

**Break-out sessions conference: Invasive Alien Species, The Urban Dimension
IUCN Headquarters, 5 September 2013, Gland, Switzerland**

**1) Communication strategies for invasive alien species, how to increase awareness and mobilise action
Chair: Lesley Dickie (EAZA), Rapporteur: Liza Drius (IUCN)**

Conservation in any of its guises relies upon effective communication as conservation plans cannot progress without clear dialogue - conservationists communicate with each other, with media, with government and the wider public amongst others. Many conservation issues can have straightforward 'headlines' such as halting the loss of habitats, even if the underlying issues are complex. However, Invasive Alien Species as a threat to biodiversity is a tricky and challenging subject to communicate and thereafter engender coordinated action to combat biodiversity losses resulting from IAS. To non-experts when does a species become problematic and how do we prioritise one species over another? Tackling IAS also raises the spectre of culling and control of one group of animals to benefit other, sometimes leading to emotive public debate on the ethics of conservation planning, in addition to valid welfare concerns as to the methodology of culling. More recently with climate change issues being incorporated into conservation planning and increasing discussion of assisted migration, what will this mean for IAS conservation planning in the future - what will constitute an invasive species? This break-out session will discuss many aspects of communicating IAS to different audiences.

There were two consecutive break-out session on the topic "Communication strategies for invasive alien species, how to increase awareness and mobilise action". Each session was attended by around 20 people.

To facilitate the discussion among the participants, the following three questions were used as guidance:

- Who are the key target audiences and what are the main messages on IAS which need to be communicated?
- How can the human and social dimensions of raising awareness of IAS be overcome?
- What resources (human and financial) are needed to effectively communicate IAS?

Outcomes of the discussion:

Participants' answers and inputs were captured on a board. At the end of the session, participants were asked to mark the issues/elements which in their view need to be prioritized. Due to time constraints, only group 1 was able to complete all three questions and mark their priority issues.

The following paragraphs try to capture the key ideas which emerged from the discussion from both group 1 and 2.

Question 1: Who are the key target audiences and what are the main messages on IAS which need to be communicated?

The identified target audiences were:

Industry	Nature users	Nature advocates	Policy	Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ companies ▪ seed supply industry ▪ pet shops ▪ planners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ anglers, hunters ▪ gardeners ▪ landscape managers ▪ foresters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ scientists ▪ zoos ▪ conservation organizations ▪ animal welfare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ policy and decision-makers ▪ local authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ families ▪ general public ▪ media ▪ teachers ▪ youth

(airports, etc) ▪ professional organizations ▪ doctors	▪ landowners ▪ farmers ▪ tourists	organizations ▪ “friends of...” associations		▪ plane travelers ▪ donors ▪ different cultural groups ▪ ambassadors ▪ multipliers
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The key messages were:

Explaining the problem	Presenting the solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IAS are a threat and cause damage ▪ Action is urgently needed ▪ Public health is affected ▪ Humans are responsible for IAS ▪ It is information to get the right information from the right sources ▪ Native vs alien ▪ Domestic vs wild ▪ The welfare of animals is important ▪ It is not an ethical issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prevention and early action are better than cure ▪ Native nature is beautiful ▪ Education is essential (long term prospect) ▪ There is a solution to IAS (giving hope) ▪ Think locally and act globally ▪ There is need for biosecurity measures ▪ There is need to create a new normal

Two contradicting statements were supported by some participants: “IAS are not nature” vs “IAS are part of nature”.

Some participants underlined the need for messages to be positive, consistent and focused.

Group 1 highlighted as priorities:

- ⇒ There is need for biosecurity measures
- ⇒ Prevention and early action are better than cure
- ⇒ There is a solution to IAS (giving hope)
- ⇒ Among the audiences: decision-makers

Question 2: How can the human and social dimensions of raising awareness of IAS be overcome?

Some of the points raised in this discussion were common to the answers to the following question. Participants identified some key challenges and suggested possible solutions for overcoming social and human barriers to IAs communication.

Challenges	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human mobility, people move much more than in the past ▪ “Status” species, some celebrities promote exotic species as pets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emphasize the need for prevention ▪ Use consistent and clear terminology ▪ Carrot and stick approach ▪ Explain the fact that humans are the origin of the problem ▪ Promote best standards to overcome differences in approaches by different cultural groups

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistent understanding of policy ▪ Prioritization of care
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One solution was marked as a priority:

⇒ Explain the fact that humans are the origin of the problem

Question 3: What resources (human and financial) are needed to effectively communicate IAS?

Ways	Human resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better use of social media by conservationists, apps ▪ Harmonizing terms and definitions ▪ Improving collaboration and communication among teams and departments ▪ Increasing public dialogue, promoting citizen science ▪ Harmonization of messages ▪ Changing school curricula ▪ Supporting non-traditional partners, non-scientific knowledge ▪ Better knowing the baseline, science and impacts, using case studies ▪ Being honest and acknowledge that the problem comes from people ▪ Transboundary cooperation ▪ Using personal stories ▪ Giving incentives for scientists to communicate ▪ Promoting smarter money (prioritization of money use and synergies) ▪ Increasing scientific knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social scientists ▪ Politicians' engagement and support ▪ Multipliers ▪ Ambassadors, champions (celebrities) ▪ Artists, photographers ▪ Industry-led initiatives ▪ Objective, friendly media

Group 1 marked the following as priorities:

- ⇒ Changing school curricula
- ⇒ Better knowing the baseline, science and impacts, using case studies
- ⇒ Social scientists

2) Voluntary versus legislative approaches to deal with invasive alien species in urban areas

Chair: Riccardo Scalera (IUCN ISSG), Rapporteur: Chantal van Ham (IUCN)

Recognising the increasingly serious problem of invasive alien species in Europe, the European Commission is currently working on a dedicated legislative instrument on Invasive Alien Species. This is one of six key objectives of the new EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy adopted in May 2011.

In the meantime, several strategies have been developed and implemented at both the national and regional level to deal with IAS e.g. eradication, control, containment, and prevention, of course, which is unanimously acknowledged as the best available management option, when feasible.

In addition, the Bern Convention which has promoted and supported the development of several codes of conduct or similar “incitative” voluntary instruments to start regulating the main identified pathways and the relevant activities (i.e. Hunting, Pets, Horticulture, Botanical Gardens, Zoos and aquaria, Recreational Fishing, etc.). In fact, controlling the key entry routes is considered the most effective way of tackling the threats from IAS.

Voluntary codes of conduct and best practices are considered fundamental flexible “implementation” tools, which could be scaled up with support from public bodies, industry federations, user groups and/or NGOs as appropriate, with the aim of ensuring responsible, proactive policies, and applying these in a coherent manner across Europe. On the other hand, in certain situations the principle of self-regulation might be more successful and effective than other legally binding schemes. A voluntary code of conduct can clearly fulfill multiple roles: awareness-raising, stimulating stakeholder involvement, leverage/dissemination of best practices, supplementing existing regulations or filling a regulatory gap.

Questions for discussion:

- Based on your experience (or opinion), which would be the main virtues and shortcomings of mandatory legal provisions?
- Based on your experience (or opinion), which would be the main limits and potential of voluntary instruments, e.g. codes of conduct?
- Which level of flexibility would you expect from a regulatory framework in relation to IAS (e.g. species lists, etc.)?
- Which are the aspects of an early warning and rapid response system that could be better regulated by a mandatory law rather than a voluntary approach?

Outcomes of the discussion:

- Enforcement is essential especially at an early stage of introduction
- Voluntary measures benefit from peer pressure and are often taken up at the local level
- The challenge for all measures are resources
- The EU legislation deals with the worst part of the problem but needs to be complemented by voluntary measures
- For voluntary measures to work effectively, an incentive is required (e.g. a label)
- Legislation may trigger voluntary action (e.g. for species not listed as priority)
- To act voluntary awareness and understanding is required
- Some aspects however do need a mandatory approach
- The code of conduct is useful for less fundamental aspects and can help to implement the legislation
- A voluntary approach can help to avoid battles between actors (e.g. hunters, animal breeders)
- The voluntary approach is as strong as the ideas, needs and willingness of people
- Is there space for integration of voluntary measures in the legislation?
- A mandatory approach would be needed for ant farms (German example)
- Even with legislation in place, imports for commercial purposes are not always inspected
- The EU legislation will present an equal ground for all
- Control and eradication will be the responsibility of the EU Member States – the reason for this is that citizens may not understand the need and this may backfire towards to the EU
- EU Member States have the obligation to prevent spread to neighbouring countries

- Part of the listing of priority species should be risk assessment
- In absence of legislation, a code of conduct can inform or prepare a sector for future legislation or when legislation is missing
- A code of conduct has to be flexible, there will be differences between countries
- Pathways have to be addressed and priorities are needed in particular for unintentional introduction
- The co-decision process will reshape the legislative proposal of the European Commission and good ideas are welcome. Resistance can be expected
- The 'polluter pays principle' should apply (those who damage, pay for the costs)
- The list of species will be influenced by commercial interests
- Legislation is not a complete answer to find solutions for the problems
- Adaptation to the local situation is required
- Movement of species requires annual updating of the priority list of species
- Who can oversee if codes of conduct work? For example by a penalty system or standards as an incentive to implement the code
- The code of conduct has to represent the sector
- The implementation of the codes of conduct has to be evaluated
- Legislation is required, because economic or personal gain may lead to breach of the code of conduct and many continue on the same path as before the code was established
- There is a role for sector associations to comply with the code of conduct

3) Regional cooperation & responsibility for action to minimise the risk of IAS

Chair: Neil McIntosh (ECNC), Rapporteur: Ana Nieto (IUCN)

The opportunities for IAS to proliferate (take hold or spread) are that much greater when there are failures to act in concert. Between (and even within) different countries and regions in Europe there can be different levels of awareness and attention for IAS: there is often variable data and incomplete technical information; there are different political, social and cultural contexts; also, there are diverse national and regional policy frameworks. Agreeing on the level of threat and risk from IAS, as well as who is responsible for action, can be the more challenging given (often) divergent economic, social and environmental priorities.

Such factors, singly and collectively, can constitute formidable barriers to developing and taking cooperative actions for IAS. However, at the same time, there are common challenges to be addressed and, therefore, significant opportunities to improve collective action and cooperation.

To achieve comprehensive regional cooperation and cross-sectoral approaches to addressing IAS, as a group, we will discuss and share your experiences.

Questions for discussion:

- What type of partnerships need to be set up to address the impact of IAS in cities? (e.g. partnerships between the horticulture sector and NGOs)
- What actions these partnerships can take to address the problem?
- How to foster collaboration on IAS between cities?
- How to ensure the exchange of information on IAS and best practices among cities?

Outcomes of the discussion:

- Communication is the answer to most issues...
- If the species is not causing a problem to a city then no need to do anything else there.
- In London, we have created a specific list different from the national one and have categorized them (priority 1, it has not arrived yet etc) so this is not a problem for us. Everyone knows that it is a city list.
- Identify reference centres within each country to facilitate the dissemination and exchange of information (Denis Simonin is the contact person at the EC))
- In Belgium we have a website (waarnemingen.be, observations.be) that allows citizens to report the observation of IAS so that they can be detected before these species get established (early warning and rapid response).
- Some countries like NL and BE have established lists with species (so far only mammals) that can be traded so a sort of white/black list approach.
- Difficult to establish partnerships with horticulture centre – they don't understand the issue. There is a problem of definition of IAS and of undertaking action at different scales in a country (e.g. horticulture professionals work in gardens so not into regional action). In specific cases funding is given to reward the use on non-IAS.
- Responsibility - Enforcement agencies are the ones having the responsibilities. If the people that are at the borders enforcing and implementing legislation are not trained and are not able to identify the species, then the legislation will not work.
- Cities should be financially awarded for taking action on IAS (e.g. like beaches get flags!)
- At the country level there is an organism that brings together all municipalities – reaching those organisms would be key in promoting action.
- Use of existing networks to promote action – iclei etc
- Having an expert in a city that can provide advice when requested on how to deal with IAS is essential.
- Exhibitions to be exposed in cities showing examples of IAS
- Host a Green Week on the theme of IAS
- Interreg funds projects that aim at addressing IAS in more than one country
- Partnerships need to be created with cities and rural areas
- Opposition stakeholders need to be involved in order to be successful