

Welcome to Issue 5 of Non-native Species News: Autumn 2020

We hope everyone is staying healthy and safe. While our team is working from home, the best way to contact us is via email at nnss@apha.gov.uk.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter. Please find more information and resources on non-native species online at www.nonnativespecies.org. For updates on our awareness raising campaigns, follow [@CheckCleanDryGB](https://twitter.com/CheckCleanDryGB) and [@InvasiveSp](https://twitter.com/InvasiveSp). An accessible [HTML version of this newsletter \(external link\)](#) is also available. All links in this newsletter are external.

News

Invasive Species Order 2019

Guidance on the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019 is now available on Gov.uk. Read the guidance for [animal](#) and [plant](#) species.

Any queries about the enforcement of the Order or licencing can be directed to Natural England enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk or Natural Resource Wales specieslicence@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk.

Be Plant Wise campaign relaunch

The Be Plant Wise campaign was relaunched in September as part of UK Plant Health Week. The updated campaign asks asking retailers to take a pledge to support the campaign and order a free Be Plant Wise pack, and gardeners and pond owners follow three simple tips to help prevent the spread of invasive plants:

- Know what you grow – Choose the right plants for your garden, pond and water features.
- Stop the spread – Keep your plants in your garden - don't plant them, or allow them to grow, in the wild.
- Compost with care - Dispose of your unwanted plants, roots, weeds, seeds, and seed heads responsibly.

Find out more on the [Be Plant Wise website](#) where you can order a free Be Plant Wise pack with posters, leaflets and stickers.

Invasive Species Week 2021

Save the date! Invasive Species Week 2021 will be held during the week beginning 24th May 2021. More information to follow.

Quick links

[Adventures with Bonnie – training a mink detection dog.](#) Scottish Invasive Species Initiative.

[Webinar: Horizon scanning for non-native species.](#) Led by Professor Helen Roy.

Updates from non-native species projects

Partnership working to prevent the spread of non-native species

The Angling Trust has produced [a video](#) from a recent launch of the Thames Floating Pennywort Pilot project, which took place on the River Kennet in September.

The project involves environment groups and government agencies working together to help halt the spread of floating pennywort, a highly invasive non-native plant that is choking rivers and lakes across Britain. [This video](#) looks at the work being carried out on the River Kennet and tributaries involving Reading and District Angling Association and other organisations.

Scottish Invasive Species Initiative – Coronavirus impacts and insights

Vicky Hilton, Scottish Invasive Species Initiative

At the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative, the spring Coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown saw us faced with the prospect of invasive species fighting back whilst we stayed at home. For us, as for everyone else, there were more important public health matters to be tackled as the COVID-19 pandemic did its worst.

March saw us contacting our 270 mink volunteers with instructions to suspend monitoring and trapping activity. We pessimistically anticipated the backwards step this would bring - shutting down our surveillance and trapping network after 2½ years of hard work establishing it. We underestimated the tenacity of our volunteers - the response from many was a determination to continue; “We’ll use our daily exercise to check our raft” was the frequent reply. While raft and trap numbers reduced from 578 to 319 units, over half the network was kept up and running by volunteers through lockdown. By July, when lockdown restrictions had eased, the network had been restored to near pre-lockdown levels and trapping effort returned to that needed to tackle the

autumn dispersal period when young mink move to new territories for next year's breeding season.

We used staff home working time during lockdown to take our education pack – [Alien Detectives](#) - to another level. With a sudden demand for home schooling materials and talk of future blended education with outdoor learning encouraged, we used desk time to widen the scope of the Alien Detectives resources making them suitable for use by families and home-learners as well as in schools.

Emerging from lockdown we adapted our plant control strategy. Staff and contractors were unable to start work until June – and, of course, by then giant hogweed plants were indeed giant and coming into flower. Our window for chemical control was closing quickly. We prioritised our most important hogweed sites for action – where possible we treated chemically but elsewhere, we cut flowering heads to prevent seeding and spread. Himalayan balsam pulling, normally run as summer group activities, was curtailed - group work was not an option this year. By autumn when we shift to Japanese knotweed treatment, things were beginning to get back on track and small numbers of volunteers helped with stem injection. We adjusted our procedures to keep our team and volunteers safe but we were operating back at something akin to 'normal'.



Cutting giant hogweed heads to prevent seeding. Image: SISI project.

Providing safe volunteering opportunities this year of all years has never felt so important. Outdoor volunteering has many positive benefits for both physical and mental wellbeing and, whilst we continue to be challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, providing opportunities for people to get active and be outdoors helping nature with the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative is particularly valuable and valued. With more people with spare time on their hands we tried to support as many as possible to come out volunteering with us. Things aren't the same of course but we have offered opportunities wherever we can.

So, although our activities were and are constrained, we have continued work with volunteers on mink and plant control programmes and, together, keep those invasive species in check. A surprising bonus this year was the unique and early insight gained as to what future invasive species control post-Scottish Invasive Species Initiative might look like.

Our work implementing a community-based approach to invasive species management is geared towards creating a sustainable legacy to the Initiative – building community capacity to continue control after the project has ended. The COVID lockdown suddenly put this to the test – what would happen to invasive species control when we weren't around? We witnessed volunteers maintaining mink monitoring and control, farmers and land managers using their staff (trained by us) to continue Giant hogweed treatment when we couldn't, and local people heading out on their own to pull balsam on sites we'd worked on together previously.

We acknowledge this was a snapshot taken in exceptional circumstances and we can't say whether such enthusiasm would stand the test of time. However, the observations from 2020 suggest our strategy is indeed the right one. The impression we have is that work investing in communities, training volunteers and engaging at a local level are working and are creating a resilient, skilled, enthusiastic network of volunteers - willing to carry on the battle against invasive species. We look forward to building on these foundations in 2021.

To contact us or find out more about the work of the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative visit www.invasivespecies.scot , follow us on social media ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)) or sign up to our [newsletter](#).

Recording non-native species: water primrose

Trevor Renals, Senior Technical Advisor, Invasive Species, Environment Agency

Water primrose *Ludwigia grandiflora* is an ornamental perennial plant native to South and Central America, associated with wetlands and marginal zones of watercourses, ditches, ponds and lakes. The plant has been introduced into GB through the ornamental aquatic plant trade. It primarily spreads by vegetative fragments and forms dense carpets of growth that exclude native biodiversity, increases flood risk and siltation and degrades amenity.

Since 2009, the Environment Agency has been coordinating the eradication of water primrose in GB. During that time, a further 29 sites have been added to the 14 initially confirmed in 2009. Of those sites, 16 are believed to have been eradicated over the 11 year period. Water primrose is proving hard to completely kill, but the programme has successfully reduced the biomass of known sites to a fraction of the original infestation. By the end of 2019, the combined total area for all known water primrose in GB was



Water primrose. Image: Trevor Renals.

less than 100m², but this has increased during the pandemic restrictions, despite the valiant efforts of site managers.

Early intervention is key, and so far the programme has prevented water primrose from establishing and spreading in a watercourse. The large majority of sites are farm or urban ponds and lakes; often fisheries, private gardens, amenity areas or golf courses. To date we have avoided the profound damage to wetlands and watercourses experienced elsewhere in its invaded range, such as in France (see photo), the Netherlands and Japan.



A water primrose infestation. Image: Trevor Renals.

If you suspect that you may have seen water primrose, check the identification with the ID sheet on the NNSS website and report the location on alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

Tackling Invasive Non-Native Species in the UK Overseas Territories (The OT Biosecurity Project)

The [UK Overseas Territories \(OTs\)](#) encompass some of the greatest biodiversity in the world, accounting for 94% of the UK's endemic biosecurity. As small islands they are particularly vulnerable to the impact of invasive non-native species - the greatest threat to island biodiversity, and a risk to food security and sustainable development. A 3.5 year NNSS led project, funded by the FCO's [CSSF fund](#), was carried out between 2016 and 2020 to improve the biosecurity of the UK Overseas Territories (OTs) against invasive non-native species. Total project funding was £1.26 m, less than £20,000 per territory per year.

At the end of the project, the OTs have substantially strengthened their protection against the threat of invasive non-native species as a result of project activities. The project involved 343 people within the OTs, 9 UK government and part-government bodies, and more than 150 external experts from 54 entities in the UK, Europe and USA. In addition, the project mobilised over £1m in co-finance, in effect almost doubling the project budget. The project continues with reduced funding, principally to provide technical support to the OTs on request.

EMFF Biosecurity Planning for Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation

Chloe Powell Jennings, Natural Resources Wales

Chloe Powell Jennings (Natural Resources Wales) is working on a project which involves working with stakeholders to create a marine biosecurity plan for the [Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation \(PLAS SAC\)](#). The project is funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and will run to June 2022.

The project has so far been gathering evidence to underpin biosecurity planning and two reports have recently been published as part of the project (pathways assessment and INNS impacts on MPA features, fisheries and aquaculture). Chloe is currently working with the Welsh Fishermens Association, the PLAS SAC officer and other stakeholders to look at what biosecurity actions could be feasible in the area to inform the species action plans and pathway action plans. Chloe has also been working on distribution maps, fact sheets for relevant species and stakeholder identification training (online!)

The next stage of the project is to continue using local knowledge gained from stakeholder engagement (questionnaires, online meetings, etc.) to continue working on the species and pathway action plans and possibly hold an online workshop early in the New Year (if feedback is that one would be useful). The project will also involve further monitoring, management and awareness raising actions including a contingency plan exercise, producing biosecurity videos, etc. The final phase of the project will be to implement, embed and monitor the biosecurity plan.

Please contact Chloe at chloe.powelljennings@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk for more information or visit the [project website](#).



A stack of invasive American slipper limpets, *Crepidula fornicata* from Swansea bay. Image: Chloe Powell Jennings.



The invasive Carpet Sea Squirt, *Didemnum vexillum* taken from a boat hull in Holyhead, Image: Natural Resources Wales