



Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative Newsletter



As we move closer to the summer and the beginning of this year's active control and eradication programmes, I thought this would be a good opportunity to reflect briefly on the progress that has already been made by the Initiative since its launch in September 2008. To this end, Scott Perkin, Co-ordinator of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, has kindly submitted an article providing his personal reflections on some of what he believes to be the Initiative's most significant achievements to date. I hope that this provides a bit of a flavour of all the activity that has been going on over the past year and a half. Thanks to everyone for their ongoing support - I look forward to working with all of you in 2010, the 'International Year of Biodiversity'!

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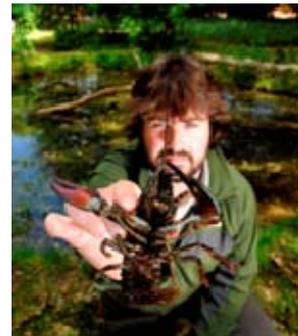
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UPDATE FROM THE CO-ORDINATOR

It has been a busy winter for me at the Initiative, with a large amount of my time being spent putting in place the arrangements for the many control and eradication activities that will be going on over the coming months. But that's not all that I have been doing!



Since my last update, we have:

- Produced a final version of the Status Report and Action Plan, following a period of consultation on the draft document. The final report is available to download from the website;
- Shared the records held on the Norfolk Non-native Species Database for the Initiative's six 'priority species' with the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS);
- Worked in partnership with the Broads Authority and Environment Agency to carry out control of floating pennywort on the River Waveney;
- Made arrangements for several other high priority invasive species control projects, such as the control of giant hogweed on the River Yare;
- Held the 4th Norfolk Non-native Species Stakeholders' Forum;
- Engaged with members of the public at the Fair on the Yare, Wild about Norfolk, Wake up to Wildlife (the Broads Authority's event to mark the International Year of Biodiversity) and the Gressenhall Easter Fair, in order to raise awareness of the impacts of invasive species and the actions that can be taken to help prevent their spread.

Mike Sutton-Croft

Co-ordinator, Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative

NEWS FROM NORFOLK

The Norfolk Non-native Native Species Initiative 18 Months On: Some Personal Reflections

Although the Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative is just 18 months old, it has already made significant progress. Amongst other achievements, it has: developed a centralised database documenting the occurrence of a wide range of non-native species across the county; finalised a status report and action plan for six, high priority aquatic and riparian non-native species; organised two stakeholders' forums to bring together representatives from over 20 organisations and sectors; developed a dedicated web page on the Norfolk biodiversity website; and obtained substantial coverage in the local media, including the Eastern Daily Press and BBC Radio Norfolk. In addition, substantial funding for the implementation of strategic control and eradication projects has been secured from Defra/EA and Natural England; this will be used to support a wide array of projects on the ground over the next two years. Two flagship projects, the eradication of giant hogweed along the River Nar SSSI and the removal of floating pennywort from Rockland and the River Waveney, are already well underway.

These initial results have been very encouraging and demonstrate that a county-level endeavour of this kind can significantly raise the profile of non-native species, harness the energies of a diverse coalition of stakeholders and provide an effective mechanism for translating national policy into local action. The experiences of the Initiative so far also suggest that Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) partnerships can provide particularly useful structures and outreach mechanisms for work on invasive species. It is my hope that other LBAP partnerships will be interested in working in this area, and I have been encouraged to hear that the Cambridgeshire LBAP has recently started to develop its own project on non-native invasive species.

Despite these early achievements, it is clear that a tremendous amount remains to be done. The preliminary findings of the Initiative suggest that non-native species are widespread in Norfolk and leading to a growing range of economic, ecological and social threats. To take just one example: the internationally-important Norfolk and Suffolk Broads remain vulnerable to the impacts of a wide range of invasive non-native species, including many aquatic and riparian plants (eg, floating pennywort, parrot's feather and Himalayan balsam), birds (eg, Egyptian goose), molluscs (eg, Asiatic clam and zebra mussel), and mammals (eg, mink, Chinese water deer and muntjac).



The situation is exacerbated by the fact that:

- Invasive non-native species continue to be available from a wide variety of sources, including pet shops and garden centres;

- The lack of county-level early warning systems and co-ordinated response mechanisms means that new non-native species could potentially enter Norfolk with relative ease;
- There is still insufficient data about the occurrence, distribution and rate of spread of non-native species in the county;
- Control and eradication efforts will require support for many years to be successful;
- Insufficient awareness of the problem at all levels means that non-native species are not properly identified, labelled or reported, are still purchased by the public and still released into the wild.

As NNNSI moves from its initial focus on strategic planning and into implementation on the ground, it will continue to tackle these issues “head on”. I am delighted that funding from Defra, Natural England, the Broads Authority, the Environment Agency and the Water Management Alliance will enable us to continue the Initiative for at least the next two years – and I know that Mike Sutton-Croft looks forward to working with organisations and individuals across the county to reduce the impacts of invasive non-native species on Norfolk’s biodiversity.

Scott Perkin
Co-ordinator, Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership

Initiative holds 4th Norfolk Non-native Species Stakeholders’ Forum

On 24th March 2010, NNNSI held the 4th Norfolk Non-native Species Stakeholders’ Forum. Delegates from local authorities, conservation NGOs, statutory Government agencies and local volunteer groups met at the Abbey Conference Centre to learn about action being taken to reduce the distribution and impacts of invasive non-native species at both a national and local level, and exchange their own experiences of invasive species management. A ‘Knowledge Fair’ in the afternoon provided delegates with an opportunity to see invasive species first-hand and to benefit from expert guidance on their identification.



Delegates at the invasive aquatic plants ID stall at the Forum Credit: Scott Perkin

Once again, the Forum attracted a suite of excellent speakers. Dr Gerry Barnes (Norfolk County Council) chaired the Forum, which began with Trevor Renals providing an update on the work of the Environment Agency in controlling invasive species across GB. Jack Sewell (MarLIN) told the group about some of the worst non-native invaders in the marine environment, an area which has

often been overlooked in our region. Crayfish expert Stephanie Peay gave delegates a 'crash course' on the variety of crayfish species present in the UK and their impacts. To end the morning session, Brenda Mayle (Forest Research) highlighted the economic impacts of invasive species through the case study of the damage caused by grey squirrel to the forestry sector.

The afternoon was given over to case studies of local action. Mike Sutton-Croft began the session with a summary of the Initiative's progress since the last Forum in February 2009. This was followed by Lou Mayer (Water Management Alliance) and Julia Stansfield (Environment Agency), who provided updates on two of the Initiative's 'flagship' projects: the eradication of giant hogweed from the River Nar and the removal of floating pennywort from the River Waveney. To end the day, delegates took part in a 'Knowledge Fair', where they were given the opportunity to improve their skills in identifying key invasive marine and freshwater plants and animals.

A brief summary of the Forum, along with the slides from the presentations, will soon be available on the NNNSI website:

www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/nonnativespecies

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Bug tackles UK's knotty problem

In March 2010, Wildlife Minister Huw Irranca-Davies gave the go-ahead for the release of the sap-sucking psyllid *Aphalara itadori* to help control Japanese knotweed in the UK. This will be the first time that this kind of 'natural control' has been used on an invasive non-native plant in Europe.

Following years of research by Dr Dick Shaw and his team at Cabi in identifying the psyllid as the best biological control agent for Japanese knotweed, the decision to permit its release into the wild represents an exciting development in our struggle to bring the plant into check.



Aphalara itadori Credit: CABI

The ministerial decision was made following a period of public consultation from July-October 2009. To find out more, please visit:

<http://www.cabi.org/japaneseknotweedalliance/>

Be Plant Wise!

The 'Be Plant Wise' campaign, recently launched by Defra and the Scottish Government, encourages gardeners, pond owners and aquatic plant retailers to help reduce the spread of invasive aquatic plants into the wild. The campaign, fronted by that most famous of pond enthusiasts, Charlie Dimmock, has three core messages: 'Know what you grow'; 'Stop the



spread'; and 'Compost with care'. It aims to help people avoid purchasing invasive aquatic plants for their pond, identify if they already have them present and provide guidance on their safe disposal.

To find out more, please visit:

<http://beplantwise.direct.gov.uk/index.html>

2010 - The International Year of Biodiversity

In a bid to raise awareness of the astonishing rate that biodiversity is being lost across the globe (a rate that some experts put at 1,000 times the natural progression), the United Nations has declared 2010 as the *International Year of Biodiversity*. Norfolk will be playing its part in marking the year, with the Biodiversity Partnership and many other groups planning events.



To find out more, please visit:

<http://www.biodiversityislife.net/>

GB Non-native Species Secretariat launches its new website

On the 1st February 2010, the GB Non-native Species Secretariat launched its new-look website (www.nonnativespecies.org). The website includes all the fantastic content of the old website, but in a much more 'user-friendly' format. It also has a host of new features, such as a 'Species Alerts' section and a section containing useful information and guidance for local action groups, such as the Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative.



UPCOMING EVENTS

6 May 2010: The **Seventh GB Non-native Species Stakeholder Forum** is being held this year at the IET London: Savoy Place. The day will feature a mix of presentations and workshop sessions, with plenty of time for delegates to 'mingle' and share experience. For more details, please visit:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/news/events.cfm?id=8>

22 May 2010: The Non-native Species Initiative will have a stall at this year's **Wild about the Wensum**, being held at the Pensthorpe Nature Reserve. The event provides a great opportunity to celebrate the natural history and heritage of the Wensum Valley, with loads of activities including a mini beast exploration, guided walks, nature quizzes and treasure hunts. For more information, please visit: <http://www.pensthorpetrust.org.uk/wild-about-the-wensum.htm>

22 May 2010: Not only is the 22nd May the day of Wild about the Wensum, it is also the International Day of Biodiversity! To help mark this occasion, the Initiative's **alien spaceship display** will be making a welcome return to the Forum in the centre of Norwich. The display will form a part of the Norfolk

Biodiversity Partnership's event to mark the day, which will also feature the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's innovative 'Grains of Truth' exhibit. For more information, please contact Scott Perkin at scott.perkin@norfolk.gov.uk

19 June 2010: The Wymondham Nature Group has organised an event to celebrate both the wealth of wildlife that can be found in their local area, and to help mark the International Year of Biodiversity. **Wild about Wymondham** is free to attend and will be held at the Town Green Centre (behind the Methodist Church) in Wymondham. There will be a variety of activities and displays on the day, from a selection of groups focussed on conserving our native wildlife, including the Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative. For more information, please contact Ann Roberts at a.vroberts@talktalk.net

17-18 July 2010: Following from the success of last year's county-wide Day of Action to control invasive alien species, we have decided this year to hold a **Non-native Species Action Weekend!** This promises to be bigger and better than last year's event, with several organisations already organising activities to coincide with the weekend. If you would like to become involved, either by organising or participating in an activity, then please contact Mike Sutton-Croft at michael.sutton-croft@norfolk.gov.uk

If you would like to contribute to the next NNNSI newsletter, then please contact Mike Sutton-Croft, Co-ordinator of the Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative. Tel: 01603 228977; E-mail: michael.sutton-croft@norfolk.gov.uk

The Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative was launched in 2008 to promote the prevention, monitoring and control of invasive, alien species. It seeks to do this by:

- *Collating and monitoring data on the distribution and spread of non-native species in the county;*
- *Developing action plans to address the species of most urgent concern;*
- *Facilitating control and eradication projects at high priority sites; and*
- *Promoting awareness of the risks and impacts associated with non-native species.*

The Initiative has been established under the umbrella of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership and works through a stakeholders' forum comprised of representatives from over 20 organisations. It is financially supported by the Broads Authority, Defra, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Norfolk County Council and the Water Management Alliance.