

## Invasive Species – What you can do

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In a warm local on a cold Sunday, I asked a neighbour “How’s the fishing?” Over the next hour I learnt more about what was in the nearby river, adjacent to it and affecting it, then I had ever known. I lived in the area most of my life! He knew not only about the native species but also the invasives; “Dace were introduced to Ireland about a hundred years ago, I found my first in the Bride in 2001” and when asked when did he last see one? “Thursday” was the answer. This fisherman had a wealth of knowledge and it poured from him like the Blackwater into Youghal Bay, sure and steady. I quietly pondered had he eaten the Salmon of Knowledge?

Many people who have even just a passing interest in our wildlife will have seen an invasive species and perhaps remarked on how ‘it’s taking over’ without knowing exactly what they were looking at. Invasive species are species that have been introduced generally by human intervention outside their natural range and whose establishment and spread can threaten native ecosystem structure, function and delivery of services.

A couple of weeks after my encounter with the local angler, I was involved in a seminar on invasive species in Co. Waterford. It was pleasantly surprising to see how many people from varied backgrounds were not only aware of many of the invasive species we have but also the impacts they are having on our native wildlife. We heard stories aplenty of the negative impacts of invasive species on biodiversity. Such impacts can occur through a range of mechanisms such as alteration of habitats and food webs, competition, herbivory, predation, introduction of parasites and pathogens and through the dilution of native gene pools. We also saw images of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) sprouting up through a road and the foundations of a house and heard horrific stories of the blister burns people received from coming into contact with Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*). It isn’t just our native biodiversity that’s affected by invasive species!

### What can you do? – Submit records!

The local angler, many of people at the seminar and others I’ve spoken to, have all stated they ‘wanted to do something’. A major issue with invasive species is that once introduced, control, management and eradication *where possible* can be very difficult and costly. Therefore, early detection and reactive measures are desirable. Early detection requires a person to spot an invasive species and record information about that sighting. That record can then be submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre and once validated, it can be displayed on the publicly available mapping system. This facilitates those who wish to combat the threat of invasive species to be informed of what invasive species we have and where they are, along-with being alerted to records that may show if a species is new to an area or indeed Ireland. Such information can then lead to measures being undertaken such as: legislative, awareness, management etc. There is an obvious wealth of information that the public and in particular Anglers have about what’s invasive in their frequented areas and that information, in the form of a record submitted to the National Invasive Species Database, has the potential to help tackle the threat of invasive species.



### What is a Record?

It is information that is noted down when a species has been observed. It answers the following questions:

- WHO recorded the species? – Recorder name
- WHAT was recorded? – Species name
- WHERE was the species recorded? – Grid reference and location description
- WHEN was the species recorded? – Date
- WHO determined the species? – Determiner name (The Determiner is often the person who recorded the species but if you are unsure about its identity then please have this validated by an expert and give their name)

### Submission of Priority of Species

Invasive species that the Data Centre has prioritised for record collection and that Anglers may encounter include the three riparian species: Indian Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) [1], Japanese Knotweed [2] and Giant Hogweed [3]. They grow quickly and densely in summer shading out native flora and when they die back in winter, they leave the soil more susceptible to erosion which can then wash into the nearby waterway and disturb the natural ecosystem. Their negative impacts are greatly compounded when all three are found growing together. Other priority invasive species include Chub (*Leuciscus cephalus*), Dace (*Leuciscus leuciscus*) and Chinese Mitten Crab (*Eriocheir sinensis*).



### Where to submit records

For more information on submitting records to the National Invasive Species Database, the project and priority species please visit the Data Centre’s invasive species website <http://invasivespecies.biodiversityireland.ie>. Address: National Biodiversity Data Centre, Carriganore, Waterford or phone (051)306240.