

BirdLife Position on Invasive Non-Native Species in the European Union

This position was adopted by the Birds and Habitats Directives Taskforce on 20th February 2017. This position replaces BirdLife's previous position entitled 'Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the EU', which was adopted by the Birds and Habitats Directives Taskforce in 2009. For external use.

SUMMARY

Invasive Non-Native Species are one of the principal drivers of extinction across the globe, including in Europe and Central Asia. BirdLife is not opposed to invasive non-native species themselves. Rather, BirdLife is opposed to inappropriate human actions which break down natural ecological barriers to dispersal and allow invasive non-native species to establish and spread.

The implementation of policies and practices which minimise the damage already caused by invasive non-native species and which limit the potential for further damage should be encouraged. BirdLife agrees with and supports the Convention on Biological Diversity's 'Guiding Principles' on invasive non-native species

BirdLife welcomes the coming into force of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species. If fully and effectively implemented, the EU Regulation will contribute to the aims of the Birds and Habitats Directives and significantly reduce existing and potential future damage caused by invasive non-native species within the EU.

Contact: Wouter Langhout wouter.langhout@birdlife.org

What Are Invasive Non-Native Species?

- A. Non-native species are those that have been introduced by humans, either accidentally or deliberately, into an environment where they do not normally occur. Most non-native species are benign in their new environment. Indeed, as they have not evolved in these new conditions, they are often maladapted and unable to survive or reproduce within them.
- B. However, some non-native species are able to thrive in their new environments. When this occurs and the establishment of the non-native species is, or is likely to be, detrimental to native biodiversity, the species is referred to as an Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS).
- C. The Convention on Biological Diversity formally describes invasive non-native species as 'species whose introduction and/or spread outside their natural past or present distribution threatens biological diversity'.

What damage do Invasive Non-Native Species Cause?

- D. Along with habitat loss, over-exploitation and pollution (including climate change); invasive non-native species are considered one of the principal drivers of biodiversity loss. Globally, invasive non-native species have been responsible for 68 of the 153 bird extinctions of the last 500 years¹. Currently, 21 European bird species are threatened with extinction wholly, or in part, because of invasive non-native species². This includes Azores Bullfinch *Pyrrhula murina*, Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* and the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*².
- E. Invasive Non-Native Species can also cause significant human health problems; for example, Ragweed *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*³ and Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*⁴. As well as significant economic damage; for example, it is estimated invasive non-native species cost the European Union's economy over €12 billion a year in impacts and management⁵.

General Position on Invasive Non-Native Species

- F. BirdLife is concerned about the significant ecological damage invasive non-native species cause. BirdLife encourages the implementation of policies and practices which minimise the damage already caused by invasive non-native species and which limit the potential for future damage.
- G. It is important to clarify that BirdLife's concerns about invasive non-native species are not based on prejudice against, or the demonization of, species perceived to be foreign or unfamiliar.
- H. The diversity of species on Earth, in other words the nature we love and seek to conserve, is in part generated and maintained by the isolation provided by major geographical barriers. Oceans, mountains, deserts and other barriers to dispersal have led to species, habitats and ecological communities evolving independently in different regions of the Earth. It is the breakdown of these natural barriers, caused by the human-mediated movement of organisms around the world, which allows invasive non-native species to establish and cause ecological damage. BirdLife is not opposed to the invasive non-native species themselves - as these species, like all species, are not intrinsically bad. Rather, BirdLife is opposed to inappropriate human actions which break down natural ecological barriers to dispersal and allow invasive non-native species to establish and spread.
- I. However; it is also important to note that once an invasive non-native species has become established: BirdLife supports, in accordance with the principles described in paragraph L and N, the management of such species, including the eradication of such species where feasible, so as to minimise or reverse the damage to nature caused by human actions.
- J. The term 'invasive alien species' is synonymous with the term 'invasive non-native species'. Many treaties and pieces of legislation, e.g. the 'Convention on Biological Diversity' or the Europe Union's 'Regulation on Invasive Alien Species', refer to invasive non-native species as 'invasive alien species'. Indeed BirdLife International's Global Programme on this topic is called the 'Invasive Alien Species Programme'.
- K. However, in the English language 'alien' is often used as a pejorative word. Consequently, BHDTF considers the term 'non-native' to be the more neutral and, therefore, the preferred terminology. Although the use of 'non-native' is encouraged; it is recognized that, given the widespread use of the term 'alien', it may not always be feasible to use 'non-native' in external or internal communications.

General Position on the Management of Invasive Non-Native Species

- L. BirdLife agrees with and supports the Convention on Biological Diversity's 'Guiding Principles' on invasive non-native species. In particular, noting the utility of Guiding Principle 1 '*The Precautionary Approach*' and Guiding Principle 2 '*The Three-Stage Hierarchical Approach*' which calls for the following hierarchical management of invasive non-native species:
- 1. Prevention**, preventing the establishment of invasive non-native species is generally easier and more cost effective than managing an established invasive non-native species
 - 2. Early Detection and Rapid Eradication** of an established invasive non-native species prevents the spread of the species. Thereby, reducing its impacts and management costs.
 - 3. Long-term Control and Containment** of an established invasive non-native species should occur, if possible, where eradication is not feasible so as to reduce the potential for further ecological damage.
- M. In addition, BirdLife notes that aquatic (both freshwater and marine) and island habitats are particularly vulnerable to invasion by non-native species. Consequently, these habitats should receive priority investment for the actions outlined in Paragraph L. Please note the additional information on our position on invasive non-native species in the marine environment contained within paragraphs X and Y.
- N. Any management measures used must avoid wider long-term adverse impacts on the environment and at a population-level among non-target species. Long-term adverse impacts on the environment includes impaired soil quality, increased risk of soil erosion, impaired water quality and chemical contamination, among others. In addition, as some management measures for invasive non-native animals have the potential to cause distress, pain or suffering to the target species measures should, wherever possible, be taken to spare target animals from avoidable distress, pain or suffering.

Position on the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species

- O. The EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species is a strong legal instrument and is 'fit for purpose'. If properly implemented, the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species will significantly reduce the existing and potential damage caused by invasive non-native species.
- P. The EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species is an essential component of the nature protection legislation of the EU. Invasive non-native species are the third largest driver of extinction risk in Europe⁶. As such, BirdLife considers that the EU Birds and Habitats Directives can only be fully and effectively implemented if the Invasive Alien Species Regulation is itself fully and effectively implemented.
- Q. EU institutions, Member State Governments, other NGOs and the scientific community should all ensure the EU's Regulation on Invasive Alien Species is fully and effectively implemented.
- R. The full and effective implementation of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species can only be achieved if the Guiding Principles, particularly Guiding Principles 1 and 2 [*see paragraph L*], of the Convention on Biological Diversity are strictly adhered to.
- S. 'The List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern' and the national lists of 'Invasive Alien Species of Member State Concern' are integral components of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species.

- T. Invasive non-native species with the potential for significant ecological impact should be included on 'The List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern' and the national lists of 'Invasive Alien Species of Member State Concern'. To this end, BirdLife will:
- i. Agree, on the basis of known ecological impact, a 'Priority List of Invasive Non-Native Species for the European Union'.
 - ii. Strongly advocate for the inclusion of the species identified in Paragraph 'T.i.' in 'The List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern' and the national lists of 'Invasive Alien Species of Member State Concern'.
- U. The European Commission should develop guidance to assist Member States in the full and effective implementation of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species. In particular, this guidance should cover:
- i. Best practice for border and customs inspections and enforcement.
 - ii. Best practice for the use of derogations and authorizations, including appropriate licensing systems.
 - iii. Best practice on inspections, in line with the BirdLife Position on Improvements Needed to Environmental Inspection Regimes in the European Union.
 - iv. Interpretation of effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties, including those related to the polluter pays principle.
 - v. Best practice for the effective and proportional humane management and treatment of invasive non-native species.
 - vi. Guidance on embedding the principles of invasive alien species management and prevention across Member States' Ministries and Departments.
- V. The EU Institutions should ensure the types of evidence acceptable to the purposes of point (b) of Article 4(3) and points (a) to (h) of Article 5(1) of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species are in line with the precautionary principle. Uncertainties in the evidence base should not be used to justify the non-inclusion of a species on 'The List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern'. In addition, the required examination of the known uses of proposed species for inclusion on 'The List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern', including the examination of the social and economic benefits deriving from those uses, should be proportionate and not preventative to the inclusion of species on 'The List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern'.
- W. The EU Institutions and the Member States should implement an effective and proportional funding mechanism so that the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species can be fully and effectively implemented. Such a funding mechanism should provide adequate funding for: i) the creation of Risk Assessments so species may be included on 'The List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern'; ii) rapid eradication of recently established populations of species included on 'The List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern'; iii) long-term post-eradication monitoring and biosecurity to reduce the risk of reinvasion; and iv) the restoration of ecosystems damaged by species included on 'The List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern' following eradication.

Position on Marine Invasive Non-Native Species

- X. Marine invasive non-native species are particularly difficult to eradicate and manage and prevention must be the priority action. Ballast water and biofouling are significant pathways for the introduction of marine invasive non-native species. Addressing these pathways through internationally agreed protocols should be a national and international priority.
- Y. To this end, all European Union Member States should ratify the International Maritime Organization's International Ballast Water Convention.

Position on the Honolulu Challenge

- Z. All European Union Member States, along with the European Commission, should support and make a commitment under 'The Honolulu Challenge on Invasive Alien Species'⁷.
- AA. In keeping with the BirdLife International Secretariat's commitment and support to 'The Honolulu Challenge on Invasive Alien Species', all BirdLife Europe and Central Asia partners are encouraged to support and make a commitment under 'The Honolulu Challenge on Invasive Alien Species'.

-
- 1 BirdLife International (2000) Threatened Birds of the World, Lynx Editions and BirdLife International
 - 2 BirdLife International (2015) European Red List of Birds, Luxembourg Office for the Official Publications of the European Communities
 - 3 EFSA (2010) Scientific Opinion on the effect on public or animal health or on the environment on the presence of seeds of *Ambrosia* spp. in animal feed, EFSA Journal 2010; 8(6): 1566
 - 4 Pergl, J., Perglova, I. (2006) *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, DAISIE
 - 5 Kettunen, M., Genovesi, P., Gollasch, S., Pagad, S., Starfinger, U., ten Brink, P. & Shine, C. (2009) Technical support to EU strategy on invasive species (IAS) - Assessment of the impacts of IAS in Europe and the EU. Final report for the European Commission. Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), Brussels, Belgium. 44 pp + Annexes.
 - 6 Genovesi, P., Carnevali, L., Scalera, R., (2015) The impact of invasive alien species on native threatened species in Europe. ISPRA M ISSG, Rome. Technical report for the European Commission. Pp.18.
 - 7 The Honolulu Challenge on Invasive Alien Species;
<https://www.iucn.org/theme/species/our-work/invasive-species/honolulu-challenge-invasive-alien-species> ; accessed 08/02/2017