

NEW FOREST WATERNEWS

NEW FOREST CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

The New Forest Catchment Partnership is coordinated by the New Forest National Park Authority and Freshwater Habitats Trust who are working alongside other organisations and communities to protect and improve the special freshwater habitats of the New Forest.

Issue: 2

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HOW DID IT ALL START? THE NEW FOREST PARTNERSHIP

The New Forest Catchment Partnership was created out of an initial pilot of 12 catchments funded by [Defra](#). It was led by [Freshwater Habitats Trust](#) and the [New Forest National Park Authority](#). The pilot looked at the benefits of working with local communities and organisations to identify opportunities to improve the health of ponds, streams, rivers and lakes and implement collaborative action. This aimed to help meet legislative requirements such as those of the Water Framework Directive condition, but importantly also sought to improve the quality of the local environment within the specially protected landscape of the National Park and deliver ecosystem service benefits to local communities.

Following the successful pilot period in the New Forest catchments, the government extended the approach, often referred to as the 'Catchment Based Approach', to all catchments in England. The current New Forest partnership continues to be co-hosted by Freshwater Habitats Trust and New Forest National Park Authority. It benefits from close collaboration with numerous partners including representatives of local landowners and managers, as well as the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission, non-governmental bodies and other statutory bodies such as local councils.

These partners have the shared vision of achieving the best possible water environment wherever possible in the area, and working together to make the best of their resources and local expertise. The

New Forest contains many fantastic streams, rivers, lakes and ponds. Over 400 freshwater macroinvertebrates and 300 species of freshwater wetland plants can be found within the catchment, making it a nationally important area for freshwater and coastal wildlife. For this reason it is important to ensure all waterbodies are achieving the highest possible standards for water quality and naturalness.

Aided by funding from the Environment Agency and National Park Authority, the Partnership was successful at implementing practical improvements in the Sowley catchment in 2015. These included habitat restoration as well as measures to reduce the amount of pollution entering the catchment.

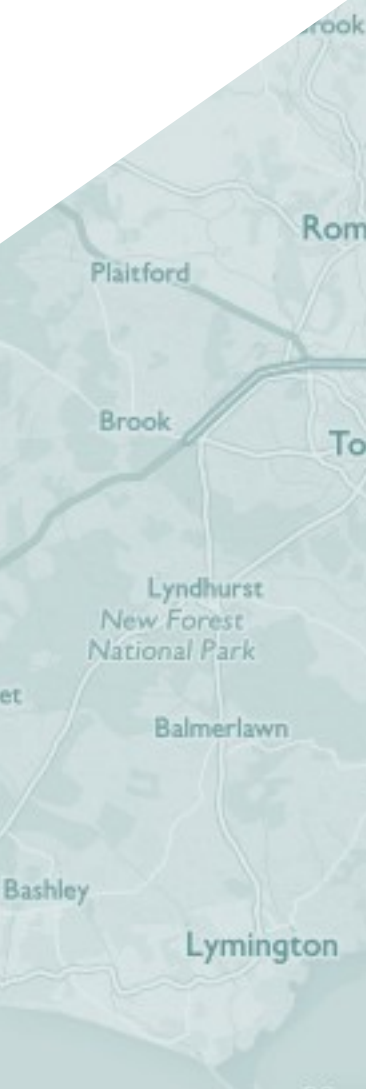
Spurred on by this success, Freshwater Habitats Trust led a bid on behalf of the Partnership for a program of work to be delivered over forthcoming years as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded [Our Past, Our Future](#) landscape partnership scheme. The [Living Waters project](#) seeks to improve waterbodies within the Beaulieu Abbey Stream and wider catchment, including initiatives to address recreational impacts on water quality and engage local communities and visitors to the New Forest. The landscape partnership scheme is also helping to deliver other projects which will improve riparian habitats such as supporting the continuation of the successful New Forest Non-native Invasive Species project.

Ian Barker
New Forest National Park Authority



Nigel Matthews

Beaulieu River



NEW FOREST WATER BLITZ

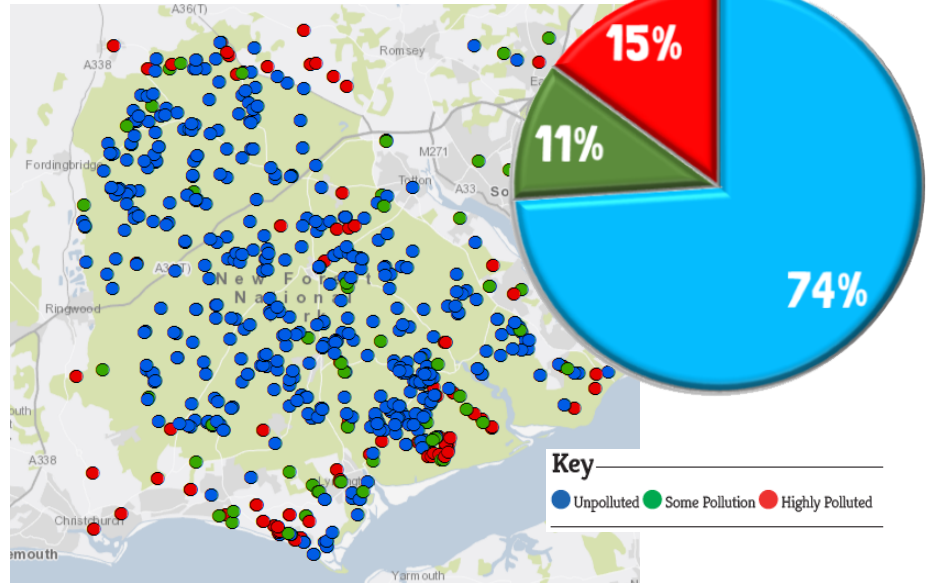
The results are in from the citizen science survey!

Over the course of three months, 12th March to 12th June, volunteers undertook the Clean Water for Wildlife citizen science survey across the New Forest. They used quick kits to measure the levels of two widespread nutrient pollutants, nitrate and phosphate. The survey aimed to discover fantastic clean water habitats, free from nutrient pollution, and to reveal the extent of nutrient pollution facing the Forest's freshwater life.

Volunteers collected and tested 675 water samples from across the New Forest and surrounds for nitrate and phosphate. In total 314 ponds, 13 lakes, 277 streams, 19 rivers and 35 ditches were sampled.

The results show what a truly outstanding freshwater landscape the Forest contains. Just under three quarters (74%) of sites showed no evidence of nutrient pollution; they are clean water habitats. This contrasts very markedly with other lowland catchments, such as the Ock (Oxfordshire), where over 70% of freshwater habitats were affected by pollution.

The clean water habitats in the Forest were dominated by ponds (54%), but there was also a large number of clean water streams



Map of New Forest showing locations and results of the Water Blitz

(36%) and some clean water lakes and rivers. It is now quite rare to find unpolluted rivers and streams in lowland England. The traditional management for hundreds of years and its multiple conservation designations has been a shield to much pollution. The Forest has remained generally much less polluted than most of the English countryside; a clean water gem.

The Clean Water for Wildlife survey is far from over! There are gaps in the data and

many places left to test. Do you have a freshwater gem on your doorstep? Sign up for your kits and discover more about your local freshwater habitats.

For more information and to sign up for the survey please visit: freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/clean-water

Hannah Worker
Freshwater Habitats Trust
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CLEANING UP OUR WATERS

Tackling the impacts of phosphate pollution

The New Forest has one of the most exceptional freshwater landscapes in the UK. It is home to many of our rarest freshwater plants and animals that depend on its clean waters. However, even the New Forest is still vulnerable to issues such as phosphate pollution.

Phosphate is a plant nutrient that alters plant communities, affecting the creatures that should live there, and in severe cases causing algal blooms which use up oxygen and 'suffocate' aquatic insects and fish. It runs into ponds, rivers and streams through a range of sources including your home. Phosphates enter your household waste water from the products we use to clean our

homes and the food we eat. Poorly performing septic tanks and small sewage works can also leech phosphate rich raw sewage into the environment.

To help raise of awareness and to begin tackling this threat we have produced [two leaflets](#) summarising issues caused by phosphate pollution, and how best to maintain septic tanks and small sewage treatment works to prevent pollution.

There are lots of little steps we can all take to reduce phosphate pollution. For more information and to view the leaflets please visit the NPA website (Link: <https://goo.gl/Kwh9sl>)



Managing your Septic Tank

A clean home shouldn't mean a dirty river

The babbling streams and rivers of the New Forest can hide a dirty secret - Phosphate.

Naturally-occurring nutrients feed the watercress, watercress and watercress usually found growing in our streams. But in excess amounts, the plant nutrient phosphate acts as a pollutant. It can't be seen in the water, but it makes its presence plain by disrupting the habitat, allowing nutrient-hungry algae to out-compete aquatic plants, and in extreme cases, triggering algal blooms. When the algae die and are deposited as sediment, this can smother plants, and as they decompose, oxygen is used up, suffocating aquatic insects and fish. As well as threatening our wildlife, these processes can prevent us from using and enjoying our waterways, polluting rivers, threatening angling, water sports and shellfisheries, and contributing to flood risk.



THE NEW FOREST NON-NATIVE PLANTS PROJECT:

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING AT THE CATCHMENT SCALE



The New Forest Non-Native Plants Project (NFNPP) was set up in 2009 to help landowners meet their responsibilities to stop the spread of invasive non-native plants in the New Forest area, particularly along river banks and in wetland habitats.

Hosted by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT), the Project has been funded and supported by a partnership of organisations including the New Forest National Park Authority, the Forestry Commission, Natural England, DEFRA and the Environment Agency. Currently, funding is provided by a) the Heritage Lottery Fund through the Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership scheme, b) the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, for work on Crown Land on the Open Forest and c) the Forestry Commission for work on Crown Land outside the Open Forest. Two Project Officers, Catherine Chatters and Jo Gore, are employed by HIWWT, with funding secured until the end of March 2020.

The aims of NFNPP are to identify where invasive non-native plants are a problem, offer advice and practical help to landowners and managers to control their spread, raise awareness about the problems caused by invasive non-native plants and undertake research into methods of control.

The work undertaken by NFNPP helps to

implement, locally, The Great Britain Non-Native Species Strategy (August 2015). The successful implementation of this Strategy is dependent on effective partnership working.

At the start of the project, NFNPP focussed on five invasive non-native plant species, namely Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, American Skunk Cabbage, Himalayan Balsam and New Zealand Pygmyweed. Since then numerous additional species have been added to the 'hit list' including the high priority Creeping Water Primrose *Ludwigia grandiflora*, and the number of species being tackled by NFNPP has now more than tripled.

Many of the species being tackled by NFNPP are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981; it is therefore unlawful to plant them in the wild or 'otherwise cause them to grow in the wild'. Although it is the landowners' responsibility to stop them spreading into the wild, it is recognised that landowners and land managers need help if such species are to be controlled at the catchment scale.

The control of Giant Hogweed along the Avon Water is a good example of effective partnership working at the catchment scale. Giant hogweed was introduced from the Caucasus as an ornamental garden plant in the nineteenth century. It has since 'jumped the garden fence' and spread along river



Giant Hogweed

banks, each plant being capable of producing 50,000 seeds. In addition to it being highly invasive, its toxic sap reacts with human skin to cause painful, burning blisters.

During 2009 Catherine ascertained the distribution of Giant Hogweed along the Avon Water from Sway downstream to Efford and identified all the relevant landowners. This involved contacting a large number of people as the Avon Water is characterised by a highly fragmented pattern of landownership. Giant hogweed was discovered growing in 43 separate ownerships on approximately 4km of riparian habitat. It was clear that a co-ordinated programme of control would be required.

One of the landowners kindly offered the free use of the meeting room at her hotel, conveniently situated on the Avon Water, so Catherine convened a meeting of landowners during autumn 2009. This proved particularly effective as it provided an opportunity for landowners to meet each other and to develop a sense of responsibility towards their neighbours; they soon realised that they were all 'links in the chain' or 'pieces in the jigsaw'. The majority



Himalayan Balsam on the Lymington River

NON-NATIVE PLANTS PROJECT CONTINUED....

of landowners agreed to a co-ordinated programme of treatment by professional contractors using approved herbicide; the remaining landowners agreed to dig up Giant Hogweed plants on their land. Herbicide treatment and digging commenced in 2010 and has continued with two treatments per year since then, resulting in a substantial decrease in the population. As Giant Hogweed seeds can remain viable in the soil for over 7 years, we are delighted that funding will be provided through 'Our Past, Our Future' to continue the herbicide treatment until 2019.

Himalayan balsam on the Lymington River and its tributaries is another successful example of control at the catchment scale. During 2009 Catherine started to identify landowners and land managers along the Lymington River and met the Secretary of

Brokenhurst Manor Fly Fishing Club. He told her that the fishing club members used to pull Himalayan balsam but gave up when they realised that nobody upstream was undertaking any control, as the seeds were carried downstream, infesting the areas which the fishing club had cleared. He agreed that, if Catherine could identify the owners upstream and encourage them to co-operate, he would ask the fishing club members to renew their efforts to control balsam on their stretch of river.

Since then a co-ordinated programme of hand-pulling has been arranged each year by NFNNPP involving the fishing club and enthusiastic volunteers, tackling the Himalayan balsam along the Lymington River and its tributaries the Mill Lawn Brook and the Passford Water. Volunteer work parties in the Lymington catchment

are now organised by Jo Gore, involving local residents and corporate groups. During 2016 Jo was grateful for help given by staff from SSE, Bournemouth Water, Oil Spill Response, Lloyds Bank and Ridge LLP and she is currently planning further balsam pulls for 2017.

Partnership working between NFNNPP, land owners, land managers, volunteers and contractors is proving to be the key to successful control of invasive non-native plants at the catchment scale.

For further information please contact **Catherine Chatters** (Catherine.Chatters@hiwwt.org.uk)

or **Joanne Gore**

(Joanne.Gore@hiwwt.org.uk)

W: hiwwt.org.uk/new-forest-non-native-plants-project

EVENTS

- **18/01/17 (19:30-21:30) - [Wildlife Through the Seasons in the New Forest](#)** (Wildlife Trust)

An illustrated talk about wildlife throughout the year.

- **29/01/17 (10:30 -16:00) - [New Forest Volunteer Fair](#)** (NPA).

Make a change and volunteer for wildlife projects, heritage surveys, ranger services and outdoor activities within the stunning landscapes of the New Forest National Park.

- **09/03/17 - Prevent the spread of non-native plants** (Wildlife Trust)

Fishermen and anglers are invited to a half day raising awareness event on non-native plants that are affecting the New Forest's water ways at Testwood Lakes, near Totton. Booking essential.

Email : Catherine.Chatters@hiwwt.org.uk

VOLUNTEER OPPOTUNITIES

- **Stop the spread of Non-native plants** (Wildlife Trust)

Join a work party to help to stop the spread of Himalayan Balsam. For more information email: Catherine.Chatters@hiwwt.org.uk

- **Clean Water for Wildlife** (Freshwater Habitats Trust)

Use quick kits to measure the levels of nutrient pollution in your local freshwater habitats.

W: freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/clean-water

E: peoplepondswater@freshwaterhabitats.org.uk

- **Our Past, Our Future** (NPA)

Volunteer for a variety of activities across the national park, including wildlife surveys and practical conservation tasks.

W: <https://goo.gl/HWRxTS>

E: richard.austin@newforestnpa.gov.uk

THE NEW FOREST CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP

The partnership is a group of organisations that are working with local communities to protect and improve the outstanding freshwater environment of the New Forest.

W: freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/catchment-projects

E: hworker@freshwaterhabitats.org.uk

Key partners include:

SUPPORTED BY

