

How to map easily and effectively – example

The best way for your Local Action Group (LAG) to start controlling invasive species in your area is to map your target species distribution. This will help you identify areas for control and strategically determine priority sites, aiding in the development of your strategic action plan.

Mapping your species

Mapping your species is the vital first step in tackling invasive species, maps can be used to inform control strategies and can help you identify where best to focus your efforts. The best way to map your area and species distribution is to survey your area and hunt for the furthest upstream source of your target invasive species (this is especially important when dealing with invasive plants, particularly those whose spread associated with rivers). Once you have found the furthest upstream source work your ways downstream, mapping the locations and extent of your target invasive species as you go.

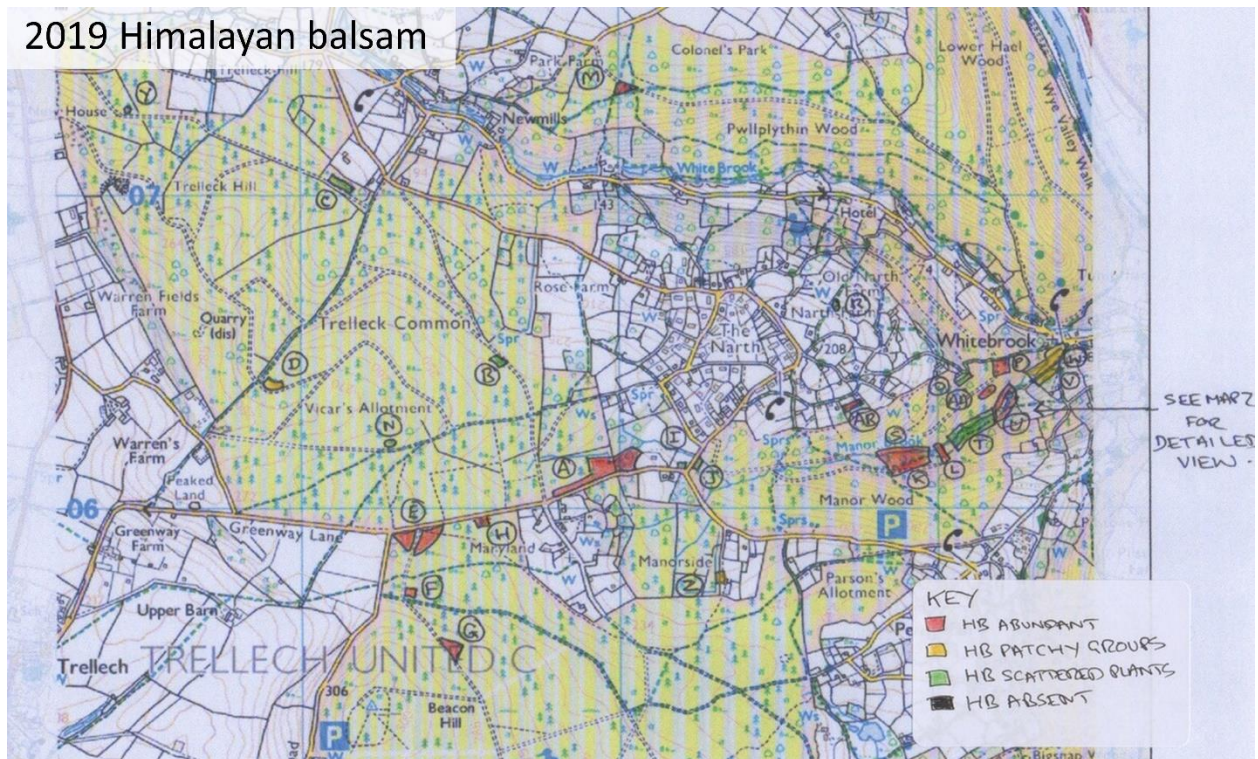
Mapping species distribution doesn't have to be a complex process, you can make it as simple or complicated as you like. A simple method of mapping is to print off maps and draw on your sites and species distribution by hand, alternatively you can use technology or apps which you can download on your phone (e.g. OS Maps, what3words, etc.).

When mapping your species extent, it is also useful to include estimates of abundance. This could be as simple including general categories for areas, e.g. 'abundant', 'patchy' and 'scattered'.

The frequency that you survey your sites is important, we recommend surveying all of your sites (whilst looking for additional areas) at least once a year. Repeat surveying of sites can be carried out using the same methods as your initial survey (e.g. drawing on a printed map and assigning categories), this will help you visualise your work and provide you with information on the success of your control measures. Hopefully you will see your species abundance reducing and sites becoming absent for your target invasive species over time.

Mapping is also a great way to show volunteers and funders all of the great work you are doing.

2019 Himalayan balsam



2021 Himalayan balsam

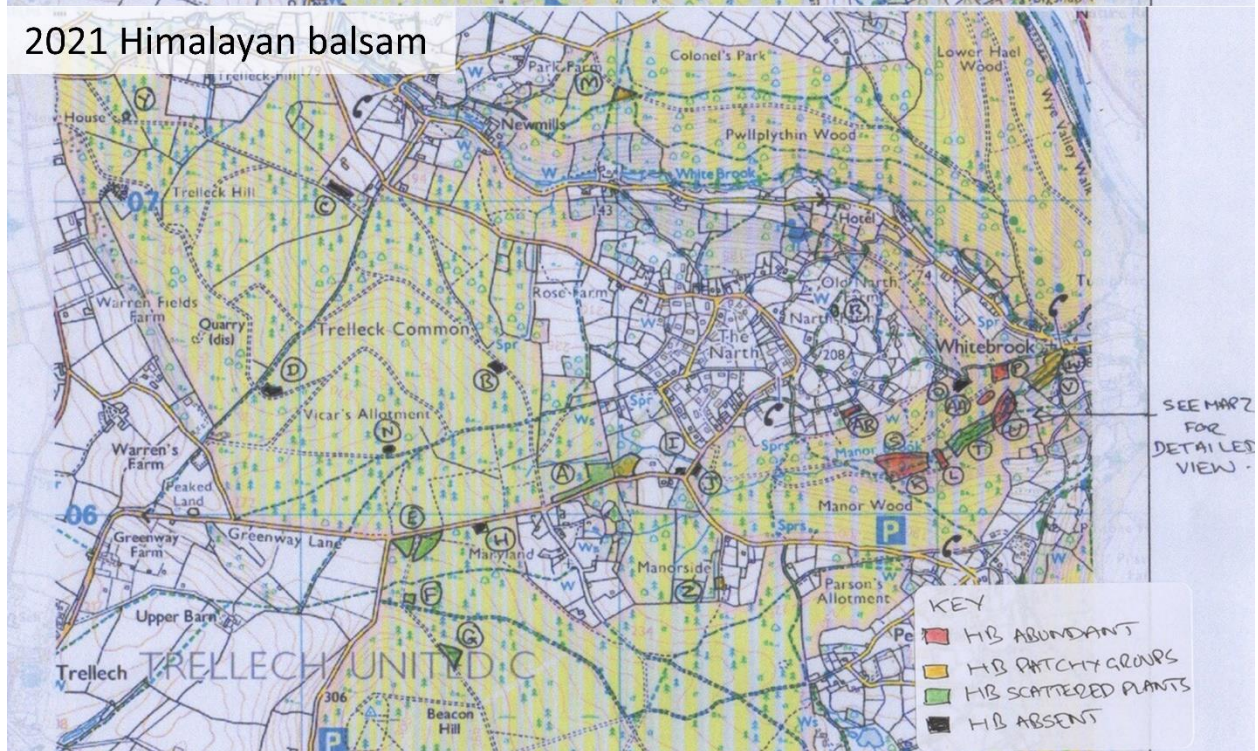


Figure 1. Example of a simple way to map species distribution. Sites are surveyed for Himalayan balsam and colour coded based on classification of species abundance: Abundant (red), Patchy (yellow), Scattered (green). This provides a way to visualise effort and success throughout management seasons. Maps are from The Narth and District Footpath Group for 2019 and 2021.

You should keep all of your species distribution and management records. This can be done using a spreadsheet or database. Ideally this should include the distribution of your target species and any management actions undertaken, e.g. location of the species or site, species extent, control measures, and where possible landowner information. You can find a [template spreadsheet](#) here, please note the first row has been filled with example information.

[Example database](#)

When mapping it is very important to take health and safety into consideration, make sure you always work in groups or pairs and never work alone. Always make sure someone knows where you are going and checks in with you throughout the day. Avoid unnecessarily risk, do not venture into steep and/or hazardous areas. More information on health and safety and an example risk assessment can be found in the Project Planning section of the WaREN Invasive Species Toolkit.

Once you have finished mapping the distribution and extent of your species you will be able to determine which sites are a priority for action and develop an action plan. For more information on writing action plans check out the Project Planning section of the WaREN Invasive Species Toolkit.

You are now almost ready to start your control work. Before starting make sure you get landowner permission and check out the Management section of the WaREN Invasive Species Toolkit.