



Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative Newsletter



Welcome to the first NNNSI Newsletter! We are hoping to produce three of these over the course of the year, to keep you up-to-date on the progress of the Initiative, management activities happening 'on the ground' in Norfolk, and policy developments taking place at a national and international level.

UPDATE FROM THE CO-ORDINATOR

Since the launch of the Initiative in September 2008, I have been very encouraged by the tremendous support provided by stakeholders across the county. Whether it be developing and populating the database, preparing project proposals or organising the Stakeholders' Forum and Day of Action (see 'Upcoming Events' for details), the level of support provided to the Initiative has been fantastic. This has made my job a lot easier and I would like to thank everyone for their ongoing assistance.



Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*
Photo: Mike Sutton-Croft

With your help, we have:

- Established the Norfolk Non-native Species Database, which holds a rapidly growing dataset. This information will form the basis of a status report on the distribution and impacts of six high priority invasive non-native species in the county: parrot's feather; giant hogweed; Japanese knotweed; floating pennywort; Himalayan balsam; and Australian swamp stonecrop. An action plan will also be developed, outlining a co-ordinated strategy to tackle these species over the next three to five years.
- Designed the NNNSI webpage, which has now gone 'live'. The page is incorporated in the website of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership (www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/nonnativespecies).
- Secured nearly £12,000 of additional funding from Defra to facilitate control and eradication projects in Norfolk (see below).
- Published articles about non-native species in a range of publications.
- Made arrangements for the 3rd Norfolk Non-native Species Stakeholders' Forum (more details in the 'Upcoming events' section).

Many thanks to all those who have already provided records for the non-native species database. These are extremely valuable, as good baseline data on species distribution will be an essential precursor to the planning of an effective management regime. Please do send in any other records that you may still have, and continue to report any new sightings!

Mike Sutton-Croft
Co-ordinator, Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative

NEWS FROM NORFOLK

Defra provides funding to help control Invasive Species in Norfolk

Almost £12,000 has been provided by Defra to help eradicate invasive non-native species from two areas of Norfolk through the new GB Invasive Non-native Species Framework Strategy. As described below, both projects will provide strategic 'wins' at sites considered to be particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of invasive non-native species.

Floating Pennywort Eradication on the Waveney

An ambitious project to eradicate the highly invasive aquatic weed, floating pennywort, from the River Waveney and Rockland is currently being carried out by the Environment Agency and Broads Authority. Both waterways are directly linked to the Broads so the potential for a major loss of biodiversity and amenity value is clear. The weed is being cleared through a combination of hand-pulling and mechanical removal.

Engagement with the local community is critical to the success of the project, with community involvement in both the survey and practical removal work.



Floating pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*
Photo: Broads Authority

Giant Hogweed Eradication from the River Nar SSSI

The Upper Nar is designated a SSSI on the basis of its chalk stream habitat characteristics. A number of relatively small stands of giant hogweed have been identified on the Upper Nar by the Water Management Alliance. To prevent further spread of the plant downstream, a rapid eradication project has been initiated by the WMA, supported by the Defra funding. Following an initial survey, the WMA will spray the largest patches, before moving onto the smaller infestations. Local landowners will deal with any straggling plants themselves and will be provided with assistance by the WMA if required.

If anyone has ideas for invasive species management projects which they feel are of strategic importance for Norfolk, then please contact Mike (michael.sutton-croft@norfolk.gov.uk) to discuss funding options.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust launches Invasive Non-native Species Survey

As part of its Natural Connections project, the Norfolk Wildlife Trust is running a survey to map the distribution of five key non-native species: Reeve's muntjac; American mink; Japanese knotweed; Himalayan balsam; and giant hogweed. The aim is to engage the general public in helping to find out where these species are found in Norfolk and help discover what impact they are having on Norfolk's countryside. The survey will run from end February through to end-September, and the results shared with NNNSI.

For more information, please visit:

www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections

MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY

Controlling Giant Hogweed: Experience from Cringleford, Norwich

The Cringleford Picnic Area is a small (1.3ha) site adjacent to the River Yare and owned by Norwich City Council. Despite its name, the majority of the site consists of a fen/tall herb community consisting of a range of plants including common reed, great hairy willowherb and meadowsweet. There is a small car park, a mown seating area next to the river and a perimeter footpath that includes a section of the popular Yare Valley Walk route.



Giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*
Photo: David North

Up until 2006, half the site area was dominated by giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), with sporadic plants scattered over the rest of the site, many of them adjacent to the car park and perimeter path. At one point, even the litter bin became almost surrounded by giant hogweed! The plant appeared to be increasing its distribution year on year, and action was clearly required; not only was the hogweed crowding out native vegetation, but also, the site was acting as a reservoir of seed that could be easily transported to other areas, not least via the adjacent river. The plant also represented a hazard to visitors; its poisonous sap is capable of causing severe blistering.

A control programme began in 2006, involving spraying the giant hogweed with a glyphosate-based herbicide. This soon yielded positive results, with a far smaller area of the site being dominated by the plant in summer 2007. By summer 2008, only scattered individual plants were present, which were dealt with by spot-spraying.

Before the control programme commenced, it was thought that it might be necessary to re-seed the main area formerly dominated by the hogweed once it had been sprayed off, but rapid colonisation of native vegetation, especially reed, occurred. This was, no doubt, aided by the recent wet summers, and the end result was that there was little bare ground left for the hogweed to re-colonise. Giant hogweed seeds are said to remain viable for at least 15 years, so we shall continue to monitor the site and spot-spray any individual plants that emerge.

On a final note, public reaction to the giant hogweed control programme, notably from the Yare Valley Society, has been overwhelmingly positive. One person did, however, express their disapproval that we wanted to get rid of such a 'fine architectural plant', which proves that the process of educating people about the threat posed by invasive species such as giant hogweed still has some way to go!

Paul Holley
Natural Areas Officer, Norwich City Council

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS

EU Moves towards a Strategy on Invasive Non-native Species



On 3rd December 2008, the European Commission issued a Communication on policy options for invasive non-native species. The Communication highlights the threats posed by invasive species to both European biodiversity and the economy (indeed it has been estimated that damage caused by invasive species and the necessary control measures cost EU member states at least EUR 12 000 million annually).

Four alternative policy options are presented in the Communication. The most comprehensive involves the development of a new EU legal instrument (including the potential creation of a centralised dedicated agency). The Communication states that this option will be the most effective at controlling invasive species, but recognises that this needs to be balanced against the costs that will be incurred. A full proposal for an EU Strategy will be brought forward in 2010.

To read the Communication in full, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/docs/1_EN_ACT_part1_v6.pdf

Invasive Alien Species to be highlighted by the International Day for Biological Diversity

The International Day for Biological Diversity is held on 22 May every year and aims to “increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues”. The theme of the day in 2009 is invasive alien species, in recognition of the massive impacts that these species are having on biodiversity world-wide.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.cbd.int/ibd/2009/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

18 February 2009: The **3rd Norfolk Non-native Species Stakeholders’ Forum** will be held at the Abbey Conference Centre, Norwich. The Forum will highlight the work already going on in Norfolk to control invasive species and demonstrate how this work is contributing to targets at a GB level. Speakers will include Huw Thomas, Head of the Protected and Non-native Species team at Defra and Dick Shaw, Principal Investigator at CABI, who is looking into potential biocontrol methods for Japanese knotweed. The event is free to attend but spaces are limited and must be booked in advance. For further details, please contact Mike Sutton-Croft at michael.sutton-croft@norfolk.gov.uk

5 July 2009: A county-wide **Day of Action** focussing on invasive alien species will be held across Norfolk. We are keen to involve as many groups

as possible in the Day, in order to raise the profile of invasive alien species within the community and deliver tangible habitat improvements on the ground. If you would like to become involved, 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, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Norfolk County Council and the Water Management Alliance.