

Invasive species are animals, too: Considering a humane approach

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Invasive alien species are animals that may pose a threat to biodiversity, but it's time to deal with that threat in a more ethical way. "We need to take a humane, long-term view and learn to co-exist, as some species considered invasive are here to stay," argues Cebuan Bliss, an

environmental researcher at Radboud University.

She is one of the contributors to a [new report on invasive species](#) published today by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

"Invasive species are one of the biggest drivers of biodiversity loss. However, unlike overexploitation and pollution, these invasive species are also [animals](#) themselves," explains Bliss. As a researcher on environmental governance and one of the 84 experts involved with the report published September 4, she focused on the ethical aspects of the management of invasive species. "Up until now, there has been very little research that considers how to deal with these invasive species, in a humane way."

Inhumane underwater traps

Bliss talked to various policymakers, experts and other stakeholders to find out how [invasive alien species](#) are governed, and how this could be improved upon. "Up until recently, the Netherlands used underwater traps to kill animals like coypu and muskrat that are considered invasive. These types of traps basically hold the animal under water until they drown, meaning that they die pretty slowly and painfully. Now, these traps are being phased out in the Netherlands, but they're still being used in other countries."

"Slowly but surely, we're seeing more humane methods of managing these species. Stichting AAP, for example, decided to house a number of raccoons that had reached the Dutch province of Limburg. And in the United Kingdom, researchers are experimenting with contraception for squirrels. Non-lethal methods of managing [invasive animals](#) also include using sound, scent, or physical deterrents. However, we still have a long way to go to facilitate kinder conservation practices."

Ecosystems change

"Invasive alien species is a very negative label, considering that many of these animals are climate refugees, or victims of pet trade trafficking. It's important to reframe how we approach the management of these animals," argues Bliss. She also emphasizes the importance of taking a long-term view when it comes to [invasive species](#).

"Ultimately, a growing number of animals cannot be eradicated and are here to stay, so we'll have to learn to coexist with them. Rather than only considering animals that were present 200 years ago, we need a [flexible approach](#) that acknowledges ecosystems are dynamic and ever-changing. This is easier for us to comprehend with certain animals. When you're talking about cats, for example, people care more, even though they are also often considered invasive given how many [native animals](#) they kill."

Provided by Radboud University

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