

Upper Onny Invasive Plants Project

2023

A report of the control and survey of the rivers East
and West Onny for Himalayan balsam



Rob Rowe

Funded by Natural England and the Shropshire Hills National Landscape



**Shropshire
Hills**
National
Landscape

UPPER ONNY INVASIVE PLANTS PROJECT REPORT 2023

Introduction

This was the ninth year of this project continuing to try to eradicate the stands of invasive Himalayan balsam along the River Onny, the Crifftin Brook and at the Bog while noting the effect of last year's work. Also, to work on downstream if time permitted.

Grants had been obtained initially from the Shropshire Hills National Landscape by the Upper Onny wildlife group. Severn Trent Water Authority 'Boost for Biodiversity' fund financed the project in 2019 and 2020 and in 2021 by Shropshire Wildlife Trust. In 2022 the project was funded through the Stepping Stones project as part of the Green Recovery Fund.

This year the grant funding was from a combination of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape, Conservation Fund and Natural England, but included some work to encourage volunteers to get involved in River Naturalness surveying. This resulted in the funding for the balsam project being reduced. And so a smaller project ran in 2023.

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, either by phone or direct contact. This was a good opportunity to explain the project and how it was progressing.

Recruiting volunteers

A small number of practised volunteers is more practical in most cases, with an ability to pick out Himalayan balsam when not in flower essential. Due to there being much less Himalayan balsam in the upper reaches these days I spent time working on my own or with one other volunteer.

Survey and Work

Work started on the West Onny on 11th July. Work consisted, as usual, of pulling Himalayan balsam by hand. No tools were used. In most places this had worked very well. The West Onny was cleared over the next 2 weeks, followed by the confluence of the Crifftin Brook and the River Onny down as far as the A489 bridge on the Plowden Estate. Also work was done on a site at the Bog.

On the Plowden estate in the past National Trust has offered their help and we have worked with their volunteers. This year that was not possible. Also this year members of the local Plowden fishing club were unable to do any balsam clearance.

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 Himalayan balsam was still visible at what was possibly its introduction point above White Grit with a few plants and with occasional plants here and there and one large difficult overgrown patch before the A488 bridge at Nind.

Through Linley Estate as far as the hall was fairly clear apart from fenced and ungrazed areas.

The lower part [below Linley Estate] was clear in most areas, although there are a few stubborn patches [please see maps].

A mile south of More it begins to be more prolific. What also becomes clear is the difficulty of clearing certain overgrown sites and how easy it is to miss a few plants which seem to have grown to a large patch by the next year.

The main challenges as usual were due to the difficulty of access in some places with uneven ground and thick scrub by the river. It was surprising to find Himalayan balsam plants in some new places whereas other previously bad areas were clear.

ACTION PLAN

In three areas the river has been fenced off recently. In two places on the Linley estate and one at Myndtown farm. Balsam has been fairly sparse in these areas previously but with the grazing removed it has suddenly appeared in some quantity. This opens the question of how good it is to fence off the river? Although gated to allow animals in, this does not seem to happen often. This needs to be looked at in future and talked about with the owners.

Doing some work to clear patches of scrub where the balsam is inaccessible and the river not too high in the winter months would be a good idea, as long as it doesn't compromise other conservation goals.

Possibly this project could be undertaken by the Stepping Stones project in future or seek another contractor to oversee the work

2024

At present we have no funding for next year and this needs to be sought if the work is to continue. A smaller project could ensure that the upper reaches were clear.

Originally [8 years ago] we only planned to go as far as the East/West Onny confluence. We would need to continue to encourage participation from National Trust and Fishing club again.

We need to 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 Himalayan balsam.

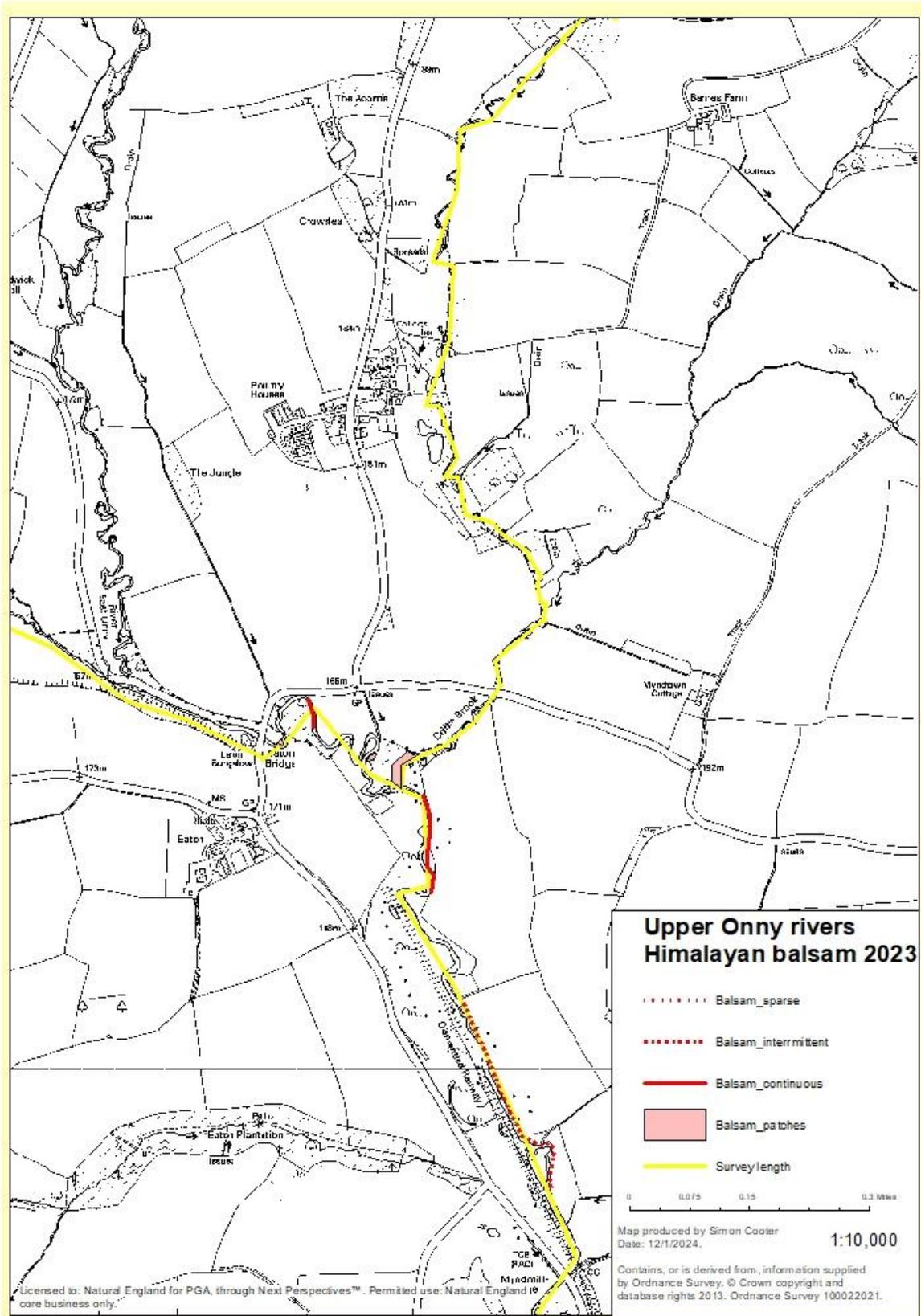
Recruit and organise volunteers in June.

Clear in early July when it is most visible with a follow up a month later on the upper reaches at the end of August.

Rob Rob September 2023

Maps

- 1-10 Detailed maps of Himalayan balsam coverage
- 11 Full survey coverage map 2022
- 12 2015 full coverage map
- 13 Priority headwater map



Licensed to: Natural England for PGA, through Next Perspectives™. Permitted use: Natural England is core business only. Contains, or is derived from, information supplied by Ordnance Survey. © Crown copyright and database rights 2013. Ordnance Survey 100022021.

