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News

Update on Yellow-legged hornet (also known as Asian hornet)

24 yellow-legged hornet (also known as Asian hornet) nests were found in 2024. More information from the Animal and Plant Health Agency’s National Bee Unit (NBU) is provided below:

Since our last update, no further nests have been located, bringing the total to 24 nests found in 2024. Results from laboratory analyses have now concluded and indicate two of the nests found in 2024 (Coldred and Udimore in Kent) are likely to have been produced by queens released from nests found and destroyed in late 2023 (Alkham and Four Oaks/Rye respectively). This is not wholly unexpected following the capture of foundress queens also thought to be related to these nests in the Spring.

These findings are not considered to be strong evidence of an established population. Defra will continue to follow an eradication strategy against YLH in 2025.

Find information on previous sightings, including a [map of nest locations](#), on the [website of the National Bee Unit](#).

For more details on identification and reporting, including Alert posters and ID sheets to help with awareness raising, please visit the [Asian hornet alert page](#).

INNS Mapper feedback survey

The INNS Mapper team are gathering feedback on INNS Mapper. To share your thoughts on its future development, please [complete a short feedback survey](#) by 12th January 2025.

New species added to the GB Alert species list

Two species have been added to the [GB Alert species list](#). Both are relatively new to Great Britain and pose a significant threat so we encourage everyone to look out for suspected sightings and [report these through iRecord](#).

Chinese mystery snail

Cipangopaludina chinensis



Native to: Southeast Asia to Japan and Eastern Russia

Impact: impacts are not well understood but it has the potential to outcompete and displace native species, including rare snail species in the Pevensey levels.

GB status: Locally established in two main areas in GB. [View the NBN distribution map for *Cipangopaludina chinensis*](#).

Image credit: Gavin Measures

Yellow-seeded false pimpernel

Lindernia dubia



Native to: North America

Impact: grows in and around the edge of ponds and outcompetes native plants.

GB status: recorded in GB for the first time in 2024.

Image credit: Etienne Branquart

Save the date! Invasive Species Week 2025

Invasive Species Week 2025 will take place from the 12th to 18th May 2025.

Last year over 200 organisations took part in this annual week of events and activities to raise awareness of invasive non-native species, their impacts, and [how everyone can help to prevent their spread](#). It was a fantastic week, thank you to everyone involved!

Please join us this year. There are lots of ways to take part, check out the list of activities from last year on the [Invasive Species Week webpages](#) for inspiration. Stay tuned for more information, including daily themes to help with planning, and online webinars you can join throughout the week.

Communications

With your help, in 2024 we sent out over 165,000 awareness raising materials (nearly double the amount sent out in 2023), including:

- Yellow-legged (Asian) hornet: 40,000 alert posters and 92,000 ID sheets
- [Check Clean Dry](#): over 780 signs, 12,500 leaflets
- [Be Plant Wise](#): 4,300 leaflets and guides to gardening without invasive plants

[View all awareness raising materials from the NNSS.](#)

Be Plant Wise

This year we are keen to boost gardeners' knowledge of invasive plants and how to help prevent their spread, through the [Be Plant Wise](#) campaign:

- **Know what you grow:** choose the right plants for your garden, pond and water features. Download a [free guide to plants to use in place of invasive non-native species](#).
- **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 which [invasive plants can't be composted](#) and how to dispose of them safely.

Please help us by sharing Be Plant Wise materials with gardeners and horticulturalists, or promoting the campaign online:

- [Awareness raising materials](#) – we can provide free hard copies
- [Be Plant Wise guidance for gardeners](#)
- [Guidance for professionals](#)
- [Materials for social media](#)



Developing an awareness raising campaign for pet owners

With help from the Pet Pathway Action Plan Working Group, we are developing an awareness raising campaign to help prevent pets becoming invasive non-native species, to be launched later this year.

Update from APHA Local Action Group Coordinator

Ben Francis, Animal and Plant Health Agency

Since my last update, I have been working on the following:

Updating the NNSW Website Local Action Group (LAG) pages

Thank you to all the LAGs who have contributed content. Please find the update pages here: [Local Action Groups \(LAGs\) » NNSW](#). If you have any feedback, please be in touch with me.

Creating LAG maps

- A simple version showing coverage across Great Britain, shown here: [LAGs and other organisations managing INNS » NNSW](#).
- An interactive online map of all LAGs in Great Britain.
- A map showing where LAG management has taken place in 2024 using data from INNS mapper. Please consider uploading your management records to INNS mapper.

Facilitating regional meetings

I am facilitating meetings for the North West of England, East Midlands and West Midlands. If you are a LAG in these regions and available to attend, please be in touch.

Funding

I have supported LAGs who received funding from Defra over the two year project. In 2025 I will look for future sources of funding. I have updated the Local Action Group Toolkit ([Local Action Group Toolkit » NNSS](#)) with a section on funding.

Promoting the work of LAGs

I have met with Network Rail to promote LAGs and explore collaboration. I am keen to hear about any issues you are having with significant landowners or organisations.

Improving biosecurity

I have been promoting the Check Clean Dry campaign and improving biosecurity provision at over 60 sites with priority species. I am working with landowners to install signs and implement other recommendations.

In 2025 I will:

- Finalise the different LAG maps
- Facilitate regional meetings in new regions
- Support the Defra funded LAG work and search for new funding opportunities
- Continue conversations with Network Rail and other organisations to support LAGs
- Continue improving biosecurity at sites with LAGs and AQUA accreditation scheme.

Contact details: ben.francis@apha.gov.uk.

Updates from non-native species projects

INNS prevention, control and biosecurity

Laura Dee, South West Lakes Trust

South West Lakes Trust, working in partnership with South West Water, manage a number of environmental projects including County Wildlife sites, Dartmoor Green Recovery, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Invasive Non- Native Species (INNS) and Biosecurity projects and Biodiversity Enhancement Schemes. We highlighted our work, including the INNS project, when we jointly hosted the water companies' Conservation, Access, and Recreation (CAR) Conference. Representatives from UK water companies enjoyed three days of workshops, guest speakers and networking opportunities.

Burrator Reservoir, part of SWW's largest landholding, was one stop during a field trip. Hosted by Morwenna, (SWLT ecologist) delegates saw leaky dams, created with the help of horse loggers. Kate Hills and Marcus Brown (SWW INNS Team) gave an insightful INNS talk about the history of crayfish at Burrator, how we are managing them and the biosecurity measures in place.

At Roadford Lake, Mark Elliot (beaver expert) and Kate Hills (SWW) gave a talk at a beaver site. At the Activity Centre's biosecurity hub Laura Dee (SWLT Invasive Species Officer) and Marcus Brown (SWW) showed the facilities including watersports washdown, boot scrub and angling dip tank. It was a wonderful opportunity to share our experiences from original concepts and design, through installation and on to the regular use of the hub as standard practice. Other water companies are following suit with new biosecurity installations.

In October, we completed a trial to remove Rhododendron from two half-hectare plots at Avon Dam, one of our Dartmoor sites, using the lever and mulch method. Developed in Scotland where rhododendron has become a huge problem, the technique uses tree poppers or winches to lever the plant out of the ground or cutting bulkier plants down to the root collar, using a mattock to destroy budding material. The cut material is used to cover the area, acting as a mulch to prevent regrowth. Contractors worked on larger and denser plants, and volunteers using hand tools worked on a second area for three days. The area will be monitored for regrowth which will be removed.

Images, credit: South West Lakes Trust: Top: Attendees at the water companies' CAR Conference, Below: Avon Dam volunteers with Ecologist Morwenna.



For more information contact invasives@swlakestrust.org.uk or visit the website: <https://www.swlakestrust.org.uk/>.

Scottish Invasive Species Initiative features in 'Make Space for Nature' podcasts

Callum Sinclair, Scottish Invasive Species Initiative

The Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI) project has featured in the NatureScot podcast series – 'Make Space for Nature'. The series looks at environmental and conservation projects across Scotland, highlighting issues impacting nature and the solutions to these problems. The Initiative featured in two episodes.

The first interviewed Project Manager Callum Sinclair, who discussed the problems caused by invasive non-native species, including damage done to our environment, health and economy, and how the Initiative is tackling their target species: giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed, American skunk cabbage, Himalayan balsam and American mink.

The second featured Jane Hamilton, Volunteer and Communications Officer for the Initiative, who highlighted the contributions of volunteers and the collaborative nature of the project. The Initiative covers over a third of mainland Scotland – operating on this scale is only possible by combining

the efforts of project partners, volunteers, landowners and land managers, organisations, and local communities.

Interviews with four dedicated volunteers in this episode shared personal perspectives on the project and their motivations for getting involved in invasive non-native species control.

Image right, credit: SISI

Tune in on your preferred podcast app (search 'Make Space for Nature', the episodes were released on 31 Oct and 14 Nov) or by following these links:



- Episode 1: <https://www.nature.scot/helping-our-native-wildlife-thrive-scottish-invasive-species-initiative>
- Episode 2: <https://www.nature.scot/natures-warriors-stepping-tackle-scotlands-invasive-species>

Visit the SISI project website for further information: <https://www.invasivespecies.scot/>

The Garden Escapers Project

Tomos Jones, North Wales Wildlife Trust

The [Garden Escapers project](#) at North Wales Wildlife Trust aims to explore how to best engage with local communities and key stakeholders to prevent invasive – and potentially invasive – plants escaping gardens into the wild. We're doing this in North West Wales by, for example:

1. Developing a gardeners' 'toolkit' to support gardeners in taking action to tackle invasive species. We've conducted three focus groups (15 attendees) and an online bilingual survey (176 responses). We wanted to understand: what resources gardeners need; what existing resources they are aware of; and what might stop them from tackling invasive species.
2. Designing an educational exhibition to raise awareness of invasive species, their impacts, and what everyone can do to help prevent their spread. We've commissioned local artist [Manon Awst](#) to develop a sculptural piece exploring the porous boundaries between gardens and wider, wilder habitats. The exhibit will launch in early April 2025. We've also been awarded funding from the Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust for permanent interpretation boards at Treborth Botanic Garden.
3. Hosting a stakeholder workshop to co-design the next phase of the Garden Escapers project. To engage with key stakeholders such as professional horticulturists, we've been working on a [new flyer which you can access here](#).

Image right: Key stakeholders busy co-designing the next phase of the project. Credit: NWWT

4. Conduct a scoping study and surveys to identify which non-native plants (not currently recognised as invasive species) are already present in protected sites within the project target areas. This will draw up a baseline which can inform future prevention efforts to restore protected sites and enable us to identify sites which are at risk from future invasions.



The Garden Escapers project is funded by the Nature Networks Programme. It is being delivered by the Heritage Fund, on behalf of the Welsh Government. For any further information, please contact Tomos Jones: tomos.jones@northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk.

North East INNS Strategy and Action Plan comes to an end

Jenny Dowden, Tyne Rivers Trust

The North East INNS Strategy and Action Plan ran from 2020 to 2024. Its overall aim is to develop and maintain cost-effective strategic approaches to prevent, detect, control and eradicate specified INNS in North East river catchments through coordinated action of river catchment partnerships.

Latest news on progress

This has been a hugely successful project. We have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders who have input into the Strategy and attend yearly workshops. We have created rapid reporting and rapid response system to help prevent spread of high-risk species. We have a shared and encouraged best practice, increased awareness of high-risk INNS and created pathway reports

and control plans for selected sites which contain high-risk INNS like floating pennywort.

Image left: Participants at a workshop. Credit: Tyne Rivers

Info on any upcoming events / next stage of the project

There is a workshop on 29th January near Newcastle which will review the strategy and demonstrate the work which has been delivered over the



last 4 years. The next strategy is also due to be written next year and this will be discussed at the workshop.

Web address and contact details for further information

- Find out more about the project and a link to the Strategy: <https://ericnortheast.org.uk/nenns/>.
- For more information contact Jenny Dowden at Tyne Rivers Trust – j.dowden@tyneriverstrust.org.

RiverCare & BeachCare volunteers are tackling Himalayan Balsam

Sally Bird, Keep Britain Tidy

The RiverCare & BeachCare programme works across East Anglia, delivered by Keep Britain Tidy in partnership with Anglian Water, with the aim of supporting local community groups to protect and enhance their local waterways and beaches. The programme currently supports 48 volunteer groups, with 1500 volunteers taking on practical activities such as litter picking, water quality monitoring, habitat creation and invasive species management.

17 of these groups are actively working to control Himalayan Balsam along their waterways, giving

their time each spring to surveying where balsam is present, and holding 'Balsam Bashing' events – which is how this invasive, non-native species is removed.

Image left: RiverCare Volunteer pulling Balsam. Credit: David Martin

Many groups have been working to eradicate Balsam for a number of years, returning on a regular basis to the same stretches of waterway - and this sustained, regular effort has been paying off!

In Braintree, Essex, the Friends of Bocking Blackwater and Friends of Hoppit Mead LAGs have been working with Braintree District Council in developing and implementing

management plans to report, monitor and control Himalayan Balsam along stretches of the Rivers Brain and Blackwater.

The Viking Kayak Club have been working on a small section of a larger project along the Great Ouse which has managed to clear Balsam through Kempston and Bedford.

In Lincoln, the RiverCare Lincoln Paddlers have begun an ambitious Balsam removal project. During the spring of 2024, they completed 25 Balsam Bashes across a section of the Witham in Lincoln, starting just upstream of the Boutham Avenue bridge and systematically working along both banks down a 1-mile stretch to Altham Terrace.

RiverCare & BeachCare volunteers are having a tangible impact in reducing this invasive plant across the region. If you want to find out more about RiverCare & BeachCare groups near you please contact us – rivercare@keepbritaintidy.org.

Kings Award for voluntary services to Addlestone Canoe Club

Wendy Pereria, Addlestone Canoe Club

Addlestone Canoe Club have been honoured to have been awarded the Kings Award for Voluntary Services (KAVS) which recognises outstanding work and is the highest accolade given to local voluntary groups in the UK, the equivalent of an MBE for groups.

Image right: Club members and volunteers. Credit: Addlestone Canoe Club.



The multi-discipline club welcomes all those interested in Paddlesports and is run entirely by volunteers. In the Summer months the club works with hundreds of young people from local youth and school groups including young careers and those with disabilities. Throughout the year there are regular sessions run for those interested in different paddlesports.

One of the services provided that helped win the award was the environmental work that is done. A team of club volunteers and coaches educate and work with teams of volunteers from the company Sky, to remove the invasive species of Pennywort from stretches of the Wey Navigation. This is done 6 times a year from April to September and is needed to stop our waterway becoming completely clogged up with the weed.

INNS Management on NRW's Upper Wye Catchment Restoration Project

Henry Richards, Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru (Natural Resources Wales)

The Upper Wye Catchment Restoration Project is funded by Welsh Government's Water Capital Programme to restore the condition of the upper River Wye. The Wye is one of the UK's most special rivers, which is reflected by its designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The overall aim of this project is to protect species and enhance habitats by addressing a range of pressures affecting the river. Our project aims to:

- Restore and improve habitat in the river, on the riverbanks and in the wider catchment.
- Reduce sediment and pollutants entering the rivers.
- Improve the resilience of the river to extreme weather events and warmer temperatures resulting from climate change.

This year, we've been surveying the upper Wye for Invasive Non-Native Species of plants that threaten our wetlands and waterways. One species we didn't expect to encounter is American Skunk Cabbage and we've been alarmed to find it across several tributaries in the project area, and sometimes in large populations.

This October, we employed contractors to tackle the skunk cabbages found on the Hirnant, a small tributary of the Wye. There are various methods for controlling it, including herbicide treatment, but we were able to remove the plants manually - digging them out completely.



Image: American Skunk Cabbage before and after management. Credit: Natural Resources Wales

We're planning to return to the Hirnant next summer to continue our efforts and will expand our management of American Skunk Cabbage across other sites in the upper Wye catchment. A big thank you to the landowners for supporting this important work. Get in touch:

- Email: RestoreUpperWye@NaturalResources.Wales
- Web: [Upper Wye Catchment Restoration Project Citizen Space](#)
- Social media: @AdferGwyUchaf

Introduction to Elwy Invasive Plant Group

Tim Mainland, Elwy Invasive Plant Group

We are a voluntary group of around 15 members who pull up Himalayan Balsam (HB) along the banks of the River Elwy within the confines of the City of St Asaph.

The Elwy valley is massively infested with HB along its length. We can only manage to maintain St Asaph itself, a stretch of less than a mile. The City Council maintains a central part of our stretch

using commercial trimmers and brush cutting. This really helps us. But a more constructive project would be to attack HB from the source of the Elwy downwards, and/or all the rivers in the Clwyd network. But this project is way beyond our resources without external input.

We meet weekly from Spring to late August to pull HB, for an hour, in groups of 2-12.

In 2024 the problem worsened dramatically, and new stands seemed to establish where there were none in 2023. We suspect that there is a mechanism whereby seeds are deposited by floods in vast numbers clumped together. Previously we believed that it took 2 years to establish a new stand: y1 by one or a few flood-borne seeds growing plants then y2 those plants disperse locally their own vast numbers of seeds. But this year we observed that Y1 was unnecessary, and the stand established without the apparent need for local dispersal.

In early 2024 we experimented with lightweight strimming of the earliest immature plants up to a few inches high. There is a short window of opportunity, lasting around a fortnight, between mid-March and mid-April when the HB seedlings are growing fast and earlier than surrounding native herbage – grass, nettles, brambles etc. In this window the early plants can be strimmed to the ground with lightweight rechargeable trimmers. We did a small-scale experiment on an area of a stand in 2024 and found it beneficial. In 2025 we wish to extend this experiment to cover larger areas with more trimmers in action. Contact information:

- Chair: Tim Mainland vetontheweb@hotmail.co.uk
- Secretary: Janet Cameron janet.cameron2@btinternet.com

Other articles you may have missed

- [Sharing information on invasive non-native species across the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories](#) (UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology)
- [Rapid spread of bee-killing Asian hornets halted in UK](#) (The Guardian)

Upcoming events

- 2025 [Local Action Group Workshop](#): 4th to 5th of February, Leamington Spa.

Contact the NNS

You can contact us at: nns@apha.gov.uk, or visit www.nonnativespecies.org where you can find:

- [The Non-native Species Information Portal \(NNSIP\)](#) with detailed factsheets for over 300 non-native species and distribution data for over 3,000 species
- [‘What can I do?’](#): links to our [Be Plant Wise](#) and [Check Clean Dry](#) campaigns, [all of our awareness raising materials](#), and [training resources](#)
- [Non-native species legislation](#)
- Information on [Local Action Groups](#)
- [Biosecurity resources](#), and much more!