

Risk assessments to block invasive wildlife pay off, study shows

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The Burmese python is an example of an invasive species introduced in the U.S. that now must be controlled at great expense.

(PhysOrg.com) -- A University of California, Davis, environmental and resource economist collaborated on a study that was the first to estimate the net benefits of screening potentially invasive wild animals, to prevent them from being introduced to the United States.

The researchers noted that federal, state and local governments are spending tens of millions of dollars annually on efforts aimed at controlling recent invasions by such animals as the [Burmese python](#), the [Asian carp](#) and the red [lionfish](#).

The study, based on the introduction of non-native reptiles and amphibians through typical importation routes, estimated that a nationwide risk-screening system would yield net benefits ranging from approximately \$54,000 to \$141,000 per species, assuming mid-range impacts of establishing species.

The study findings have been posted online and are scheduled for publication in the Sept. 15 edition of the journal [Ecological Economics](#).

“Managing the introduction of non-indigenous species is becoming a major goal of policy makers,” said the study’s lead author, Michael Springborn, an assistant professor in UC Davis’ Department of Environmental Science and Policy. “This study integrated biology and economics to tackle the question of how we as a nation balance the benefits of trade against the risk of invasive species becoming established.”

One result of globalization in recent decades has been a dramatic increase in trade and travel, which has resulted in both intentional and accidental transport of species beyond their native areas. The researchers noted that the United States receives hundreds of millions of non-native animals each year, representing thousands of different wildlife species.

Once established, introduced species can multiply to levels that can be harmful to economies, agriculture, the environment, and animal and human health. Because of that, policymakers are increasingly concerned about better managing the introduction and establishment of non-native species.

For several years, Congress has considered mandating stricter risk-assessment procedures, but legislation has stalled. Proposed legislation in the Senate would broaden the scope of the 111-year-old Lacey Act, the wildlife trade law that at this time restricts the importation of 25

“injurious species.”

More information about the study and the authors is available online at:
[www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ... 80091100262X#FCANote](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S0091100262X#FCANote)

Provided by UC Davis

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