

Tale Valley Trust River Tale Balsam report 2026

June 11

Our stalwart local businesses SimpkinEdwards and Thompson Jenner provided most of our volunteers for this opening day of 2026, with two half days thrown in at short notice from DixonSmith. We were 18 volunteers – a really great start.

Although not at all cold, it rained! The temperature offered perfect working conditions. 10 days later was the start of the first heat wave!

After the briefing, teams were distributed from Talewater to the confluence at Cadhay bridge, half working upstream and half down. A large patch discovered first in 2025 was actually professionally sprayed as it would monopolise too many volunteers for too long. Instead, having completed the mentioned stretch by lunchtime we were able to extend to Tuckmill (Payhembury), together with a more thorough and extensive search through Taleford farm to Cadhay. One volunteer had the heart stopping & magic moment on this stretch of having a beaver splosh off from the bank where it had been laying up for the day, and swimming away from him under water.

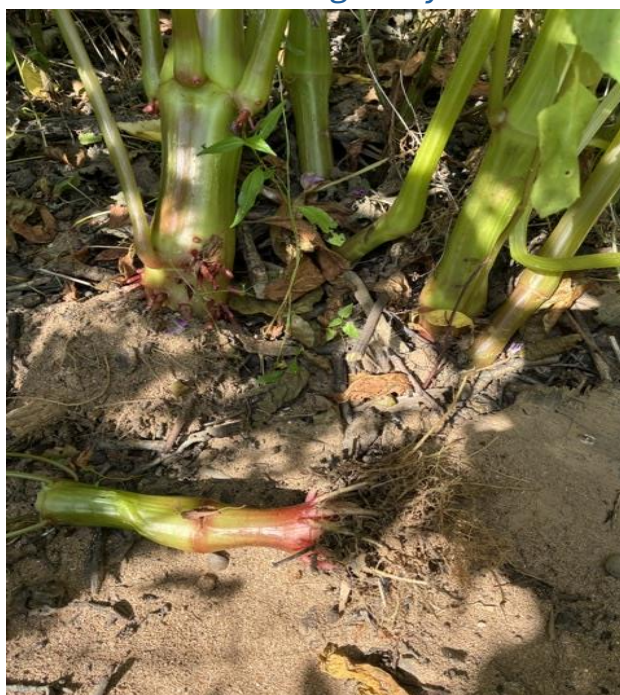
At Tuckmill on the other hand, at the end of the day, when everyone was deservedly flagging, we discovered a sneaky patch on flat damp ground adjacent to the river, covering about 100sq. meters.

We decided to just slash it to the ground – thankfully no last-minute injuries. Overall there were disappointing amounts but hopefully the thoroughness of our first group will help the July team to further mop up.

July 16

After almost a month of no rain, daytime temperatures fluctuating from 26degC to over 30C, and two official heatwaves, the water level in the river was holding up well. We again had 18

Balsam roots thriving in dry sand



volunteers, the majority from SLR Consulting and Tierney Financial Services as well as individuals. After the briefing, pairs and trios were distributed up and down the river, this time extending to Danes Mill at the top end. Despite the best efforts of the team in June there was still plenty to keep us busy – and by now with the dry weather and wall to wall sunshine seeds were on the cusp of popping – though thankfully few actually did. There were hot spots at Tuck Mill, and Half Moon Farm by the railway line, and on the Taleford Farm stretch. Nevertheless, and despite one team being treated to tea & cake at Mill Farm, we reached the confluence at Cadhay Bridge. A huge achievement.

August 5

A week ahead of the fifth heatwave of the year, and a near total eclipse of the sun, Aug 5 was a pleasant 22C sunny day. Water level in the river was still holding up remarkably well, although the beavers in places decided it could be improved – [*Beaver dam at Taleford!*](#)



We had fresh recruits this time – from Trowers & Hamblins, & Arbuthnot Latham - 8 volunteers in total, mostly new to balsam – but after their detailed briefing and introduction they were quick and diligent learners! Luckily, although the seed was well formed, it was not quite

exploding (mostly!). The hope was to cover from Talewater to the confluence – about 3 miles, but once again, and despite the fantastic efforts of two previous outings, there was a disappointing amount of balsam to pull. So in fact we only managed from the Waterloo line at Talewater to just below Taleford – circa. 2.5 miles.

Two regular individual volunteers stepped in on August 13th to complete the lower stretch to the confluence. Thank you both!



A few plants were taller than we were!

August 27

The weather was kind – cooler now but still no rain in sight. We had an elite group of Hospice care staff, two TVT trustees, and a dusting of our regular individuals. In all though we were only 9. Nevertheless, as this was the fourth outing, and the second one this month, with dedicated determination we were able to cover from Tuck Mill to the confluence at Cadhay Bridge.

Mind you, one of our Trustees took a step too far into deep water and thus did her impression of being inside a balloon, as her chest waders instantly took on water! (No photo evidence!)



Golden ringed dragonfly, Talewater

As always, a massive thank you to all our volunteers, to the Parish Councils in the Valley who support our work to protect, enhance and improve the environment of the Tale Valley, and to Westcountry Rivers Trust and Devon Wildlife Trust for all their help in making this happen.

TVT were also very fortunate in early July to receive a **Southwest Water Nature Recovery Fund** grant, covering the next two seasons – part of which is allocated specifically for balsam control. This means we can increase our capacity for volunteers. Already we have had an approach from EDF Energy offering up to 25 volunteers next year, 2027.