

Has a beautiful songbird become an invasive species in Britain?

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Presumed adult Red-billed Leiothrix at a garden bird-feeder in Horningsham, Wiltshire, UK, on 4 May 2020. Credit: P. Mumby, *Ibis* (2022). DOI: 10.1111/ibi.13090

New research published in *Ibis* has identified the red-billed leiothrix, a small brightly colored bird native to subtropical Asia, as an emerging example of an invasive non-native species (INNS) in Britain. The work also demonstrates how climate change and human activity—such as the cage-bird trade and garden bird-feeding—could increase the likelihood

of INNS becoming established in new regions.

Scientists documented recent records of the red-billed leiothrix in Britain, including a cluster in southern England, suggesting that establishment of the species may already be underway.

The team notes that where red-billed leiothrixes have become established elsewhere—including in Continental Europe, Japan, and Hawaii—as a result of escapes and releases from the cage-bird trade, they can become an abundant and dominant component of the wild bird community. If they become more widely established in Britain, they could cause a significant change in the public's experience of wildlife, by introducing a novel garden bird and altering the current and well-known soundscape in woodland, parks, and gardens.

"This study raises awareness of the red-billed leiothrix's occurrence in Britain, what future impacts this may have, and what it may show us about the effects of [climate change](#) and [human activity](#) on our wildlife," said corresponding author Dr. Richard K. Broughton, of the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and University of Oxford. "The paper calls for increased public awareness and recording of observations."

More information: Richard K. Broughton et al, The Red-billed Leiothrix (*Leiothrix lutea*): a new invasive species for Britain?, *Ibis* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/ibi.13090](https://doi.org/10.1111/ibi.13090)

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