

# IAS Policy and Hunting

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Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are often referred to as species of non-native animals or plants, which cause serious negative consequences for their new environment. However, it is important to remember that not all alien species are invasive and a significant number contribute to our wellbeing, not least the humble potato.

Estimates show that 10-15% of alien species are invasive in Europe (European Union, 2014). IAS are also ranked as the second cause of biodiversity loss and species extinction, after habitat destruction (Genovesi and Shine, 2004). Further, they cost the EU an estimated 12 billion euros per year (European Union, 2014). Because of this serious issue, IAS are, since 2003, prioritised as a new millennium challenge in Europe for biodiversity conservation.

## **2003 – THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY ON INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES**

A [strategy](#) was adopted by the Bern Convention<sup>1</sup> which “promotes the development and implementation of co-ordinated measures and co-operative efforts throughout Europe to prevent or minimise adverse impacts of invasive alien species (IAS) on Europe’s biodiversity, as well as their consequences for the economy and human health and well-being” (Genovesi and Shine, 2004).

## **2011 – THE EU BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY TO 2020**

As IAS are a major threat to biodiversity, they are included of the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#) (Target 5, Action points 15 and 16) to avoid the loss of ecosystems and their services by 2020:

Target 5 – Combat Invasive Alien Species: *By 2020, Invasive Alien Species (IAS) and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS* (European Union, 2011).

## **2013 – THE EUROPEAN CODE OF CONDUCT ON HUNTING AND IAS**

The [Code of Conduct on Hunting and Invasive Alien Species](#) was developed, with FACE’s help, by the Bern Convention and presents seven principles that hunters and hunting associations should follow to contribute to the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species and the 2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy. Respecting these principles will lead to improve the sustainability of hunting by getting involved in IAS reduction and prevention (Genovesi *et al.*, 2013).

The 7 Principles are:

1. Prevent the release of invasive alien game species;
2. Prevent introductions and the spread of invasive alien plants for game food and shelter;

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<sup>1</sup> The Bern Convention (or the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats) was adopted in 2004 by the Council of Europe to protect the natural heritage of Europe and some states in Africa. More information at: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention/home>

3. Restock with non-native species only if they are not invasive or previously introduced in ancient historic times;
4. Select sources for restocking from populations with appropriate genetic and biosecurity management;
5. Practice animal-aided hunting which minimises the risks of impacting native species;
6. Consider eradication and control as essential management tools to tackle IAS and support their implementation;
7. Collaborate on monitoring and surveillance programmes on IAS.

## **2014/2016 – THE REGULATION ON THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE INTRODUCTION AND SPREAD OF INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES**

This EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species ([1143/2014](#)) came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015. It established the first “Union list” of 37 species consisting of 23 animals and 14 plants, and recently came into law following the recent publication (in July 2016) of Commission Implementing Regulation ([2016/1141](#)). This legally obliges all member states to manage the 37 IAS on the list<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, EU Member States will be required to take measures for early detection and rapid eradication of these species, and to manage species that are already widely spread in the territory of some Member States. The List will be frequently updated<sup>3</sup>.

## **2015 – FACE BIODIVERSITY MANIFESTO (BDM) REPORTING**

FACE set up the [Biodiversity Manifesto](#) in 2010 and published the first [report in 2015](#), which shows the active involvement of European hunters in biodiversity conservation. The 2016 report, which outlines 221 hunters’ conservation projects, includes 29 projects specifically related to IAS management. These projects include:

- Surveillance of raccoon dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*) in North-European countries (e.g. see [here](#));
- Trapping American mink (*Neovison vison*) to protect European water vole (*Arvicola amphibious*) in North Wales and South West England or red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus hibernicus*) in Ireland;
- Management of grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) to encourage the development of the native red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) in Northern Ireland and North Wales;
- Managing Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) in North Wales;
- Measuring the impact of invasive brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) on the native Irish hare (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*) in Ireland.

Note: Many more projects combat IAS as part of a suit of management actions to improve biodiversity.

**IAS CONTROL REPRESENTS A BIG CHALLENGE IN EUROPE IN WHICH HUNTERS PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE BY MONITORING, EARLY DETECTION, RAPID RESPONSE, SURVEILLANCE, MANAGEMENT AND RAISING AWARENESS. HUNTERS, WITH THEIR PRECIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF NATURE AND THEIR COLLABORATION WITH RURAL AND SCIENTIST COMMUNITIES, VOLUNTARY ACT FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AS “CITIZEN SCIENCE”. THE EUROPEAN UNION INTENDS TO DEVELOP AN EU CITIZEN SCIENCE REPORTING SYSTEM FOR INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES TO BETTER INVOLVE THE PUBLIC AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THIS HUGE TASK. HUNTERS WILL ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THIS SYSTEM.**

<sup>2</sup> [The species on the list can be seen here.](#)

<sup>3</sup> 12 species are discussed to be added to the list. Among them : Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*), Raccoon Dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*) and Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*).



## **REFERENCES:**

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