

Invasive alien species in Iceland – overview, management and public influence

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Iceland became an isolated island 20 million years ago. As most of its biota did not survive the last ice age, its current biota has been established during the past 10 thousand years. Human settlers have brought a number of alien species to the country. According to the NOBANIS database (www.nobanis.org) 390 alien species are now found in Icelandic nature, of which seven are categorized as invasive and 25 as potentially invasive. Thirteen species are of special concern; American mink *Neovison vison*, cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Nootka lupine *Lupinus nootkatensis*, giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, European rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, Portuguese slug *Arión lusitanicus*, white-tailed bumblebee *Bombus lucorum*, heath star moss *Campylopus introflexus*, European physa *Physella acuta*, toothed wrack *Fucus serratus*, Atlantic rock crab *Cancer irroratus*, brown shrimp *Crangon crangon* and European flounder *Platichthys flesus*. These species have been approached with very different management priority, and many are not managed at all. Understanding why the species are treated so differently, might aid in the battle against them. When looking at factors such as their import and release process, the damage they have caused or are likely to cause, their visibility, reputation, “cuteness” and habitat types in combination with how or if they are managed, what seems to stand out is the importance of the species being known by the general public. Educating the public about invasive species is therefore of the utmost importance and probably a necessary prerequisite for management and preventing further establishment of new species.

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