

**Brussels – 13 July 2016**

## European Commission takes timid first step towards tackling invasive alien species

On Wednesday, 13 July, the European Commission adopted its first list of invasive alien species of EU concern<sup>1</sup>. The list contains 37 species, the possession and trade of which in the EU will be restricted because of their risks and impacts on the economy and the environment.

Invasive alien species are species that do not naturally occur in the EU and are introduced from elsewhere, often by humans. When these run wild and proliferate, they can cause huge damage. There are 1200 invasive alien species already established in the EU. It is estimated that these cost Europe more than 12 billion EUR every year<sup>2</sup> through impacts on public health and economic sectors. In addition, some invasive alien species have had devastating impacts on native flora and fauna, such as for example the raccoon, which kills native breeding birds and their chicks.

**Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy at BirdLife Europe and Central Asia<sup>3</sup> stated:** *“With the adoption of this list, the European Union takes a timid but important first step towards tackling one of the biggest threats to biodiversity in Europe. However, establishing sound biosecurity in Europe requires both swift action against the spread of the species on the list and the urgent expansion of the list to cover all the most dangerous species.”*

The list is the result of the Regulation on Invasive Alien Species adopted in 2014. The 37 species that are listed include plants – such as the Water Hyacinth, a garden plant that has damaged native aquatic biodiversity in Spain and Portugal – and animals, such as the Coypu rat, a rodent which is damaging flood defences and marsh vegetation. Crucially, given the free movement of people and goods in the EU, the Regulation stipulates that the species should be controlled in the whole EU, to avoid accidental spread with disastrous consequences.

However, there is still much to be done. Brunner continues: *“Several of the worst invasive species are still missing; notoriously the American Mink, which is being bred in the tens of millions for the fur industry, and has brought the European Mink close to extinction and is wreaking havoc on bird colonies.”* **ENDS**

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/13\\_07\\_2016\\_news\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/13_07_2016_news_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/docs/Kettunen2009\\_IAS\\_Task%201.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/docs/Kettunen2009_IAS_Task%201.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> BirdLife Europe and Central Asia is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 47 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach, BirdLife delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

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