

# Conservation and Ecology

Issue 12 Winter 2009/10

## River Habitat Survey news

### 1 Baseline Survey

In the past few months, the team has been busy analysing the data collected by surveyors in 2006-08 – almost 5,000 surveys carried out across England, Wales and Isle of Man.

The first report, a high level ‘snapshot’ will be published online at the end of March. This report focuses on three key themes (habitat modification, non-native invasive plants, riverside trees) and is intended to showcase ways in which RHS data can be used.



The map opposite is an example taken from the snapshot report. It shows the pattern of habitat modification across the country, with red areas being those with a high chance of being modified.

To accompany the snapshot report, we are producing a number of factsheets which will contain more detailed information as well as looking at change since the last baseline survey was conducted in the mid-90s. There will be one factsheet per River Basin District, plus one for Wales and one for the Isle of Man.

Looking further ahead, we plan to produce a series of short reports and applications modules throughout 2010 and beyond. We are keen to work closely with potential users, so if you have an idea for an application then please email us at [rhs@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rhs@environment-agency.gov.uk).

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## 2 Training

### RHS accreditation training 2010

As many of you may already know, we will not be delivering any full accreditation courses in spring 2010. This is due to limited resources and the fact that we are very busy producing reports on our baseline survey.

The situation may be reviewed based on demand and it is possible that we will run a full accreditation course for Agency staff later on in the year.

We now have a large number of fully accredited RHS surveyors across the UK and Europe. Now that all sampling for the baseline survey has been completed we expect there will be less demand for RHS surveyors - the RHS team have no plans to contract out any survey work over the coming year.

We are able to put people in touch with accredited RHS surveyors across the UK. Just email us at [rhs@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rhs@environment-agency.gov.uk).

### Refresher courses

All surveyors accredited in 2004 or 2007 will be given the opportunity to take a refresher assessment and maintain their RHS accreditation for a further three years. Instead of assessing refreshers at the beginning of the survey season, we will be assessing refreshers later in the year.

If you are due for refresher training this year, you will have your accreditation automatically extended until October 2010 so that you can carry out surveys during spring and summer 2010 before being refreshed. We will contact you once details have been finalised so there is no need for you to do anything.



## 3 Area Teams Update

### WFD Surveillance sites

All of the RHS surveys sent to us at the end of the year that were carried out for WFD surveillance monitoring have now been entered onto our database. Thank you for all your hard work in getting these surveys to us. We plan to issue guidance on how the information in these surveys can be used later on in the year.

## 4 RHS data

### EcoSys and GIS layer

The RHS database, EcoSys, can be accessed by all Agency staff via the Easinet – contact the RHS team to be set up as a user. Just use your network username and password to log in. The RHS team are happy to provide guidance on how to use the database.

<http://ecosys.ea.gov/ahm>

Don't forget that Agency GIS users have access to the RHS layer on the I drive. We have recently updated this to incorporate all baseline survey sites as well as all other RHS surveys on our database, bringing the total to over 23,000 surveys.

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## 5 Team Changes

The RHS team will be undergoing a reorganisation at the end of March. It is likely that our structure will change significantly – more details in our summer newsletter.

## 6 Contact us

**RHS email address:** [rhs@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rhs@environment-agency.gov.uk)

**EcoSys RHS database:**

<http://intranet.ea.gov/tools/applications/6012.aspx>

**RHS Address:**

Richard Fairclough House, Knutsford Road, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 1HG



## 7 RHS photograph competition

This winter we are running a photo competition in conjunction with the release of our baseline survey reports. We would like you to send in your best pictures from the following categories:

1. General bank & channel modification
2. Resectioning
3. Reinforcement
4. Riverside trees
5. Channel shading
6. Himalayan Balsam
7. Giant Hogweed
8. Japanese Knotweed
9. Unique River Basin District characteristics (landscape photos that relate specifically to the region and to features recorded in RHS)

Please use the following abbreviations for the location: Isle of Man (IoM), Solway Tweed (ST), Northumbria (N), North West (NW), Humber (H), Dee (D), Severn (S), Anglian (A), Western Wales (WW), Thames (T), South West (SW) and South East (SE).



We plan to use the winning photographs (crediting the photographers) in our regional baseline survey factsheets due for release at the end of March.

### Rules

- Photos must be 1MB or less in size and be in JPEG format,
- Photos must be the correct way up,
- Photos should be labelled as follows;
  1. Area (River Basin District, or the Isle of Man)
  2. Category as stated above (1-9)
  3. River name
  4. Participant name

For example; 'NW\_6\_Weaver\_SHewitt'.

**Deadline for entries is 20<sup>th</sup> February.**

Winners will be contacted prior to publication and listed in the next newsletter.