

27 March to 2 April was *Invasive Species Week* an initiative bringing Defra and non-governmental organisations together to raise awareness of invasive non-native species. Tackling these alien invaders costs the UK economy £1.8bn each year

Not every non-native species is bad, only a minority have serious negative impacts on British wildlife, our health or the economy. Unfortunately, around 80 species of animals and plants do cause issues and these are known as invasive non-native species.

Some are relatively well known, such as **Japanese Knotweed** which can quickly colonise and dominate railway embankments or riversides to the detriment of other species, or the **Grey Squirrel** which is having catastrophic consequences on the regeneration of woodlands. Others are less well known – such as **American skunk cabbage** which is a threat to wet woodlands, or **North American signal crayfish** which outcompete our own native crayfish. To help combat the growing threat of these alien invaders a new Devon Invasive Species Initiative is being developed under the umbrella of the Devon Local Nature Partnership (<http://www.naturaldevon.org.uk/home/devon-invasive-species-initiative/>). Great information on a range of issues and species is available from the Non-native Species Secretariat (<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/factsheet/index.cfm>).

One non-native species of particular concern locally is **Himalayan balsam** (*Impatiens glandulifera*). Many local people would like to reverse its spread, the dense stands of which dominate many rivers banks, damp woodlands and hedgerows. It can impede water flow during heavy summer rainfall, out compete other plants, and when it dies back in winter, leaves soils prone to erosion. Seed capsules explode when ripe spreading seed far afield. If you look carefully at riverside vegetation, you will already see the next generation of plants emerging.

During the summer landowners, local organisations and individuals will be tackling this problematic plant across the catchment of the River Otter, with the focus primarily being on tributaries and outlying populations before main river valleys are tackled. Total control is a long-term aim. This work is supported by small teams of enthusiastic volunteers. Recent years has seen some great successes, including on the Colaton Brook due to the efforts of the *Otter Valley Association*. Being by or in a stream around wildlife on a summer day is a lot of fun, and as conservation work goes, Himalayan balsam is relatively easy! Wellies, long sleeves and gloves are all that is needed and you quickly get to recognise the targets leaves and fleshy stems even if the flowers are not out.

So, whether you are under 8 or 80+ and can come along once or every week, balsam bashing is for you. You will definitely be making a positive and rewarding difference to local wildlife. Register your interest now and find out how you can help locally. The annual pulling season starts in June and continues until early September.

Which day?	Which area?	Co-ordinators email
Wednesdays x 6	Budleigh brook/Back brook/Commons area	kate.ponting@clintondevon.com
Thursdays and Saturdays	Colaton Brook area	patrickhamilton35@outlook.com
Saturdays x 4 followed by barbeque	Newton Poppleford area	swanstandg@btinternet.com
1 hr on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons	Tipton, Fluxton, Metcombe, Venn Ottery area	councillor.johnharding@gmail.com
Thursdays x 3	Tale Valley area	mish@escot-devon.co.uk

Events for April

Otterton's Beavers A riverside walk suitable for all ages.
Wednesday 5 April, 1100 or 1400 Otterton Mill, EX9 7HG

Kate Ponting, Countryside Learning Officer for Clinton Devon Estates will lead walks upstream from Otterton to see signs of recent beaver activity. Discover some of the benefits and conflicts beavers create in the landscape and get an update on the River Otter Beaver trial to date.
No booking necessary

Clinton Devon Estates are pleased to be sponsoring the farmers market **at Budleigh Food and Drink Festival** www.budleighfoodanddrink.org.uk As well as selling our award winning venison we'll also be in the children's tent on **Sunday 9 April 11-12.30** with crafts and activities to learn about organic milk production. Staff and volunteers from the Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust will be in the 'Living and Lifestyle' marquee all weekend. See you there!

Clinton Venison Woodland walk and a tour of the Deer Larder with Wildlife Ranger, Tom Garner.
Monday 24 April 1100 Pophams Farm, Colaton Raleigh EX10 0HT and woodland venue to be confirmed on booking.

Maintaining levels of wild deer is integral to the management of Clinton Devon Estate's woodlands, ensuring the welfare of deer stocks and protection of our FSC certified woodland, enabling native broadleaved woodlands to regenerate. Learn about deer management and see how and where our award-winning Clinton Venison is produced. Places are limited so booking essential: 01395 446918. kate.ponting@clintondevon.com

From American skunk cabbage to Zebra mussels: An illustrated A-Z of Devon's alien invaders!
Thursday 27 April, 1900-2100 Rolle Estate Office, Bicton Arena, EX9 7BL

Dr Sam Bridgewater, Head of wildlife and conservation for Clinton Devon Estates will introduce common and less well known plants and animal invaders and discuss how to combat the threats some of these pose to British wildlife, our health or the economy. Places are limited so booking essential: 01395 446918. kate.ponting@clintondevon.com