

Nature in brief

4: Invasive Non-Native Species



Signal Crayfish - Bruce Shortland (c)



Giant hogweed - Roy Sexton (c)

Many plants and animals in Scotland are not native. Problems arise when **non-native species spread unchecked because they have no natural predators**. If the climate suits them, such species are then able to thrive and **can threaten Scotland's native flora and fauna**, either by outcompeting them for resources or by carrying diseases that indigenous wildlife have no immunity to.

Invasive non-native species (INNS) pose a high and **significant risk to biodiversity** - so much so that the Convention on Biological Diversity has recognised **INNS as the third greatest threat to biodiversity**. In Scotland, much of the western highlands has been blighted by *Rhododendron ponticum*; many of our riparian habitats are strewn with Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and or/ giant hogweed; American mink threaten water vole and, grey squirrels if left unchecked, will wipe out the red squirrel.

Controlling the damage done by INNS is costly – estimated to be over c. **£200 million** per year in Scotland.

The **signal crayfish**, which was first recorded in Scotland in 1995, is present in many of Scotland's river systems including the Tay, Tweed and North Esk. This species poses a **threat to Scottish salmon and trout fishing** industry which is estimated to be worth **£73 M** per year. Japanese knotweed grows through tarmac, drains and concrete; its control on Scotland's road network alone **costs c. £750 000 per year**.

The Trust endeavours to eradicate 'significant threat' species such as giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed on its own wildlife reserves and works with a range of stakeholders at a catchment or landscape scale. The Trust is a lead partner in removing grey squirrel through the **Saving Scotland's Red Squirrel project** and is involved in American mink control.

For further information please contact:

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What the Scottish Wildlife Trust would like to see:

- **Full implementation** of the Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain
- **Significant improvement of education** and awareness of INNS amongst the general public, industry and landowners
- **Wider publicity and distribution** of the Scottish Government's Code of Practice on Non-Native Species
- **Research into and promotion** of best practice for control and eradication of INNS
- **Adoption of the ecosystems approach** when dealing with INNS
- **Continued funding** of Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project
- **Strict plant import controls** to prevent spread of novel pathogens
- **Full implementation** of the Tree Health and Biosecurity Plan
- **Full implementation of the International Maritime Organization** Convention on Ballast Water to prevent the introduction of non-native marine species in Scottish waters