

Controls needed to stop zebra mussels invading Great Britain

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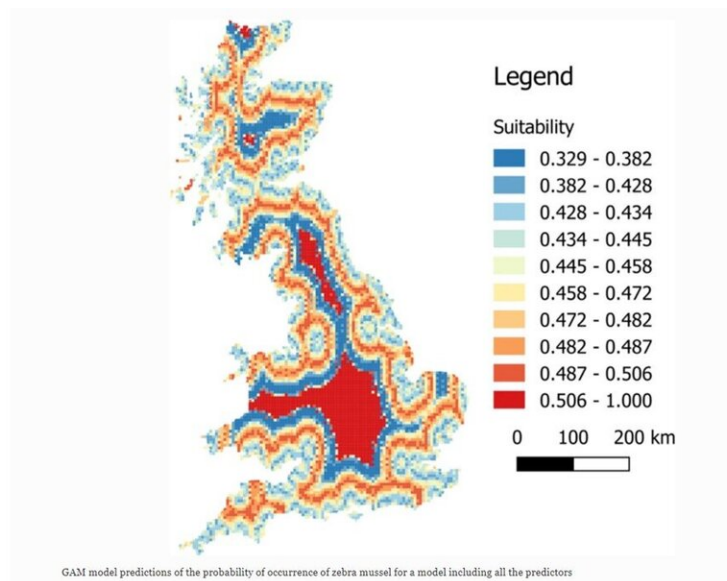


Image shows model predictions of the probability of occurrence of zebra mussel. Credit: adapted from Rodriguez-Rey et al (2021).

New research by Swansea University scientists found that boat ramps facilitate the dispersal of the highly invasive zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*).

To contain the dispersion of this invasive species Dr. Marta Rodriguez-Rey and co-authors suggest in the new study, that strict control measures and target monitoring around boat ramps should be implemented.

Invasive bivalves are a problem as they can cause widespread environmental damage, and eradication has proved difficult. The [zebra mussel](#) is one of the most damaging invasive bivalves—it reproduces fast, disperses widely, and damages the economy. In Great Britain, £5 million are lost each year due to pipe fouling and damage to water infrastructures caused by [zebra mussels](#).

In this study, the research team examined the distribution of the zebra mussel in Great Britain using a [model](#) to generate maps that can predict future dispersion. The model shows that distance to boat ramps is the best way to predict the mussel's distribution—and mussels are more likely to be present within 3 km upstream of boat ramps.

Dr. Rodriguez-Rey said: "Using these maps, we detected many areas in most catchments currently without zebra mussel that have a high risk of becoming invaded. For instance, we know this mussel species is already established in some areas in the Thames River but not in all areas, and these free zones should be targeted for monitoring and prevention."

More information: Marta Rodríguez-Rey et al, Boat ramps facilitate the dispersal of the highly invasive zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*), *Biological Invasions* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s10530-020-02453-9](#)

Provided by Swansea University

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