

# UPPER ONNY INVASIVE PLANTS PROJECT

## REPORT 2017

### **Introduction**

The object of this year's project was to continue to try to eradicate the known stands of invasive plant species (specifically Himalayan Balsam] along the river West Onny, along Crifftin Brook and at the Bog, noting the effect of last year's work. Also, to work on downstream if time permitted.

In addition, any reports that came in from the public would be investigated within the wider catchment of these two tributaries by myself as the contractor but also calling on help from the UOWG plant group to try to ensure complete coverage of the watercourses. As the contractor, I identified the owners of the river contacting them for permission to survey, raising awareness of the issue and offering methods of control.

The majority of this report relates to Himalayan Balsam (HB) as only two new small sites for Japanese Knotweed (JK) were found.

### **Contacting owners**

Most riparian owner details were the same as last year although there were again a few errors of details and changes of ownership.

Where possible, all owners were contacted by either phone or direct contact. This was a good opportunity to explain the project and how it was progressing.

### **Recruiting volunteers**

Similarly, to last year at the beginning of July, I approached Natural England and the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme for help with recruiting volunteers.

Having built up a list of volunteers from previous years and responding to a mail out from the LPS there was a good response this year and eventually 12 different people helped at different times and places, resulting in a total of 23 volunteer days.

A smaller number of practised volunteers was more practical in most cases due to there being less HB than last year in most places.

If the site is very obviously bad then a large team is most efficacious, otherwise having a few experienced people able to spot the HB quickly when not in flower is more important.

Simon Brown (Shropshire Outdoors Development Officer from Shropshire Council) was contacted with a view to helping with his team. They came out with a small team and helped for one day.

The fishing club on the Plowden estate also helped on one occasion and hopefully will do so again.

### **Promotion**

Similar promotional materials were used to last year .The 'WANTED' poster was produced again [copy attached] with pictures of HB and JK and a brief description of what we were doing and where, with an appeal to contact myself with any relevant information.

This again was distributed around the catchment area and displayed on village notice boards, in local shops, pubs and churches.

There was a small response to this in the form of telephone calls to me and people had contacted me during the past year.

The double-sided flyer was again used to give to landowners and other interested parties. This gave more information on HB and JK and how to control them [copy attached].

## Survey and Work

Work started on the West Onny on 5th July. This was possibly a little late as vegetation was quite advanced this year. Work consisted of pulling HB by hand. No tools were used. In most places this had worked very well. It became immediately obvious that some of the really bad areas were again much reduced from last year. The West Onny was cleared over the next 3 weeks, followed by the Criftin Brook and the River Onny down as far as Hillend on the Plowden estate.

In August we returned to the upper reaches of the West Onny north of Nind to clear plants that had re-grown or been missed. Some areas were eventually cleared 3 times. Difficulty of access due to uneven ground and scrub by the river were the main challenges and it was surprising to find HB plants in certain places whereas other previously bad areas were clear.

## Time spent [in days] removing HB in each area [volunteers and my time] Last 2 year's times shown for comparison.

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Confluence to Newton Farm	5	2	2
Newton Farm to Linley Hall	9	2	2
Linley Hall to A488 Welsh Lodge	2	2	2
Welsh Lodge to Appletree Farm	9	5	4
Appletree Farm to White Grit	9	7	5
The Bog	4	1.5	3
<b>2016</b> Criftin Brook		5	3
River Onny confluence to Plowden Bridge		4	4
White Grit west along ditch <i>and</i> top of Rea Brook, the Gravels t		1	1
<b>2017</b> Plowden bridge to Hillend			7
<b>Total</b>	<b>38 days</b>	<b>29.5 days</b>	<b>33 days</b>

The time spent from Welsh Lodge to White Grit included returning 2 or 3 times. Volunteers were covered by Natural England's and my own insurance and we adhered to NE's risk assessment. The amount of work done would not have been possible without volunteer help for which I am extremely grateful.

## Summary

This year has given an idea of the effect that two years clearance work can have and as mentioned the effect on the lower part [below Linley Estate] was good in most areas, although in two or three places [for some reason] it was still quite bad. What also becomes clear is the difficulty of clearing certain overgrown sites and how easy it is to miss a few plants.

There are several natural breaks along the river:

1. Above the Linley Estate [parallel to the A488] to the source is nearly all small grazed fields with some woodland and gardens.
2. Linley Estate, down as far as where grazed to just past the hall. At the moment, the middle section of Linley Estate [all grazed, approx. 4 km] is virtually clear of balsam.
3. Larger grazed areas and some intensive arable to just below the confluence.
4. Down to Hillend on Plowden Estate is also a distinct marker. Downstream from that point HB becomes dominant throughout the rest of the estate along the river and beyond.

Japanese Knotweed was only found or reported in two new small locations and the landowners are dealing with it themselves.

## ACTION PLAN

We now have a much clearer picture of the problem. This year's work has shown how effective the last two-year's clearance was and gives an idea of how much work will be needed in the future. It was slightly disappointing to see how it persists in the upper reaches.

Although it is an ongoing problem, it seems it could be kept under control with a lessening input of time and money each year at least as far as Hillend; unlike other river systems [or further downstream where it is totally out of control].

Given that the seed bank of HB is viable for about 3 years and some will probably always flower and seed however carefully the river is checked, we may never be able to remove it completely but bring it to very low levels with continual vigilance.

### 2017/2018

- Explore possibilities of funding for next year and apply to **Severn Rivers Trust**
- Maintain contact with landowners to thank them for their help and cooperation and encourage them to continue playing an active role in reporting and removing HB.
- Recruit and organise volunteers in June.
- Clear in July when it is most visible with a follow up a month later.

*Presuming that the work we have done this year will again have had some significant impact, hopefully the amount of HB will be lower again next year.*

### Estimate for proposed work in 2018

#### **UPPER ONNY CATCHMENT**

**July 2018 [based on team of 4 people per day; supervisor and 3 volunteers]**

**West Onny** [west of A488] 2 days;

[East of A488] 2 days

**Criftin Brook** 1 day

**The Bog** 1 day

**Plowden estate** 3 days

**August 2018**

**West Onny, Criftin Brook, Plowden 4 days**

**3 supervisor days to set up/contact landowners/report afterwards**

**Total 13 days supervisor time and 39 volunteer days.**

**16 days at £150/day**

**Other costs; Insurance £200**

**TOTAL £2600**

**RIVER ONNY PLOWDEN ESTATE.**

**As we did this year, we could work on down river with resources allotted or apply for more funding. Hopefully, we could work with more fishermen on the Plowden Estate.**

**Rob Rowe September 2017**

## Upper Onny Invasive Plants Project

This project aims to survey the Rivers East and West Onny and to provide landowners with advice and support for the removal of invasive plant species.

If you identify **Himalayan balsam** or **Japanese knotweed** on your land, please contact Rob Rowe on 01588 630648 or [rob@robrowe.co.uk](mailto:rob@robrowe.co.uk)

### Himalayan Balsam

Introduced as a garden plant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this tall, attractive, annual plant is now widespread in the UK and is highly invasive, especially along rivers and in woodland, where it out-competes our native plants. It has explosive seed heads and seed is dispersed by wind and water downstream.



Himalayan Balsam's characteristic features :

- pink-purple trumpet –shaped flowers, sweetly scented
- stem hollow, sappy, fleshy and brittle, green to red in summer
- leaves opposite, in whorls of 3-5, finely serrated edges
- seed capsule, 2.5cm (1in) long, hangs on red stalk

Controlling Himalayan Balsam

- **handpulling** from the roots: if the stem snaps, pulling must be completed to include the roots
- **strimming** below the lowest node or joint before the seed capsules are formed
- plants can be left on site to decompose

# WANTED:



**Japanese Knotweed**



**Himalayan Balsam**

## INFORMATION

### on the whereabouts of these two plants

These non-native plants spread rapidly and have a serious impact on the local environment, smothering riverbanks, spreading into fields and outcompeting native plants.

This Upper Onny Invasive Plants project aims to locate these two species in the Upper Onny area and control them for landowners before the plants can become a problem.

**If you have seen these plants in the Onny area  
between the Long Mynd and Corndon Hill,  
please contact Rob Rowe:  
[rob@robrowe.co.uk](mailto:rob@robrowe.co.uk) or 01588 630648.**

This project has received funding from the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund