



Species Survey

The survey activity can be done in two ways, either as a supervised group walk or as a take home activity that each learner can complete with their family. The results are then discussed in the class.

Below is some information about the species listed on the survey to help start your discussions.

Grey squirrel	Himalayan balsam	Giant hogweed 
Originally from Canada and the USA, introduced in the early 20 th century. Grey squirrels are much larger than reds and are able to out-compete them for food and nesting sites. Greys also carry the squirrel-pox virus, which they are immune to, but is sadly fatal to reds.	First recorded in 1839, being cultivated in a greenhouse as an annual garden plant. It forms dense thickets, especially in wetlands, which alters the normal balance of the environment. Seeds drop into rivers and contaminate land downstream. The plants explosive seed release, which can send seeds into the air up to 4m away, means it can cover areas rapidly.	The earliest recorded introduction was in 1817 from its native Russia to Kew Gardens. Widely planted in fashionable gardens throughout Britain they quickly escaped and the first ('wild') population was recorded in 1828. Now widely distributed throughout Britain and Europe. They can grow up to 6m tall and contain chemicals that can cause burns and blisters . Their sheer size means they swamp all other plants and change the natural species present.
Rhododendron ponticum	Japanese wireweed	Japanese knotweed
First recorded in Britain, probably originating from Spain or Portugal, in approximately 1763. Mostly used in botanical gardens and big estates. It forms very dense clumps which stop light reaching native species. Its leaves are toxic to nearly all wildlife and it is thought to carry sudden oak death disease. It is estimated that the plant now covers over 98,700 hectares in Britain.	First seen in the UK in the Isle of Wight in 1973, it has spread along the south and west coasts and has now been found in every country of the British Isles. It is a very fast growing seaweed and its 1m long frond type leaves out-compete native algae and sea grasses for light and space. It has also become a nuisance in shallow harbours and on beaches.	It is thought that Japanese knotweed first arrived in the UK in the 1840s as a specimen for botanical gardens. The thick bamboo-like stems of the plant can regrow from fragments of root left up to 2.5m under ground. Incredibly fast growing, between May and July it can add 10cm a day and can grow to 3m tall. It forms very thick patches which out-compete other plants and its strong stems can grow through man-made structures, damaging brick work and tarmac.

Species Survey



Scientists monitor where and when invasive species are found all over the country. How many items on the list can you find in your local area?



Grey squirrel

Parks, gardens and woodland

Seen: ☐

Where:

When:



Himalayan balsam

River banks, wasteland and gardens

Seen: ☐

Where:

When:

Do not touch - can cause skin blisters



Giant hogweed

Widespread especially on river banks

Seen: ☐

Where:

When:



Rhododendron ponticum

Moorland, woodland and riverbanks

Seen: ☐

Where:

When:



Japanese wireweed

Seashore, rockpools and harbours

Seen: ☐

Where:

When:



Japanese knotweed

Urban areas and gardens

Seen: ☐

Where:

When:



Giant hogweed can grow to the height of 4.5m to 6 meters.



Remember not to touch any of the species listed above. Giant hogweed can cause painful blisters and touching any of the plants could help them spread!