

# Intervention offers 'best chance' to save species endangered by climate change

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A University of York scientist is proposing a radical programme of 'assisted colonisation' to save species endangered by climate change.

Chris Thomas, Professor of [Conservation Biology](#), says the strategy is applicable across the world, and he suggests Britain as a potential haven for species such as the Iberian lynx, the Spanish Imperial Eagle, the Pyrenean Desman and the Provence Chalkhill Blue butterfly.

In an opinion paper in *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, Professor Thomas, of the University's Department of Biology, says that moving [endangered species](#) is the only viable option to maintain some climate-endangered species in the wild.

He says: "Expanding the dispersal of endangered species may represent the most effective [climate change](#) adaptation strategy available to conservationists to reduce extinction rates across the globe."

Guidelines on releases into the wild for the conservation purposes condone only the release of a species into an area where it used to occur -- re-introduction rather than introduction – with aim of the recovery of a species in its native range and/or restoring the ecological community.

But Professor Thomas says a more radical policy is now required if humanity wishes to minimise the number of species that become extinct from all causes, including from climate change and species invasions. He says increased local and regional species richness that would result is

positive, provided that this does not result in higher global extinction rates.

"Translocation represents one of the principal means of saving species from extinction from climate change; in conjunction with maintaining large areas of high quality (low human impact) habitats," he says.

"We need to develop a long "shopping list" of potential translocations and, where possible, put in place monitoring of extant populations to help identify when action is needed. The later we leave it, the harder and more expensive translocations will become."

"Each species should be considered carefully to judge the balance between the potential benefits of helping to save a species from extinction and any changes to existing species within the UK."

Professor Thomas says Britain is an ideal recipient location for translocated species. Earlier research found that around 2,000 introduced species have become established in Britain without indigenous species being destroyed as a consequence.

"A British Assisted Regional Colonisation area would contribute to the conservation of globally threatened species," he adds.

He says that the risks to Britain's indigenous species would be small because the translocations would take place within the same broad geographic region. Professor Thomas argues that the largest declines of indigenous [species](#), such as the red squirrel, in Britain stem from long-distance translocation such as introductions from North America which would not normally be sanctioned under a deliberate assisted colonisation policy.

Provided by University of York

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