

A new baseline of invasive plants in Isabela

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Charles Darwin Foundation (CDF) botanists have published a list of all the introduced plants growing in Puerto Villamil, Isabela Island, the third largest town in Galapagos. 261 species were recorded, 39 of which were found growing wild.

Despite 95% of the archipelago falling under the Galapagos National Park, invasive plants spreading from the inhabited areas are having large impacts on the native flora and fauna.

Anne Guezou, one of the botanists of CDF, says: "Thanks to the cooperation of residents we were able to visit every property in Puerto Villamil and obtain the first complete baseline of introduced species."

Five species were identified as potentially serious weeds that should be completely eradicated from the island, including the "lead tree" *Leucaena leucacephala*, regarded as one of the worst tropical weeds.

"By identifying invaders before they become widespread, and investing in their eradication or control we can protect this World Heritage site from their impacts." says Guezou. She adds, "Early detection must go hand in hand with preventing the arrival of more non-native plants into Galapagos".

Staff at the Charles Darwin Research Station are working with the Galapagos National Park and SESA (Ecuadorian Agricultural Health Service) to prevent importation of plants from mainland Ecuador.

This work was accomplished with the support of Project "Control of Invasive Species in the Galapagos Archipelago", a donation from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to the Ecuadorian Government, represented by the Ministry of Environment.

Source: Public Library of Science

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