

NON-NATIVE INVASIVE PLANTS

These are plants from other countries that have arrived in the Stour Valley during the last 100 years or so and some are causing problems!

Plants such as giant hogweed and himalayan balsam were originally planted in gardens due to their beauty and grandeur. When they escape into the wild, they can crowd out other plants and cause river bank erosion. For further details on non-native invasive plants log onto: www.nonnativespecies.org



Himalayan balsam has orchid like flowers. The stem turns pink to red in summer and is hollow, sappy, fleshy and brittle.

Why don't you take a walk alongside a river and try to identify some of the plants that you see? You could try to find some non-native invasive plants and report your sightings. This could help the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project to control them. You can report your sightings online here: <http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/inns>



STOUR VALLEY EDUCATION NETWORK

Picture credits: late Dr Nigel Holmes, Alex MooreDaLuz, The GB Non-Native Species Secretariat, Pixabay, Wikipedia user Algirdas SVEN would like to thank everyone who helped in the preparation of this factsheet. Produced by Jane Crone and Ellie Mead.

Giant hogweed is widespread along some parts of the Stour Valley, although work is ongoing to control it. Giant hogweed grows up to 5m tall, has umbrella shaped flowers. Its stems have sharp bristles and purple blotches.



Did you Know? You must never touch this plant because even very small amounts of sap from its stem and underside of its leaves can cause severe blistering.

Himalayan balsam is very common in the Stour Valley where it grows in dense stands. Fortunately, himalayan balsam isn't poisonous, and it can be removed very easily by hand pulling it out of the ground. Here is a group of Stour Valley volunteers who pulled out hundreds of plants by the river in Bures.

Did you Know? Himalayan balsam has exploding seed pods and it can fire its seeds up to a distance of 8m.



STOUR VALLEY Discovery Fact Sheet



RIVER MANAGEMENT

MANAGING the RIVER for TODAY and the FUTURE

The River Stour is 47 miles long with 7 main tributaries (smaller rivers running into the main river). It is looked after carefully to keep it healthy and full of wildlife.



RIVERS NEED TREES

In the past people didn't know that trees keep rivers and their wildlife healthy. Trees and woody debris (decaying matter from trees) were removed from rivers using dredgers to improve it for milling, navigation and land drainage. Unfortunately, this made the river too wide, too deep and too straight - harming fish and other wildlife.



TREE PLANTING

5,000 riverside trees have been planted through the River Stour Enhancement Project between 2015 -2018 in the Stour Valley.



What do fish eat?
85% of a trout's diet in the summer is made up of insects that live on trees such as caterpillars.

Discover the abundance of insects that live on our trees. Take an old white sheet and put it under a tree. Gently shake the branches of the tree to see the many types of insects that fall onto the sheet. The Woodland Trust website can help you identify what you find www.woodlandtrust.org.uk



JOURNEYING DOWN THE RIVER...

...things to see and do

RIVER RESTORATION

Rivers should have a range of different habitats leading to a high diversity of fish and other wildlife. The River Stour Enhancement Project has helped various stretches of river in the Stour Valley to return to a more natural state.

Dredging of the River Stour and its tributaries in the past has made parts of the river too wide, deep and straight. A healthy river has natural bends in it called MEANDERS.

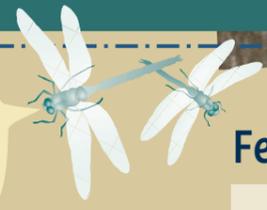


GOOD RIVER MANAGEMENT

Good river management allows some parts of the river to flow fast and some to flow slowly. This makes a variety of habitats for plants and animals to thrive in.

Today's river managers use BAYS, BACKWATERS, BERMS, RIFFLES and WOODY DEBRIS as ways of allowing a dredged river to return to its natural state.

A habitat is a home, where living things settle as they can find shelter and food.



Features found on a well-managed river

-  BERM
-  LOG JAM
-  POOL
-  FLOW DEFLECTOR
-  RIFFLE
-  BRUSHWOOD MATTRESSES



BAYS AND BACKWATERS

Backwaters are areas of water with no current beside the main river. Past river straightening and deepening means that there are not as many of them on the Stour as there were in the past. Backwaters can increase the area of wetland habitat for plants and animals. They provide areas of warm, shallow water where fish fry can grow well. Fish can seek refuge there when the river is flowing fast.

It is important to keep a river oxygenated as fish need oxygen dissolved in water to survive.

When fish lay their eggs we call it spawning. Did you know that baby fish are called fry?

BERMS

Berms are shelves in the river channel next to the bank. They are constructed as part of river restoration schemes to speed up the process of natural river recovery. Berms can be made from a variety of materials, including soil, wood and gravel. They provide habitats for river animals and plants.



RIFFLES OR GRAVEL GLIDES

Raising the river bed with gravel makes the river flow faster, providing a very important habitat for invertebrates and spawning sites for fish. They also help to oxygenate the water. Fish species that benefit include chub, dace and bullhead.



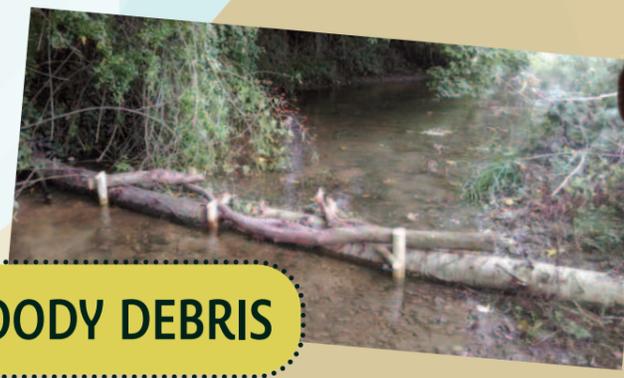
Sediment is soil and fine pieces of rock found mainly at the bottom of a river. The bottom of a river is called the river bed.

Fish you are most likely to see in the Stour are minnow, roach and perch.



WOODY DEBRIS

Flow deflectors, log jams and brushwood mattresses. Logs, twigs and branches are an essential ingredient of healthy river systems. Wood in rivers helps to keep the gravel bed clean of sediment and suitable for fish spawning. They also help to create habitats for invertebrates and fish.



Invertebrates are animals without a backbone. These include worms, mayflies, shrimps, and snails.

