



Check out our January newsletter which jam-packed with updates and articles from across Wales! We hope you enjoy reading and feel free to share with anyone you think might be interested – they can also join our Network by contacting [Jess Minett](#).

## January Newsletter

### WaREN Update

Happy New Year from WaREN - we hope you all had a lovely holiday period and you didn't think about invasive species too much!

In the run-up to Christmas and the New Year the WaREN team have been busy organising Local Action Group (LAG) workshops in Wales! We will be running two workshops:

- [North Wales - 8th Feb, Venue in the Park Alyn Waters, Wrexham](#)
- **South Wales - TBC**

Join us for guest speakers, INNS mapper, and the launch of our new LAG Toolkit! Find out more and book your place using the links above, we hope to see you there!

We would love to hear about all of the amazing invasive species work you got up to in 2022. **If you are a LAG or volunteer group tackling invasive species in Wales, [please fill out this form](#)**. It's great to hear about everything you are doing! This form should take around 10-20 minutes to complete and it gives us better understanding of volunteer efforts on the control and management of invasive species in Wales.

The refreshed GB INNS Strategy 2023-2030 will be published soon. The Strategy will be available online, keep a look out for it on the [GB Non-native Species Secretariat website](#).

We are looking forward to running more training and engagement activities this year, especially during Invasive Species Week (15<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> May). Keep an eye out for any upcoming events on our [webpage](#) and in your inbox.

---

## LAG and Volunteer Effort

### Snowdonia Society – Rhododendron

Historically Beddgelert has been a hotspot for invasive *Rhododendron Ponticum*. When in flower it would turn the Hillsides around Beddgelert bright pink; a beautiful sight to those who didn't know the ecological impact of this plant. Through lots of hard work and financial investment these hillsides are returning to their natural state.

A lot of this work was carried out by the LIFE Celtic Rainforest Project. The bushes were generally cut down and stem injected to prevent regrowth. This method has proved very effective in killing off the large bushes, but unfortunately this isn't a silver bullet to solve the Rhododendron problem. Seed sources within the valley mean that more new bushes keep springing up around the village.

Recently the Snowdonia Society has been working with the LIFE Celtic Rainforest Project, private landowners, and other partners to keep on top of the seedlings that have been popping up in the Beddgelert area. Our amazing volunteers have been managing these seedlings by hand-pulling and digging them up. This method is very efficient when the plants are young; collectively 8 volunteers managed to remove over 400 rhododendrons in just 5 hours!



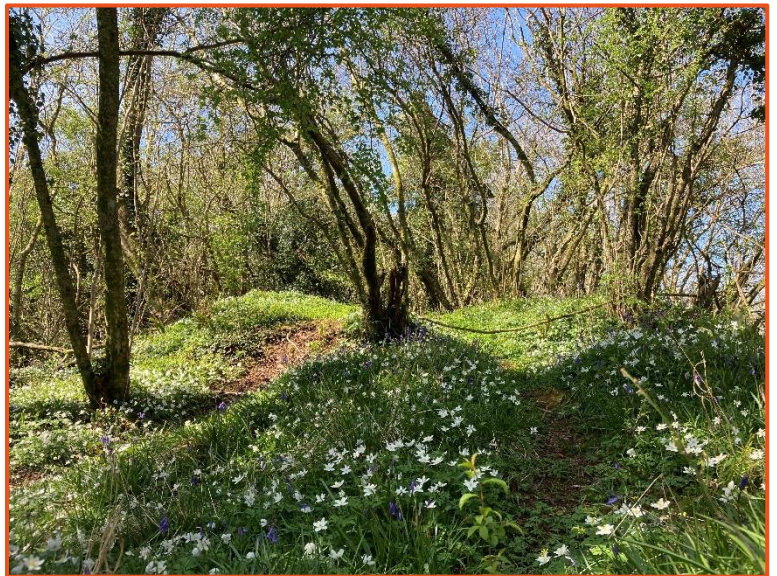
Allowing rhododendron to take hold again would be like taking two steps forward and one step backwards. Consolidating and maintaining the work that's already been done is often as important as doing the work in the first place.

---

### **Rhondda Cynon Taf – Living Landscapes Cherry Laurel Removal**

Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) is an invasive non-native tree that has become a very popular hedge plant amongst homeowners and developers due to its evergreen properties. But when it escapes into our ancient woodlands it is devastating, as the dense canopy shades out native wildflowers such as bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and wood anemone (*Anemonoides nemorosa*), as well as poisoning the soil.

Cherry laurel containing cyanogenic glycosides, which when digested by animals and humans, becomes prussic acid (hydrogen cyanide); this poisonous substance also pollutes the water that drips off their leaves, killing the ground flora beneath them.



Unfortunately, Cherry Laurel is often promoted as being 'good for nature', as it can provide nesting habitat and food for birds. But this, along with garden waste being dumped into woodlands, only helps spread seeds into our wild areas, ultimately destroying natural habitat.



The second picture is an example of the damage caused by cherry laurel. About 80% of this ancient woodland has now lost all its undergrowth and woodland flora.

With Local Places for Nature funding from Welsh Government, several ancient woodlands in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which are popular with local communities, have had cherry laurel removed this winter. A hefty job that involves mass felling and stump treatment.



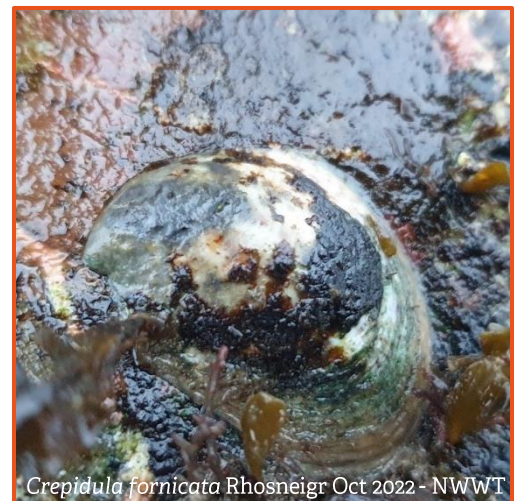
In future, we look to remove laurel (and other invasives) from landscaping schemes promoted by developers and hope to work with local people to monitor and remove garden escapes on our Living Landscape sites.

---

### Monitoring marine invasives in North Wales

Since April 2021 the North Wales Wildlife Trust has been working with volunteer hubs carrying out monitoring of intertidal rocky shore species, mostly within Marine Protected Areas in North Wales. A main focus is to keep an eye out for INNS and other species moving due to Climate Change. Our hubs cover three main areas of rocky shore in North Wales and carry out monthly surveys throughout the year. In 2022 we were able to document the presence, and in some cases expansion in range, of several marine INNS including:

*Crepidula fornicata* – unlike in southern areas the slipper limpet has not become established in North Wales, yet. However, we were informed of its presence at the Menai strait and have been carrying out timed species surveys for this particular species in the survey areas surrounding and have been able to document some of the spread of this species.



*Crepidula fornicata* Rhosneigr Oct 2022 - NWWT

*Ostrea chilensis* – an unusual species the Chilean oyster was introduced and has since settled in the Menai strait, but nowhere else in the UK. In 2022 our volunteers found this had increased in number spread within the strait.

*Corella eumyota* – is a non-native species of sea squirt which has been found in several areas by our volunteers. We hope these sightings will help to provide further information as to its movement.

*Sargassum muticum* – is a widespread algal INNS across North Wales and our volunteers help to document where it is seen growing, as its seasonal growth occurs each Spring-Summer.

The year ended with a conference in December, which incorporated a workshop by Chloe Powell-Jennings and Laura Grant (both from NRW) who utilised the Marine INNS kit (samples and information) created by Chloe and Anna Holmes from the Amgueddfa Cymru. More information on how to ID our INNS species can be found on the Pen Llyn A'r Sarnau Website [here](#) a Gymraeg [yma](#) and see [here](#) ([Cymraeg](#)) for more information on our Shoresearch surveys.



## Four Rivers for LIFE

### **New project launched to tackle the state of four rivers in south Wales**

The Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Four Rivers for LIFE Project was launched in October 2022 and will protect, enhance and help restore the Rivers Teifi, Tywi, Cleddau and Usk. An estimated 776km of river will be improved.

The project, supported by the EU's LIFE Programme with funding also provided by the Welsh Government and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, will see over £9 million injected into tackling urgent conservation challenges over the next five years.

The rivers are classed as [Special Areas of Conservation \(SAC\)](#), meaning they are of international importance for wildlife and plants such as salmon, lamprey, shad, otters and water crowfoot.

The project will work with farmers, land owners, contractors and local communities to:

- Improve conditions for salmon, lamprey, shad and other fish populations that have declined drastically in recent years
- Remove constraints to fish migration - address river obstructions such as weirs and other barriers
- Re-naturalise rivers – re-introducing boulders, woody material and gravel back into the rivers, as well as re-meandering, and floodplain reconnection







- Planting trees along river banks to create habitat, increase shading and establish buffer strips, with associated water quality and bank stability benefits.
- Reduce the impact of invasive non-native species such as Himalayan balsam, American skunk cabbage, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed
- Improve land management practices – reducing nutrients and sediment inputs from agricultural land by working with farmers and landowners to promote best practice farming techniques
- Re-establish the critically endangered Freshwater Pearl Mussel in southwest Wales

Four Rivers for LIFE will be led by NRW in partnership with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, River Restoration Centre, Agriculture Research Centre Manager (ARC) Coleg Sir Gâr and Woodland Trust, with financial support from LIFE, Welsh Government and Dŵr Cymru/Welsh Water.

To find out more please go to the project website [www.naturalresources.wales/4RiversforLIFE](http://www.naturalresources.wales/4RiversforLIFE)

## Research

### **Angling Trust: Invasive species survey and help stop the spread!**

Invasive non-native species are increasingly present in our waters and can have a significant impact on our fish and fishing.

The Angling Trust has launched a survey to get a better understanding of where anglers are fishing both in the UK and abroad, and anglers' awareness of invasive non-native species.

The findings will be used to improve the information available to anglers on invasive species and inform our ongoing work in this area to assist fishing venues, clubs and individuals in invasive species prevention and control.

Participation in this survey is completely anonymous and the questions posed will not allow individuals to be identified. The questionnaire should take around 15 minutes to complete.

[The survey can be found HERE.](#)

### **Recording impacts of invasive species through citizen science: a pilot study**

North Wales Wildlife Trust is involved in a new project which will explore a novel approach to assess the impacts of invasive species by working with local volunteers (including LAGs) and citizen scientists to develop and test different standards for field impact assessments. It is being led by Coventry University with North Wales Wildlife Trust as project partners through WaREN. The project is funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

The main aim of this project is to explore the feasibility of involving citizen scientists in the recording of impacts of invasive species. The specific objectives are to:

1. develop field and digital protocols for impact assessments by citizen scientists,
2. test the field protocols with Local Action Group volunteers in Wales,
3. test the digital standard in a recording application, and
4. analyse and compare results for different species and protocols as well as impact evidence derived from traditional analyses.

If you're a LAG or volunteer group in Wales and want to get involved in this exciting project please contact [WaREN](#).

---

## Opportunities to work with us

### **"Where are the mink?" – study on mink distribution and management options in Wales**

We wish to appoint an organisation (or organisations) to conduct a feasibility study on mink (*Neovision vison*) distribution in Wales and to scope options for establishing a mink forum. The aim is to improve the strategic approach and join-up efforts.

Preference will be given to study proposals that address the following:

- Analysis of current evidence on mink distribution in Wales (including mink 'hotspot' maps for Wales).
- Identify current control and management efforts (e.g. through projects), and where there are gaps in the effort.
- Look at the most cost-effective options for monitoring the distribution (e.g. GPS technology).
- Scoping the feasibility of establishing a mink forum in Wales; identifying lessons learnt from other similar forums.
- Analysing the potential members for the mink forum and engaging with relevant stakeholders (e.g. with semi-structured interviews). At least one workshop to bring potential forum members together.

If you are interested, please find out more and apply [here](#).

---

## In the News

### **The eradication of Topmouth gudgeon from a Llanelli lake**

Topmouth gudgeon (or Stone moroko), an invasive fish species, has been identified at Sandy Water Park, Llanelli, a lake on the Millennium Coastal Path.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Environment Agency plan to eradicate the invasive Topmouth gudgeon from this popular lake in Llanelli. In early January 2023, the two agencies will start work to remove

the fish from Sandy Water Park to protect the future of the lake, as well as waterways throughout Wales and England. The work has been funded by Welsh Government and is supported by landowners, Carmarthenshire County council.

Check out this NRW [article](#) and [blog](#) to find out more!

---

### What does COP15 mean for invasive species?

Most of you will have heard about the recent COP15 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) which gives nature hope for the future, for more information check out this [Wildlife Trust Blog](#).

But what does this mean for invasive species?

Target 6 of the GBF focuses on invasive species and aims to:

- Eliminate, minimise, reduce and/or mitigate their impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services,
- Prevent their introduction and establishment,
- Reduce the rate of introduction and establishment by at least 50%, and
- By 2030, eradicate or control invasive species especially in priority sites, such as islands.

We look forward to working with WaREN members to achieve these targets in Wales. Find out more about what COP15 means for invasive species in our new [blog](#)!

---

### Saving nature - The Times 21<sup>st</sup> December 2022

Sir, Further to your leading article on the Cop15 agreement on protecting species and habitats ("Saving Nature" and report, Dec 20), one of the main threats to biodiversity is invasive species. Countering this threat often involved killing undesirable though photogenic species, from grey squirrels in the UK to possums in New Zealand, which brings animal rights activists into conflict with wildlife conservation scientists. While it is easy to set ambitious targets, there is challenging work ahead on informing society as to enable pragmatic implementation of the objectives.

Rob Yorke, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire.

Find out more on COP15 and mobilising bipartisan collaboration required for conservation [here](#).

[Find out more about WaREN](#)

The Wales Resilient Ecological Network (WaREN) Project is being delivered by North Wales Wildlife Trust and the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. WaREN is funded by the Welsh Government Sustainable Management Scheme until April 2023.

