



LAXTON ROAD, ATHERSLEY.

**PHASE I HABITAT AND PROTECTED
FAUNA SURVEY.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Acanthus WSM Architects Ltd plans to submit a planning application for an area of land located adjacent to Laxton Road, Athersley, Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out a Phase I Habitat and Protected Fauna Survey of the site to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. The site survey was carried out on 25th September 2013 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendix I and II of this report provides additional information on nesting birds and is designed to assist the reader in understanding the contents of this report.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. Prior to visiting the site the survey area was cross referenced to maps and aerial photographs to give a general idea of the habitats and potential issues within the area and to identify potential access and walking routes.

2.2. The survey area and immediate surrounding area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society:-

- * Badger setts.
- * Badger latrines or dung pits.
- * Badger snuffle holes and evidence of foraging.
- * Badger paths.
- * Badger prints in areas of soft mud.
- * Badger hairs caught on fencing.

2.3. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) activity by looking for the following signs, in line with Rob Strachan, Tom Moorhouse and Merryl Gelling (2011). *Water Vole Handbook: Third Edition*:-

- * Water vole burrows.
- * Water vole faeces and latrines.
- * Water vole feeding stations.
- * Water vole runs.
- * Water vole prints in areas of soft mud.
- * Water vole lawns.
- * Predator field signs.

2.4. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of otter (*Lutra lutra*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with the P Chanin (2003). *Monitoring the Otter and Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers: Monitoring Series No10 Guidelines*:-

- * Otter prints in soft mud.
- * Otter spraints.
- * Otter Holts.

2.5. The survey area was searched for mature trees and derelict buildings and where found these were checked for potential bat roosting sites in line with L Hundt (2012). *Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines* by looking for the following signs:-

- * Holes, cracks or crevices.
- * Bat Droppings.

2.6. The land immediately adjacent to the survey area was assessed for bat roosting potential and bat foraging potential. Connective routes and flight lines were also assessed whilst on site and using maps of the area.

2.7. The area within 500m of the survey site was cross referenced to maps to highlight all ponds close to the site. Where possible, all ponds identified were accessed using agreed access or public rights of way to assess the potential for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) to be present.

2.8. The survey area was searched for watercourses and waterbodies and where found all watercourses and waterbodies within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for the presence of crayfish where safe to enter the water. The survey was carried out in accordance with the *Conserving Natural 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 1, Protocol for Monitoring the White Clawed Crayfish*.

2.9. The survey area was assessed for the potential for reptiles and suitable reptile habitats. Where applicable the area was also searched for the presence of reptiles.

2.10. All surveys were carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) survey standards and advice.

2.11. This survey was carried out by Michael Sims, Bsc. Environmental Conservation, AIEEM. Bsc. Environmental Conservation covered all aspects of the conservation sector; plant identification, survey standards and working within the planning system. Post-university Michael completed an apprenticeship with The Sheffield Wildlife Trust as a Biodiversity Skills Trainee. There he trained in Phase 1 Habitat survey, plant identification and bat survey. Upon his completion of this apprenticeship he was deemed fully competent in Phase 1 Habitat survey and also achieved an OCN in Environmental Conservation. In February 2011 he was recruited by Whitcher Wildlife Ltd. where he has specialised in Phase 1 Habitat Survey, but has also branched out into protected species survey. He has attended a number of courses, whilst at both The Sheffield Wildlife Trust and at Whitcher Wildlife Ltd., focussing

upon plant identification but also crayfish and great crested newt survey. He has been accredited as an Associate member of CIEEM and has obtained his Natural England survey licences for Bats and Great Crested Newts – in recognition of his competence and time spent working within the environmental sector.

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. Data searches were carried out through Barnsley Biological Records Centre and the NBN Gateway and MAGIC websites for records of protected species and designated sites in the vicinity of the survey area. See Appendix V for data search results.

3.1.2. The Barnsley Biological Records Centre holds records of a red kite within a 10km grid square covering the site. This is bird species listed as red in terms of its conservation importance, which means it is a globally threatened species.

3.1.3. The NBN Gateway held records of Noctule within a 10km grid square covering the site.

3.1.4. The Barnsley Biological Records Centre and MAGIC website data searches showed that no designated sites within the survey area.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The survey area covered a plot of land located off Laxton Road, Athersley, Barnsley, South Yorkshire; see Figure 1.



Fig. 1

3.2.2. The proposed development site is an area of parkland. This is located within a residential area and is boarded by an area of allotments. The park contains short-mown grassland, planted trees and areas of shrub; see Figure 2.



Fig. 2

3.3. Description of Habitats.

3.3.1. Appendix IV of this report contains a map of the site which has been annotated to show which habitats were present during this survey. The habitats on and adjacent to the site are:-

- A3.1 – Scattered Broad-leaved Deciduous Trees
- J1.2 – Amenity Grassland
- J1.4 – Introduced Shrub

3.3.2. A3.1 – *Scattered Broad-leaved Deciduous Trees*; see Figure 3.

Deciduous trees were scattered along the western boundary of the site. The species present there included sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).



Fig. 3

3.3.3. J1.2 – Amenity Grassland; see Figure 4.

A large area of amenity grassland was located within the centre of the site. This was short mown, making species identification impossible.



Fig. 4

3.3.4. J1.4 – Introduced Shrub; see Figure 5.

A band of shrubs was located along the western boundary of the site. This included various varieties of cotoneaster (*cotoneaster* sp.).



Fig. 5

3.4. Description of Fauna.

3.3.1. No badger setts or badger field signs, such as latrines, tracks and snuffle holes, were discovered within the surveyed area.

3.3.2. As there were no running watercourses located at the site, the survey area was assessed as unsuitable potential habitat for water vole, otter and freshwater white-clawed crayfish.

3.3.3. No buildings, trees or other features, with attributes potentially suitable as bat roosting habitat, were located within the survey area.

3.3.4. No ponds, potentially suitable as great crested newt habitat, were located within 500m of the survey area. As such, there is no potential for great crested newts to be present within the proposed works.

3.3.5. At least two varieties of cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* sp.) were discovered along the western site boundary. Cotoneaster is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and it is illegal to allow it to spread into the wild. No other invasive plant species were discovered within the survey area.

3.3.6. A high proportion of the vegetation located within the survey area has been assessed as being potentially suitable as bird nesting habitat. No active bird's nests were discovered during this survey.

3.3.7. Due to an absence of loose materials which would be suitable as refugia, this site has been assessed as being unsuitable habitat for reptiles.

3.3.8. No Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats or species were located within the survey area.

4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. As no badger setts or badger field signs were discovered within the surveyed area, the proposed works will not impact upon badgers.

4.2. The survey area was assessed as unsuitable potential habitat for water vole, otter and freshwater white-clawed crayfish. As such, the proposed works will not impact upon these species.

4.3. As the survey area was assessed as being unsuitable potential habitat for roosting bats, the proposed works will not impact upon this group.

4.4. As there is no potential for great crested newts to be present within the proposed works, the works will have no associated impacts.

4.5. Cotoneaster, a Schedule 9 invasive plant species, was discovered along the western site boundary. The presence of this species will dictate how vegetation clearance is carried out.

4.6. The scattered trees and planted shrubs located within the survey area have been assessed as being potentially suitable as bird nesting habitat. If vegetation clearance is to be carried out during the bird nesting season, which extends from March to September, it is likely that nesting birds will be impacted upon.

4.7. Due to an absence of loose materials which would be suitable as refugia, this site has been assessed as being unsuitable habitat for reptiles, and the proposed works will have no associated impacts.

4.8. As no BAP habitats or species were discovered within the survey area, there will be no associated impacts.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. Due to the presence of cotoneaster within the survey area, it is recommended that safeguards are put in place to prevent its spread.

5.1.1. A toolbox talk, detailing the identification of cotoneaster, is included in Appendix IV of this report. This should be issued on site and site personnel made aware of its contents.

5.1.2. If this vegetation is to be cleared during the course of works, it will be necessary to pull it from the ground and burn it on site, to ensure that the seeds are not spread, or remove it from site as contaminated waste.

5.2. It is recommended that all vegetation clearance takes place outside of the bird nesting season, which extends from March to September. If vegetation clearance must take place within this period, works must be preceded by a bird nesting survey. If any active nests are discovered during this survey, they, and the surrounding vegetation, must be left in place until the young have fledged.

Prepared by:	
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Checked by:	
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Appendix I. SCHEDULE 9 INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES INFORMATION.

1. Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 contains a list of invasive species of plant. Species listed under Schedule 9 are prohibited from release into the wild. Schedule 9, Section 14(2) prohibits 'planting' or 'causing to grow' in the wild of any plant listed in Part 2 of Schedule 9.

2. The following is a list of all the species of plant listed under Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Common Name	Latin Name
Alexanders, Perfoliate	<i>Smyrnum perfoliatum</i>
Algae, Red	<i>Grateloupia luxurians</i>
Archangel, Variegated Yellow	<i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon</i> subsp. <i>Argentatum</i>
Azalea, Yellow	<i>Rhododendron luteum</i>
Balsam, Himalayan	<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>
Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>
Cotoneaster, Entire Leaved	<i>Cotoneaster integrifolius</i>
Cotoneaster, Himalayan	<i>Cotoneaster simonsii</i>
Cotoneaster, Hollyberry	<i>Cotoneaster bullatus</i>
Cotoneaster, Small Leaved	<i>Cotoneaster microphyllus</i>
Creeper, False Virginia	<i>Parthenocissus inserta</i>
Creeper, Virginia	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>
Dewplant, Purple	<i>Disphyma crassifolium</i>
Fanwort (Carolina Water-Shield)	<i>Cabomba caroliniana</i>
Fern, Water	<i>Azolla filiculoides</i>
Fig, Hottentot	<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>
Garlic, Three-cornered	<i>Allium triquetrum</i>
Hyacinth, Water	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis pyrifera</i>
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis angustifolia</i>
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis integrifolia</i>
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis laevis</i>
Kelp, Japanese	<i>Laminaria japonica</i>
Knotweed, Giant	<i>Fallopia sachalinensis</i>

Knotweed, Hybrid	<i>Fallopia japonica</i> x <i>Fallopia sachalinensis</i>
Knotweed, Japanese	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>
Leek, Few-flowered	<i>Allium paradoxum</i>
Lettuce, Water	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>
Montbretia	<i>Crocasmia</i> x <i>crocosmiiflora</i>
Parrot's Feather	<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>
Pennywort, Floating	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>
Potato, Duck	<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>
Primrose, Floating Water	<i>Ludwigia peploides</i>
Primrose, Water	<i>Ludwigia grandiflora</i>
Primrose, Water	<i>Ludwigia uruguayensis</i>
Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>
Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> x <i>Rhododendron maximum</i>
Rhubarb, Giant	<i>Gunnera tinctoria</i>
Rose, Japanese	<i>Rosa rugosa</i>
Salvinia, Giant	<i>Salvinia molesta</i>
Seafingers, Green	<i>Codium fragile</i>
Seaweed, Californian Red	<i>Pikea californica</i>
Seaweed, Hooked Asparagus	<i>Asparagopsis armata</i>
Seaweed, Japanese	<i>Sargassum muticum</i>
Seaweeds, Laver (except native species)	<i>Porphyra</i> spp except
	<i>p. amethystea</i>
	<i>p. leucosticte</i>
	<i>p. linearis</i>
	<i>p. miniata</i>
	<i>p. purpurea</i>
	<i>p. umbilicalis</i>
Stonecrop, Australian Swamp (New Zealand Pygmyweed)	<i>Crassula helmsii</i>
Wakame	<i>Undaria pinnatifida</i>
Waterweed, Curly	<i>Lagarosiphon major</i>
Waterweeds	All species of the genus <i>Elodea</i>

3. The Government has acknowledged the problems that can be caused by non-native invasive species. In 2008 the Government launched “The Invasive Non-Native

Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain”. The strategy provides a framework for a more co-ordinated approach to invasive species management. It seeks to create a stronger sense of shared responsibility across government, key organisations, land managers and the public.

4. The Non Native Species Secretariat has been established to oversee the implementation of the strategy. Details of the secretariat including risk assessments and action plans for some species are available at www.nonnativespecies.org.

5. In general there are four basic methods of controlling weeds; mechanical, chemical, natural and environmental.

5.1. Mechanical control includes cultivation, hoeing, pulling, cutting, raking dredging or other methods to uproot or cut weeds.

5.2. Where this method is used all plant material must be considered “controlled waste” and must be disposed properly.

5.3. Chemical control uses approved herbicides.

5.4. Natural control uses pests and diseases of the target weed to weaken it and prevent it from becoming a nuisance.

5.5. Environmental control works by altering the environment to make it less suitable for weed growth, for example by increasing or decreasing water velocity.

Appendix II. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

It is necessary to understand a little about the legal protection offered to nesting birds in order to evaluate the findings of this report.

Part 1.-(1) Of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 states that:-

If any person intentionally:-

- (a) kills, injures or takes any wild bird;
 - (b) takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
 - (c) takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird,
- he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1.-(5) of the Act states that:-

If any person intentionally:-

- (a) disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or
- (b) disturbs dependant young of such a bird,

he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after “intentionally” the words “or recklessly”.

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September.

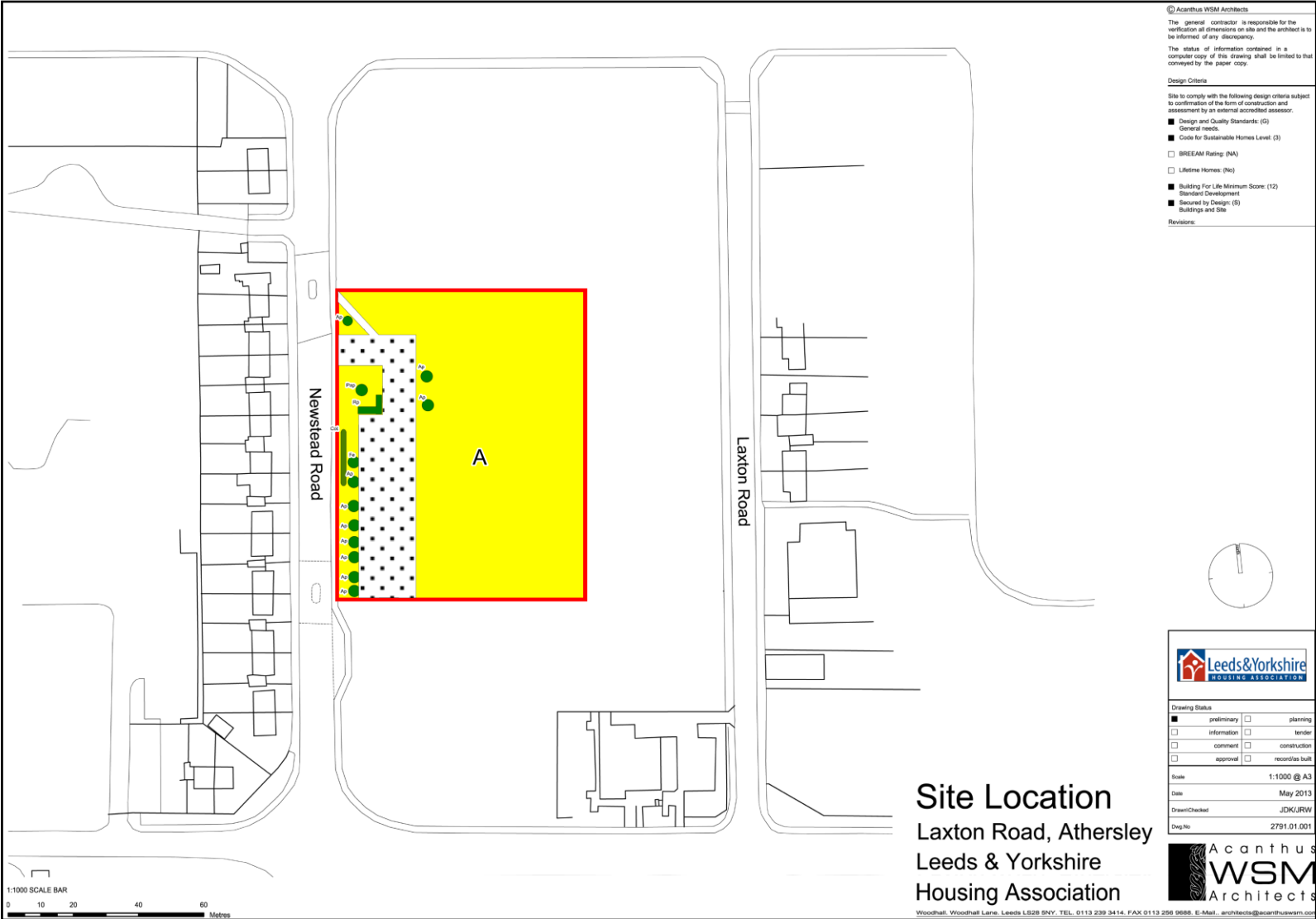
It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees, scrub and buildings but others are ground nesting.

The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Appendix III. SPECIES LIST.

A (trees and shrubs)		
	Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
	Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
	Bird cherry	<i>Prunus padus</i>
	Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
B (herbs and wild flowers)		
	Rosebay willowherb	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>
	Common cat's ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>
	Broad-leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
	Prickly sow-thistle	<i>Sonchus asper</i>
	Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
	Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>
	White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
	Common nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
C (grasses)		
	Creeping bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>
	False oat-grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>
	Cock's foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
	Sheep's fescue	<i>Festuca ovina</i>
	Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>
	Perennial rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>

Appendix IV. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA.



Appendix V. DATA SEARCH RESULTS.

Grid Ref	Date	Common Name	Comments	BAP Species	Wildlife and Countryside Act	Red and Amber birds
SE351101	01/01/2009	Water Vole	field signs	1	1	0
SE351101	01/01/2009	Water Vole	Ditch	1	1	0
SE3541010192	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Burrow	1	1	0
SE3509810140	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Burrow	1	1	0
SE3512710143	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Burrow	1	1	0
SE3541210192	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Latrine	1	1	0
SE3510810145	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Latrine	1	1	0
SE3541510202	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Latrine	1	1	0
SE3543409934	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Latrine	1	1	0
SE3539910176	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Latrine	1	1	0
SE3538910169	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Latrine	1	1	0
SE3537510169	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Latrine	1	1	0
SE3536810165	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Latrine	1	1	0
SE3513510146	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Latrine	1	1	0
SE3512910147	21/04/2011	Water Vole	Latrine	1	1	0
SE3509210138	21/04/2012	Water Vole	Burrow	1	1	0
SE3410	04/09/2011	Red Kite	1 Count	0	1	1

Cotoneaster

Species Description

Scientific name: *Cotoneaster* species

AKA: Cotoneasterau (Welsh)

Native to: Majority of species originate from east Asia

Habitat: Rough ground

A large group of small trees and prostrate shrubs that can be either evergreen or deciduous. They are becoming increasingly naturalised due to birds which eat the small red berries and spread the seed. There is one native species, wild Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster cambricus*) which occurs as a few individuals in North Wales. This ID sheet includes those introduced species which are relatively common. Where they become established they can become dominant to the exclusion of native species.

Himalayan cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster simonsii*) is an erect deciduous shrub 3-4 metres high with 1.5-2.5 cm long leaves; small-leaved cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster microphyllou*) is an evergreen low-growing shrub with very small leaves (0.5-0.8cm long) and tree cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster frigidus*) is a deciduous or semi-evergreen shrub or small tree with leaves between 6-15 cm long and flowers in dense clusters. All these species have leaves which are shiny and hairless on the upper surface and slightly hairy on the lower surface. Cotoneaster species do not have thorns.

Wall cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*) is the most widely recorded species and is distinctive in having stems that spread horizontally in flattened herring-bone like branches and bears single flowers. Unlike the other cotoneasters mentioned, the underside of leaves of this species are relatively hairless.

Cotoneasters have been in cultivation in GB since 1824 and there are over 100 species now widely cultivated in the UK. Other species could also become naturalised.

Cotoneaster species are listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England and Wales. As such, it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause these species to grow in the wild.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.

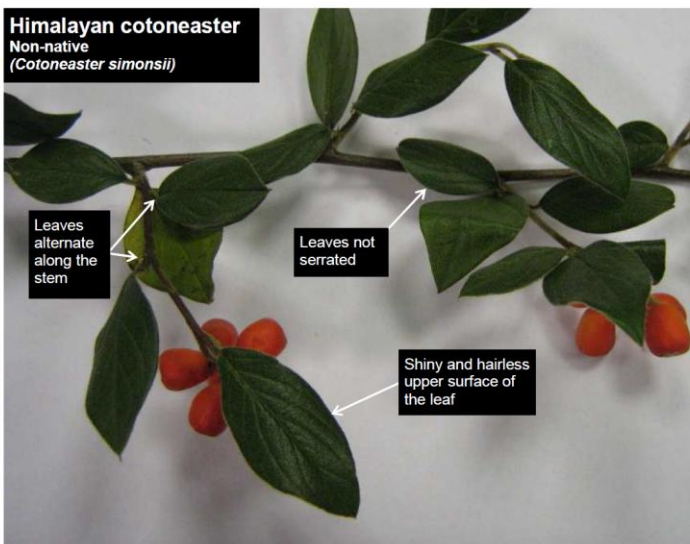


Himalayan cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster simonsii*)

Key ID Features

Himalayan cotoneaster

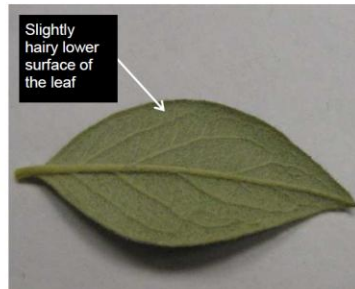
Non-native
(*Cotoneaster simonsii*)



Leaves alternate along the stem

Leaves not serrated

Shiny and hairless upper surface of the leaf



Slightly hairy lower surface of the leaf



Red/orange fruits in clusters

Identification throughout the year

Evergreen species such as the small-leaved cotoneaster can be identified throughout the year by its leaves. Deciduous species can be identified by the presence of the red berries which can remain throughout winter and, in the case of wall cotoneaster, by the distinctive herringbone-shaped branches.



Similar Species

Firethorn
Non-native
(*Pyracantha coccinea*)



A shrub with small serrated leaves that alternate along the stem, which has long thorns

Wilson's honeysuckle
Non-native
(*Lonicera nitida*)



Similar to the small leaved cotoneasters, leaves opposite not alternate

Aromatic wintergreens
Non-native
(*Gaultheria* species)



An evergreen shrub with alternate leaves and bell shaped flowers, unlike the five petalled flowers of cotoneasters

Other similar species which may be confused with cotoneaster include:

Escallonia (*Escallonia macrantha*) - an evergreen shrub which has alternate serrated leaves and numerous pinkish-red flowers, no thorns;

Barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*) - a thorny shrub with small serrated leaves, yellow flowers and red lozenge-shaped berries; and **Sea buckthorn** (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) - a thorny densely branched shrub with alternate long thin leaves with bright orange berries on female plants.

Distribution

Cotoneaster species are widespread throughout Britain.

Source: NBN Gateway. Check website for current distribution.



Some other species of Cotoneaster

Wall cotoneaster
Non-native
(*Cotoneaster horizontalis*)



Herringbone-shaped branches



Himalayan cotoneaster
Non-native
(*Cotoneaster simonsii*)



Evergreen habit

Small-leaved cotoneaster
Non-native
(*Cotoneaster microphyllus*)

References and further reading:

Johnson, O and More, D (2004) "*Collins Tree Guide*". HarperCollins

Preston, C D, Pearman, D A and Dines, T A (editors) (2002) "*New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora*". Oxford University Press

Stace, C (1999) "*Field Flora of the British Isles*". Cambridge University Press