



Check, Clean, Dry

Find out more about how you can help take positive steps to protect internationally important wetlands and freshwater habitats in the New Forest

The New Forest is world famous for its wetland wildlife. From source to sea, the ponds and bogs, rivers and streams, mudflats and saltmarshes are all extremely special for plants and animals alike.

The grazing livestock and a landscape which boasts areas of clean unpolluted wetland habitats, make the New Forest is one of the best and most Important Freshwater Landscapes and coastal areas in the UK.

The New Forest is the second smallest National Park, yet it has the highest proportion of designated land for nature conservation in England, making it an attractive location to live, work and play.



New Forest ponies grazing and drinking water at Crockford

However, as one of the most visited National Parks in England, people can sometimes have a negative impact on the plants and wildlife that have been here for thousands of years. As an ancient landscape with a deep natural history, it's important to ensure our time in the Forest and along the coast goes without harm and keeps nature in balance. One such impact is the spread of invasive non-native species.

Across the UK, over the years, we have seen an increase in the spread of non-native species introduced into the wild, usually by accident. The New Forest is no exception to this and due to the high movement of people between other places and landscapes, invasive non-native plants and animals have taken hold, and in some cases become dominant having a detrimental impact on the landscape and the native wildlife that lives here, disrupting the fragile balance of nature.



The process of an invasive species colonising a pond and the impacts that could be caused by its presence taking over the natural environment.

Our freshwater and coastal environments are particularly susceptible to invasive non-native species - due to the flowing nature of water it doesn't take long for seeds and animals to disperse and colonize.

Once an invasive species takes over impacts include the loss of native plants and wildlife including fish and birds dependent on wetland habitats, reduces water quality, increases risk of flooding and makes normal recreational activities near impossible.

To make matters worse invasive species can survive on damp clothing and kit for up to 14 days after its last use and it only takes one seed, egg or animal to take hold and become established in an ecosystem.

Organisations across the National Park are working in Partnership to raise awareness and actively eradicate invasive non-native species. It's a big challenge, however in more recent years Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and others have been eradicating some of the worst offending invasive species including Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed to name but a few. Other species such as New Zealand pigmy weed and water primrose are more difficult to tackle.



Taken by Catherine Chatters

Himalayan balsam

(Impatiens glandulifera)

Introduced as a garden plant in the 1800s however with exploding seed pods it quickly spreads. Found invading river and ditch edges.



New Zealand pigmyweed

(crassula helmsii)

Introduced in 1911 as an oxygenator for garden ponds, pigmyweed forms a dense mat in and around shallow water, smothering and out-competing native plants.



A trip to the Forest, whether for the day or as a holiday retreat, is worth planning well to ensure that your visit minimises impact. The fragile nature of the Forest means that our activities should remain tranquil and thoughtful and reducing the spread of invasive species is a top priority.

Next time you visit the Forest, plan ahead to reduce the risk of spreading invasive species.

CHECK

Many invasive species can cling onto bike tyres, kayaks and other paddle sports vessels, fishing equipment, children's pond dipping nets, footwear and clothing including buoyancy aids and even tents and camping equipment.

Here's how and what to CHECK:

1. After finishing your activity check your equipment, clothes and footwear for mud, animals (even small), and plant material.
2. Remove anything you find and leave it at the site.
3. Make sure you check nooks and hard to reach places on fishing kit, paddle vessels, camping gear and footwear.
4. Don't forget to check the dog as they too can carry invasive species from the last place they visited.

CLEAN

1. Once away from the natural environment clean everything thoroughly as a soon as you can.
2. Some equipment can be cleaned using hot water. This is a rapid, and effective method to clean equipment and kit. It is recommended you submerge for about 15 minutes at around 45 degrees. This will kill most aquatic invasive not native species.
3. For everything else clean using water and a damp cloth or a boot brush - don't forget the hard to reach places in boats, nets, buoyancy aids, bike tyres and footwear.

DRY

1. Drain equipment such as paddle sport boats.
2. It's vital to dry equipment, footwear and clothing for as long as possible before using elsewhere



Before

A pair of muddy boots likely to be holding seeds, bacteria and tiny bugs in the mud.



After

A pair of checked, cleaned and dried boots, ready to go get muddy again.

Some additional tips:

- ⇒ For your vehicle – please keep to established and permitted roads, tracks and parking areas to minimise the spread. Parking on verges in the National Park is prohibited for this and many other reasons.
- ⇒ Be Plant Wise – think about which plants you are putting into your garden and try to stop non-native plants spreading into the wild. To find out more and get advice click here: [Be Plant Wise](#)
- ⇒ To learn more about the national Check, Clean, Dry campaign, invasive species and activity based advise, click here: [Check Clean Dry](#)

Our project, Wilder for Water in partnership with the New Forest National Park Authority funding by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and Environment Agency, is working with visitors, organisations and businesses to raise awareness of the special qualities of the New Forest waterscape & to champion a best practice 'clean water standard' for camping and recreation across the National Park and beyond

To find out more click here: [Wilder for Water](#)

Green Recovery Challenge Fund

By Gemma Stride Freshwater Habitats Trust - June 2022