

Wales Invasive Non-native Species Group Newsletter

ISSUE 3

JANUARY 2020

Invasive Non-native Species (INNS) are plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms which have been introduced to parts of the world where they would not be naturally found. They have the ability to spread causing damage to the environment, the economy, our health and the way we live. INNS are the second greatest threat after habitat loss and fragmentation. INNS have been estimated to cost the UK economy at least £1.8 billion annually, they mainly affect farming and horticultural sectors but can affect transport, construction, recreation, aquaculture and utilities.

The **Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) Invasive Non-native Species Group** provides a source of expertise on INNS in Wales. The group was established in 2008 and includes a wide range of partners from Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, the environmental third sector and other public and private sector organisations.

For more info visit the [WBP website](#).

HOT TOPIC

Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019



Some species of Union concern. Clockwise from top left: Himalayan Balsam, Ruddy Duck, Grey Squirrel, Floating Pennywort (credit: SNPA), Topmouth Gudgeon (credit: Matt Brazier, Environment Agency), Water Primrose. Credit: GBNNSS unless otherwise indicated

The [Invasive Alien Species \(Enforcement and Permitting\) Order 2019](#) came into force on 1 December 2019. It introduces enforcement provisions, offences and penalties needed to comply with the requirements of [EU Regulation \(1143/2014\)](#) on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species. The provisions apply to 66 species known as '[species of Union concern](#)'.

Under the Order, NRW and the police may impose criminal sanctions in Wales relating to an offence under the Order. As the regulator, NRW may also impose civil sanctions.

Licences may be issued under the Order allowing activities which are prohibited under the EU Regulation to be carried out. These activities can only be carried out in compliance with the conditions of a licence. Natural Resources Wales are the licensing body in Wales. Natural England will issue licences in England.

An updated FAQ on the EU Regulation and Order will be published soon with a link available in the next newsletter. If you think you might need a licence for carrying out restricted activities, please see NRW's [Species Licensing](#) webpage for more information.

British Irish Council Seminar

The latest British Irish Council (BIC) INNS Seminar took place on 20th and 21st January 2020 in Cardiff with government and agency representatives attending from UK, RoI and the Crown Dependencies.

Workshops were held on Pathways, Contingency Planning, Rapid Response and International Policy. More information will be available via <https://www.britishirishcouncil.org/areas-work/environment/invasive-non-native-species> as outputs and initiatives progress.

UN International Year of Plant Health 2020

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH) to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development.

There will be awareness raising around protecting plants and protecting life over the year here in Wales. Please let plant.health@gov.wales know if you have any events or activities you might have planned that could contribute to this important message. There is also a chance to enter the photo competition, illustrating your idea of healthy or unhealthy plants. Could be an interesting one for INNS! <http://www.fao.org/plant-health-2020/photo-contest/enter-the-contest/en/>.

Legislation & policy

The **UK Environmental Audit Committee (EAC)** report on their inquiry on the impacts of INNS and their management was published on 25th October 2019 (the full report can be found here: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/invasive-species-17-19/>).

The report noted that INNS are one of the top five threats to the natural environment and made the following recommendations:

- That the funding of the GB-wide working and Non-Native Species Secretariat be significantly increased to at least £3 million a year.
- That the UK Government should update and enhance its biosecurity public awareness campaigns and put significantly more resources into engaging members of the public
- That invasive pathogens should be included in the next GB Invasive Non Native Species Strategy since the methods of prevention and control are broadly similar
- That Overseas Territories (OTs) be resourced to ensure that each OT has up to date biosecurity legislation and adequate powers of enforcement by the end of 2020
- That the UK Government should consider implementing a system to match-fund contributions from private partners for large scale eradication projects where there can be the greatest wins for biodiversity.

LATEST NEWS

New WBP INNS Group Secretariat

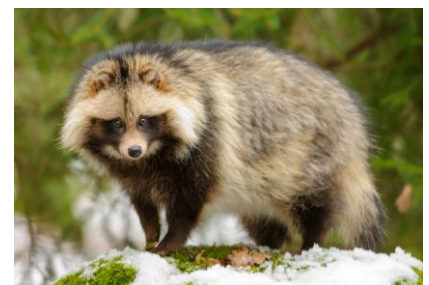
We are delighted to welcome Michaela Scrivin, who has replaced Holly York. Michaela is based in Dolgellau, Gwynedd and can be contacted on

michaela.scrivin@cyfoethnaturiolcymru@gov.uk



Raccoon dogs

WG, NRW, Police and GBNNSS continue to work collaboratively to try to re-capture two Raccoon dogs that escaped in Carmarthenshire last August. If you think you might have spotted them (dead or alive) please report this as soon as possible to the 24-hour NRW incidents telephone line on: 0300 065 3000.



Raccoon dog. Credit: istock.com/sduben

Asian Clam - *Corbicula fluminea*

National Museum of Wales staff have found Asian Clam during a survey of Cardiff Bay. This is the second Welsh record. Biosecurity measures are already in place.

PARTNER PROJECTS: WILDFOWL & WETLANDS TRUST (WWT)

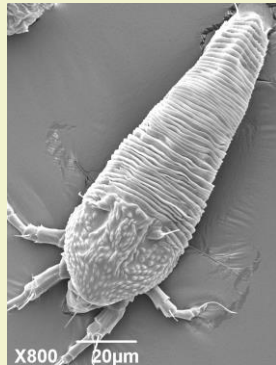
Crassula biological control trial in Llanelli

In a first for Wales, a microscopic sap-sucking mite has been introduced in a bid to help control an invasive Australian wetland plant that chokes up bodies of water and vastly out-competes our native plants.

Crassula helmsii, or swamp stonecrop, is an invasive plant introduced from New Zealand in the early 1900s as part of the ornamental pond industry. *Crassula* is a space invader. It forms mats that outcompete everything else, choking waterbodies and reducing biodiversity. It doesn't die back in winter, smothers native plants, and can reduce the amount of oxygen in water, which is bad news for all kinds of wetland creatures.

After years of staff and volunteers battling valiantly to prevent the spread and growth of this prolific alien, WWT Llanelli Wetland Centre has been supported by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and other generous funders to be the first Welsh site for the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) trial of a brand new biological control agent that feeds exclusively on Australian Swamp Stonecrop (*Crassula helmsii*).

CABI's Project Scientist, Sonal Varia, said: "Feeding by the *Aculus crassulae* mites causes *Crassula* plants to develop galls in the growing shoots, known as big bud galls, leading to a significant reduction in overall plant fitness by reducing plant growth. It is hoped that over time,



An *Aculus crassulae* mite. Credit: Radmila Petanović

the introduction of these mites will contribute to the long-term management of this weed by reducing its competitive ability, allowing less competitive native plants to grow where *Crassula* currently dominates."

WWT Llanelli Wetland Centre Reserve Manager, Dr Brian Briggs, said: "We are excited to be part of this important trial. Australian Swamp Stonecrop is an extremely invasive plant that takes up a huge amount of our time and resources and we have been hoping for an effective way to control it for years. We will be eagerly monitoring the release areas for signs of the mite getting to work."

The mite was released at Llanelli on 20th June 2019 and there are indications that the mites are having an effect. Only time and careful monitoring by CABI and WWT staff will tell if this tiny sap-sucker is the answer.

If the project is a success the mite is likely to be introduced to countless other sites around the UK which have been affected, in order to reduce the vigour of the invasive plant and prevent it from choking ditches and ponds in future.



Sonal Varia, scientist from CABI, showing WWT Llanelli Reserve Warden Peter Phillips the reddish galls produced by *Crassula helmsii* in response to the *Aculus Crassulae* mites. Credit: Brian Briggs, WWT

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Evidence and Research Needs (BEERN) Projects

Aesculapian snake in Colwyn Bay

The BEERN Programme has provided funding under the KESS Studentship scheme for a pre-emptive integrated impact assessment of an introduced snake in North Wales. The Aesculapian snake (*Zamenis longissimus*) is an introduced species that is established in and around the grounds of the Welsh Mountain Zoo (WMZ) in Colwyn Bay, an area of approximately 1.5km². With a different foraging ecology and habitat from native species, the Aesculapian snake poses a potential risk to the biodiversity of the UK. Therefore, monitoring and devising control strategies for this snake in North Wales is an important component of preserving the biodiversity and ecosystem functionality of North Wales and the wider UK.



Aesculapian snake. Credit: Tom Major

This project seeks to develop a widely applicable model system for early invasive species assessment and control planning that will benefit invasive species control efforts in the UK. Through the monitoring of their movements and habitats, the data on snake behaviour and habitat use will feed into an integrated removal plan for the species and contribute to preventing further range expansion and invasiveness.

The project began in October 2017 and will continue until October 2021. Snakes will be implanted with radio transmitters between April 2020 and September 2020, and again April 2021 until September 2021.

Public Perceptions of Invasive Alien Species in Snowdonia

The BEERN Programme has also provided funding for an undergraduate study in assessing people's perception of Invasive Alien Species in the landscape of Snowdonia. The focus will be on *Rhododendron ponticum* (Rp) infestation within native woodland settings. By bringing ideas to residents, landowners and others within the National Park about land management and species of interest, this will positively engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels. By getting people to independently recognise the negative effects of invasive alien species on native habitats within the National Park, this will also be a step in the right direction to tackle key pressures on species and habitats. More details, including a link to the survey, will be provided in the July WBP INNS newsletter.



Credit: GBNSS, with acknowledgement to NRW

Living Wales

Living Wales is a research project that uses satellite observations over Wales to capture the state and dynamics of Wales's landscape, in near real time, historically and in the future (over the long term) through integration of earth observation data, supportive ground measurements and process models.

Living Wales maps forests, canopy cover, crops, and semi-natural habitats on annual basis. Remote technologies have a role to play in mapping the distribution of INNS, and one aim of the Living Wales programme is to detect changes in the extent and distribution of the threateningly invasive species in Wales. The programme is interested in information not only on locations dominated by invasive species, but also on the locations that invasive species are starting to colonise.

The EarthTrack mobile app is being developed to collect supportive ground measurements. The app has the facility to collect information on flower-rich grassland, pollinator-rich habitats, flower-rich road verges, bees, butterflies, arable habitats, and invasive species. Visit <https://earthtrack.aber.ac.uk/index.html> for more information.

EVENTS

Training & Events

American Bivalves on British Shores

National Museum of Wales run talks and workshops on recording and collecting aliens on the Welsh coastline. These sessions are aimed at National Parks staff, volunteers, NRW staff and others working in this field. If anyone is interested in attending one in the future, please contact Anna Holmes Anna.Holmes@museumwales.ac.uk.

19th February 2020

Biosecurity Training for Freshwater Users

North Wales Wildlife Trust are running a free biosecurity training event for freshwater users on 19th February. For more information contact Gemma Rose on 07534487704 or gemma.rose@northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk.

11th March 2020

The Great Garden Escape

The Swansea Organic Gardening Group are running a short awareness raising session on INNS on 11th March at 7pm - 9pm. *Environment Centre, Pier Street, Swansea, SA1 1RY.*

20th-25th April 2020

UK National Plant Health Week 2020

The first Plant Health Week will take place during the week of 20th - 25th April 2020 and continue annually thereafter.

18th-22nd May 2020

GB Invasive Species Week (ISW) 2020

ISW will run during the week of 18th – 22nd May 2020 with many activities and awareness raising campaigns planned. If you have any further suggestions or events you would like publicised, or would like to receive updates from the GBNNSS, please email them on nnss@apha.gov.uk or visit <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=132> for more info.

19th May 2020

INNS Awareness Training Session

The National Botanic Garden of Wales are running a session on 19th May 10am – 3pm about the main issues of INNS, including ID, control methods, legislation, recording and campaigns. Some prior knowledge of ecology would be useful. £50 per person. For more details see <https://botanicgarden.wales/visit/whats-on/event/invasive-non-native-species-training-day/>.

2nd June 2020

Aliens Species in Swansea

As part of the Gower Walking Festival, a learning stroll is being organised on 2 June at 10am – 1pm. Come along on this stroll to see how many problematic alien, exotic and invasive non-native species (INNS) you can spot growing in Swansea's Singleton Park and the Botanic Gardens. Meet just inside Singleton Park on the Gower Road entrance for a prompt 10am departure! For more information visit <https://gowerwalkingfestival.uk/>.

CONTACT US



www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Invasive-Non-Native-Species-Group



@WBP_wildlife



walesbiodiversitypartnership@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk



Wales Biodiversity Partnership, c/o Natural Resources Wales, Ty Cambria, 29 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0TP