

Edgmond Wildlife Group - Report on Himalayan Balsam Control 2022

Beginning on 22nd May and working through until 30th October volunteers put in 74.5 hours of their time to control the Balsam. This year's split between zones was: Edgmond Hall land 65 hours, Harper Adams land 9.5 hours. No time was spent attempting to remove plants from the Strine, although several HAU sessions included reaching out as far as possible into the Strine and topping the plants to reduce seed dispersal. The maximum number of volunteers we had on any day was 4, the minimum was one. The work was spread over 5 visits to HAU land and 13 visits to Edgmond Hall land.

Volunteers were always properly briefed about health and safety issues and the two people who concentrated working on HAU land have already signed a waiver.

It is difficult to quantify the reduction in plants from the previous year, in most areas there was a good reduction, however, the discovery of two previously un-noticed stands of Balsam on Edgmond Hall land (in the *distant willows* and the north side of the *meadow* – see map below) meant that overall, we have been set-back somewhat.

We have had reasonable access to Edgmond Hall land this year, HAU land access was again on an *ad hoc* basis, and this proved to be the most efficient way of operating.

HAU

A measure of our success is that by the second visit on 09 June there were only 80 plants recorded, by 26th July only 5 and by 06 October no plants were recorded at all. We believe we pulled all plants before they shed seeds.

Edgmond Hall

The optimism of the late spring visits was dashed when two new stands were found on 05 June and 24 July. Both areas were well away from the canal which is why they had been missed. However, all plants were pulled before they set seeds. By 21 August only 140 plants were discovered across the whole area. This rose to 320 plants on 02 October, but almost all were spindly and probably not viable. A final inspection on 30 Oct recorded only 16 plants. We know of only one plant that set and shed seeds.

What next?

- We hope that both landowners allow us back onto their land in 2023 to continue the task. It is envisaged that a smaller number of hours will be needed.
- Access from early May through to late October is ideal.

EWG would like to thank the landowners for allowing access to prevent the further spread of this invasive species. Finally, again, a big 'thank you' goes to the determined volunteers without whose efforts this project would not have been possible.

Paula Doherty 06 Jan 2023

