



## New global registry of invasive species is 'milestone' in protecting biodiversity

**New catalogue expected to stand alongside red list as an international means to fight extinction, by helping to stop biological invasions**

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A world registry of invasive species has been launched amid concerns that governments are not doing enough to tackle the rising threat of globalisation to biodiversity.

The new catalogue - unveiled in the journal *Scientific Data* on Tuesday - is expected to become a pillar of international efforts to fight extinction alongside the "red list" of endangered species.

From yellow crazy ants on Christmas Island to little fire worms in the Galapagos, the deliberate or accidental introduction of non-native species is the biggest driver of biodiversity loss on islands and world heritage sites, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

It can also cause huge economic and health impacts, as has been the case with the arrival in Europe of tropical mosquitos, which are vectors for malaria, or the spread of Latin American

water hyacinths in Africa, which started off as cheap ornamental plants but now cause billions of dollars of losses because they clog up rivers, block ships, prevent fishing and create breeding grounds for mosquitos.

The Global Registry of Introduced and Invasive Species catalogues these and thousands of other cases in a key step towards identifying and tackling the biggest risks.

Based on an international collaboration by hundreds of scientists over eight years, the registry is seen as a tool - like the red list - that will allow countries to set up early warning and rapid response systems to prevent “door-knocking” species from entering in destructively large numbers.



Water hyacinth on the Minjiang River in Gutian county, China. The invasive plants choke lakes, block river transport and starve fish of oxygen. Photograph: ChinaFotoPress/Getty Images

This week’s data release, which covers 20 countries, reveals that 25% of the 6,400 identified invasive species have a negative impact on biodiversity and ecosystems. Information for the remaining 180 nations will be available by the middle of the year.

“This is a milestone,” said Piero Genovesi, the chair of the Rome-based Invasive Species Special Group, which led the compilation of the registry. “With this paper we want to show the rigour of our approach because this information will affect trade relations and other government policies.”

He said biological invasions are increasing in all regions and taxonomic groups and are likely to accelerate as a result of climate change, which is altering the ranges of habitats.

Topics

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