

Control of New Zealand pygmyweed *Crassula helmsii* by covering with black polythene at The Lodge RSPB Reserve, Bedfordshire, England

Wilton-Jones G.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK

SUMMARY

At The Lodge RSPB Reserve, an attempt was made to eradicate invasive New Zealand pygmyweed *Crassula helmsii* that had colonised a pond by covering with black polythene. Pygmyweed was completely eradicated but re-colonised from plants in marginal vegetation in areas not covered with polythene.

BACKGROUND

New Zealand pygmyweed *Crassula helmsii* is an introduced plant species in the UK. It can be highly invasive and tends to out-compete native plants on the margins of, and in shallow standing water. At The Lodge Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Reserve in central England *Crassula* was first found in the reserve growing in a pond in about 1990 and in 2003 steps were taken to attempt to eradicate it.

CONSEQUENCES

Covering with black polythene completely eradicated the *Crassula* from the pond.

However, at the time of writing (April 2005), *Crassula* is re-colonising from plants that survived in the surrounding marginal vegetation in areas not covered with polythene.

ACTION

In 1990, New Zealand pygmyweed was noted growing in an artificial pond at The Lodge RSPB Reserve (National Grid ref: TL 190479) in Bedfordshire, central England. In 2003 it was estimated that *Crassula* covered up to 5% of the area of the approximately 12 m² pond.

The affected area was covered with opaque black polythene (weighed down with heavy stones to prevent it rising) for six months from autumn 2003 to spring 2004 in order to try and eradicate the *Crassula*.

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