the fresh air (1)

Social interaction (total 24)

Social interaction (7)

Friendly atmosphere (2)

I like the fellow pullers (1)

Good fun, welcoming group (1)

Being with like-minded people (3)

Meeting other people who care about the environment (1)

Opportunity to meet with a mixed group of people from within my local area and many walks of life (1)

Meeting like-minded people, many of whom have extensive knowledge of flora and fauna that they are keen to share (2)

Having a bit of a chat (1)

Good morale of the teams (1)

Meeting different people (1)

Camaraderie (1)

The pleasant environment of being able to talk to people and do something worthwhile for the Forest (1)

Meeting interesting people who are generally knowledgeable not only about many aspects of natural history but also have their own special interests (1)

Learning about the natural world (total 2)

Improving our knowledge of natural sciences, especially locally (1)

Getting to know more about the New Forest (1)

Ability to work at your own pace (total 2)

Able to work at own pace and chat or just listen (1)

Thoroughly enjoyed the way in which everyone could work at their own level (1)

Opportunity to highlight corporate and social responsibility of employer (total 1)

From a business perspective I am given the opportunity to highlight the corporate and social responsibility that is becoming intrinsic to major companies such as BT (1)

Exercise (total 1)

1

Opportunity to visit certain parts of the countryside especially those with no public access (total 7)

Going to areas we haven't seen before, mainly due to being in private ownership (1)

Seeing areas that otherwise have no public access (1)

Getting out into parts of the countryside that members of the public don't normally get to (1)

Spending a few days in an environment that I might not otherwise see (1)

Visiting new areas of the New Forest and surrounding areas (1)

Seeing some interesting places including visiting some areas that are private and so which we would not otherwise see (1)

Visiting private areas around the Forest where there would not normally be access (1)

Job satisfaction (total 15)

Removing vast amounts of balsam really quickly whilst hardly noticing the work as you chat (1)

Feeling of a job well done (1)

Seeing results (1)

You can see the results of your efforts (1)

Sense of achievement when progress of balsam is slowed, especially in the large pulls (1)

A sense of achievement at the end of the day (1)

A feeling of achievement because at the end of the day we can see what we have done and we know it is part of an organised plan to tackle the river catchment (1)

Seeing the beginning and the end (1)

The job satisfaction is extremely high because you can actually see and appreciate how much you have achieved (1)

Seeing a bank free from pink flowers (1)

The sense of satisfaction to see the fruits of your labour so quickly (1)

Needs a certain amount of skill in spotting isolated plants (1)

Feeling that one is doing something useful (1)

The feeling of achievement when you see a whole area cleared of balsam (1)

Seeing the space cleared for native species after a pull and the more natural look of the area. Most gratifying if this improvement is seen on a return visit (1)

Progress report at the end of the season (total 2)

The 'end of term' meetings where an update on progress is given (1)

Hearing an update of how over time (years) the balsam is coming up less strongly (1)

Ease of the task (total 2)

Not too tiring (1)

It is satisfyingly easy to actually pull up the plants by the roots – they don't fight back hard with prickles and stings! (1)

Project Officer / deputy leader (total 2)

The charming organiser (1)

Good deputy leader (1)

Good organisation (total 1)

(1)

What do you least enjoy about participating in Himalayan balsam pulls?

Rain (total 9)

Rain! Nothing like as enjoyable when it's wet (1)

Rain (3)

Working in heavy rain (1)

On your knees in the rain for hours!!!! (1)

I'm not too keen on working in the rain (1)

My last balsam pull was in extreme wet weather conditions, which didn't go down too well, otherwise it is a very enjoyable, easy task! (1)

Getting wet through and cold (1)

Mud (total 9)

Walking through boggy areas where I might disappear under the mud for good. This does make me nervous sometimes as I'm not as agile as I used to be (1)

Falling over in the mud! (1)

Some of the areas are quite wet and muddy but that's where the plants are (!) and any risks/issues are well explained and understood (1)

Getting stuck in mud (3)

Slipping over in mud (1)

Mud (2)

Health and safety procedures (total 2)

Health and safety nonsense (1)

The register and the various permissions (1)

Physical discomfort (total 7)

Getting tired (1)

After about 4 hours my back starts protesting, so I stop (1)

Bending over to pull the small plants (1)

Insect bites (2)

Nettle stings (1)

Having to get up early (1)

Frustration (total 8)

Not being able to reach balsam growing in inaccessible places (2)

Not being able to pull balsam growing on land not currently included in the project (1)

Returning to areas where balsam was not pulled properly or where re-growth has occurred from heaps left on the ground (1)

Not finding any balsam on sites which were cleared in previous year (1)

Some of the areas (in 2012) were too wet to venture in and perhaps the event should have been cancelled (1)

As a new volunteer finding the work sites (1)

Need to ensure you don't miss even the smallest shoot (1)

Nothing relevant to state in response to this question (total 4)

**The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project is hosted by
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