Ymddiriedolaeth Natur Gogledd Cymru North Wales Wildlife Trust

Ymddiriedolaeth Natur De a Gorllewin Cymru Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales

Check out our September newsletter which is 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 Gareth Holland-Jones.

September Newsletter

WaREN Update

Happy September - We at WaREN hope you have enjoyed the summer. As we turn to autumn, we'd like to thank you all for your hard work in tackling invasive species in your local area.

WaREN has been busy attending events; whether that is with one of the projects it is supporting for example the Coventry University project "Recording impacts of invasive species through citizen science' organising events across Wales. WaREN also attended the National Eisteddfod from the 5th until the 12th of August, highlighting the issues and impacts of invasive species along with biosecurity solutions through our invasive species hunt and eDNA game.

We are looking forward to running INNS Mapper app training in the next couple of months. Keep an eye out for any upcoming events on our webpage and in your inbox.

LAG and Volunteer Effort

Removing invasive Himalayan Balsam plants to protect Anglesey's riverbanks

Anglesey Council Officers, in partnership with local contractors and local volunteers, have been working to remove the highly invasive plant, Himalayan Balsam, from Anglesey river catchments.

Himalayan Balsam can often be seen standing up to two metres tall and displaying prominent pink flowers.

The plant is an invasive non-native species, which mainly grows along riverbanks and in damp woodland. The plant poses an elevated risk to the environment as it competes with native plant species – taking their space, light, nutrients and pollinators, and prevents other plant growth.

Himalayan Balsam also increases riverbank erosion which can lead to long term damage to spawning ground for fish species, as well as decreasing the river's water quality.


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Anglesey Council's Countryside and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) department carry out annual work to control the plant across numerous sites on Anglesey. This work is carried out by utilising funding provided by Natural Resources Wales.

AONB Community Warden, Owen Davies, said, "This collaboration has proven to be a great opportunity to work alongside Bangor University students on our Himalayan Balsam control programme. It is great to see how enthusiastic all the students have been about managing and protecting our natural environment."

He added, "We worked alongside Rebecca, a student from Bangor University, who was on placement with us throughout June. She helped greatly with our GIS Balsam mapping by recording the coordinates of observed balsam during site visits, then inputting these into GIS to generate shapefiles of balsam coverage."

Each plant can generate anywhere between 600 and 2,500 seeds. It might look pretty but it colonises quickly; displacing native plants and consequently adversely affecting biodiversity, soil stability and water quality.

What causes clumps of Himalayan balsam seedlings?

Himalayan balsam is unfortunately widespread at Moelyci Farm, Tregarth, Gwynedd, despite several years of attempts to control it. It is not unusual to find tight clumps of Himalayan balsam seedlings in the grassland and bracken litter (figs 1 & 2) and these clumps are particularly numerous in 2023.

My first guess at an explanation was that these corresponded to larders where small mammals, probably voles, had cached seeds in the autumn and for some reason not consumed them during the winter. However, having excavated three of the clumps, there was no sign of a burrow underneath any of them.

Another possibility is that they arise from ripe but unexploded seed pods which have landed in the turf. But a seed pod contains up to 16 seeds (Beerling & Perrins, 1993), whereas the clumps typically contain 30-60 seedlings and the largest clump I have counted contained 191 seedlings (fig. 3).

I think uneaten food caches gathered by a small mammal or bird are still the most likely explanation. Can anyone flesh out the details, please? Beerling and Perrins suggested wood mice are involved in distributing Himalayan balsam seeds up to 10 metres from the parent plant.

In terms of controlling the plant, the clumps of seedlings are quite helpful. It is much quicker to pull out dozens of seedlings with one hand than to remove the same number of Himalayan balsam plants one at a time.

Beerling, D.J., & Perrins, J.M. 1993. Impatiens glandulifera Royle (Impatiens roylei Walp.). Biological Flora of the British Isles 177. Journal of Ecology, 81: 367-382.

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NERC Project – 'Recording impacts of invasive species through citizen science'

WaREN has been supporting Coventry University by facilitating events for this project funded by the Natural Environment Research Council. As of the 10th of August, the second workshop had taken place in Llandogo, Wye Valley, South Wales.

Your dedication and commitment to helping this project has been valuable in the pursuit of a better understanding of the impacts of invasive species.

Following popular demand, Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) has been added to the list of target species. The list of species the project is looking vegetation surveys of are:

- Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*)
- Cherry laurel (*Prunus lauracerasus*)
- Variegated Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon ssp. argentatum*)
- Winter heliotrope (*Petasites pyrenaicus*)
- Japanese rose (*Rosa rugosa*)
- Himalayan honeysuckle (*Leycesteria Formosa*)

So far there have been 29 vegetation surveys (as of August) across Wales. If you are interested in helping contribute to surveys for the project's target species, please follow the sign-up link.

Potential funding

Dŵr Cymru citizen science support programme

Dŵr Cymru have recently launched a citizen science support programme. Citizen science groups and organisations can apply to DCWW for up to £10,000 per project in a 12-month period. The programme runs until 31st March 2025.

Details can be found on the DCWW website here.

In the News

Biosecurity planning to prevent invasive species in six of Wales' Marine Protected Areas

As part of the marive Invasive Non-Native Species Biosecurity Planning project, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) will undertake research which will be used to create biosecurity plans which will be put in place in Six of Wales' Marine Protected Areas:

- Dee Estuary SAC,
- Menai Strait and Colwyn Bay SAC,
- Cardigan Bay SAC,
- Pembrokeshire Marine SAC,
- Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries SAC,
- And the Severn Estuary SAC.

The project will work on the work already done for biosecurity planning in Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau SAC and working with key stakeholders to take practical steps to reduce the risk of introducing and spreading invasive species.

For more on the NRW website here.

Is there an invader in your garden? A potential sting

During Asian hornet week 2023, and the increase in sightings and nests across Southern England (37 nests at 30 sites as of 07/07/23) WaREN created a blog on how to identify a friendly wasp, hornet, woodwasp, or hoverfly from foe the Asian hornet.

Raising awareness of the Asian hornet is vital for preventing its establishment in the UK. They are a threat to our native biodiversity. The threat is they change their diet to meat during summer and feed on pollinators and other insects but also heavily predate on honeybees having an economic impact.

If you want to keep up to date with any news on sightings, the National Bee Unit have a rolling blog here.

Thematic Assessment Report on Invasive Alien Species and their control

In September the IBPES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) released a Thematic Assessment Report on Invasive Alien Species (From here know as INNS) and their controls. The report assessed the current status and trends of INNS, their impacts, their drivers, their management. and options for policy to deal with the challenges they pose. The assessment takes into account various knowledge and value systems including local and indigenous knowledge.

For a summary of the scope, scale and significance of the assessment, please refer to the 'primers'. For more information here is please read the full scoping document.

Find out more about WaREN

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Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government