## Key facts

**Definitions**

* **Native species -** an animal or plant that has colonised Britain naturally since the last Ice Age ended.
* **Non-native species -** an animal or plant that has not colonised naturally but was introduced (either accidentally or deliberately) by people.
* **Invasive non-native species** - a non-native animal or plant that has the ability to spread causing damage to the environment, the economy, our health and the way we live.

**Statistics and impacts**

* By the year 1800 approximately 100 non-native species had been introduced to Britain.
* Increases in global trade, transport and travel has meant that the rate of new introductions has increased dramatically.
* Now over 2000 **non-native** plants and animals from all over the world have been introduced to GB by people and the number is increasing each year.
  + 75% are plants
  + 22% are invertebrates (mainly insects)
  + 3% are mammals and other organisms
* Most non-native species are harmless but around 10-15% become **invasive** and spread causing damage to the environment, the economy, our health and the way we live.
* Once established the damage they cause is usually irreversible.
* Invasive non-native species are one of the top five drivers of biodiversity loss ([IPBES](https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment)).
* They cost the GB economy at least £1.7 billion a year / UK economy at least £1.8 billion a year.
* A wide range of species and taxa are invasive, and their impacts affect a wide range of environments.
* Invasive non-native species reduce the ability of native wildlife to cope with other pressures such as climate change and habitat loss.
* Some habitats are more vulnerable than others, such as freshwater environments and small islands.
* Many invasive aquatic species can survive out of water for over two weeks on damp clothing or equipment.
* Climate change is likely to exacerbate their impacts as conditions become favourable for invasive species which were not previously able to establish in GB.
* They are easily spread from a tiny plant fragment, seed, egg or animal which can be hard to spot, or even invisible to the naked eye.

**Impact examples**

* In Britain invasive non-native species have led to dramatic declines of native wildlife including the water vole, tansy beetle, and white-clawed crayfish.
* Invasive non-native species harm native wildlife in a number of ways, including damaging habitat, preying on or out-competing other plants and animals, and spreading disease.
* Since the introduction of mink, water voles numbers have rapidly declined. Water vole sites diminished by as much as 94% in 'one of the most rapid and serious declines of any British wild mammal during the 20th century' (Mammals of the British Isles 2008). The problem has been exacerbated by habitat changes.
* The rare tansy beetle was originally widespread across Britain but is now endangered, in part due to invasive Himalayan balsam which completes with the native tansy plant. Tansy beetles rely on the tansy plant for food and shelter, and are now restricted to two populations which are supported by conservation schemes to try and protect them from extinction.
* Invasive signal crayfish are driving native white-clawed crayfish to extinction through the spread of crayfish plague and competition for resources.
* Invasive non-native species can interfere with activities we enjoy, for example, invasive plants including Himalayan balsam and floating pennywort clog banks and waterways preventing anglers, boaters and paddlers from using them.
* Some can even be harmful to our health. The sap of giant hogweed contains a toxin which causes nasty skin burns on contact with sunlight.

Find more information on non-native species in the [Non-native Species Information Portal](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/factsheet/index.cfm).

**What can we do?**

We are all affected by invasive non-native species in some way, and we all have a part to play in preventing their spread.

* **If you go fishing, boating or paddling,** remember to [Check Clean Dry](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry/)**your boat and any clothing, footwear and equipment after leaving the water.**
* [Be Plant Wise](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/beplantwise)and don't let your garden, pond, or aquarium plants enter the wild.
* **Take care of your pets, never release them or allow them to escape into the wild.** It’s cruel and could harm other wildlife.
* **Look out for Asian hornet, a predator of honeybees which is not yet established in GB. Record your sightings of this and other**[alert species](https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/alerts/index.cfm)**.**Read more on [Asian hornet](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet)and how to report sightings, find free [ID sheets for invasive non-native species](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=47) and download the Asian Hornet Watch app.
* If you enjoy being outside why not **join a**[Local Action Group](https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/index.cfm?sectionid=71)**helping to manage invasive plants.**