

NATURAL HERITAGE TRENDS

NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Species which have been introduced deliberately or accidentally to a country in which they are not found naturally are termed 'non-native' or 'alien'.

More than 1000 non-native species occur in the wild in Scotland. Mainly plants, 98% are found on land or in fresh waters. Relatively few become invasive but when they do, unwelcome effects can result.

Land

American mink (*Mustela vison*) first escaped from Scottish fur farms in 1938. By 1995, the feral population was estimated to exceed 50,000. Predation by mink can have a devastating impact on ground-nesting birds (waders, waterfowl and seabirds) and the native water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*).

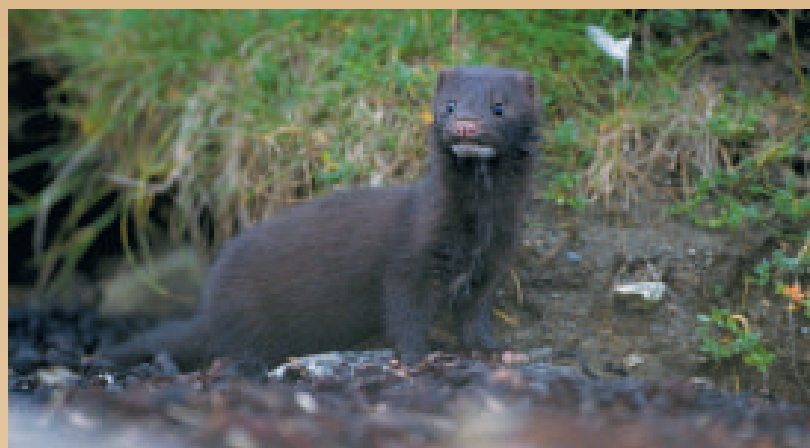


Photo: Laurie Campbell



Photo: Sue Scott

Fresh water

Signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), native to North America, have been found in at least six locations around Scotland since the first self-sustaining population was discovered in the Kirkcudbrightshire Dee catchment in 1995. Impacts on Scottish freshwater ecosystems may include predation of macroinvertebrates, amphibians, juvenile fish and fish eggs; elimination of aquatic vegetation; and increased erosion and destabilisation of riverbanks through burrowing.

Sea

Of 24 non-native species known in the seas around Scotland, ten have potentially harmful effects on the environment and/or commercial interests. The Japanese seaweed *Sargassum muticum* was reported for the first time in Scottish waters in February 2004. It has become invasive elsewhere in Great Britain and Ireland.



Photo: Graham Saunders

For further information see

Welch, D., Carss, D.N., Gornall, J., Manchester, S.J., Marquiss, M., Preston, C.D., Telfer, M.G., Arnold, H. & Holbrook, J. (2001). *An Audit of Alien Species in Scotland*. SNH Review Series No. 139. Scottish Natural Heritage, Battleby.

Saunders, G. (2004). *Natural Heritage Trends: The Seas Around Scotland*. Scottish Natural Heritage, Battleby.

Eno, N.C., Clark, R.A. & Sanderson, W.G. (1997). *Non-native Marine Species in British Waters: A Review and Directory*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

We aim to reveal long-term trends and make supporting information available so that it can be used in all decisions affecting the natural heritage (SNH Corporate Strategy, 2003).

Find out what's going on at

www.snh.org.uk/trends