



A campaign involving DIY Youtubers is launched by the Bern Convention to raise awareness on Invasive Alien Species

- The campaign “Invasive Crafted Species”, launches on the 14th of November, involves popular *Youtubers* specialised in DIY who have crafted different invasive alien species.
- Under the claim “If you like it, craft it!”, the campaign highlights the dangers of exotic species and aims to involve citizens in fighting this major environmental problem.
- Invasive alien species is one of the biggest causes for species extinction worldwide and only in the European Union €12 billion are spent in preventative and remediation measures every year.

Strasbourg, 14 November 2015 - The Bern Convention is presenting **Invasive Crafted Species**, a creative campaign to inform the public about invasive alien species, a major environmental issue caused by the introduction of animals or plants into a new ecosystem with serious negative consequences.

According to Piero Genovesi, expert on invasive alien species at IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), “to effectively address this threat, regulatory approaches alone are not enough, and it is essential to involve the key sectors of the society, to raise awareness and to encourage more responsible behaviors”.

Although citizen’s release of exotic species is an important cause for this environmental crisis, most indicators point that public awareness is relatively low amongst Europeans. In order to target large population sectors with little appreciation of this issue, **Invasive Crafted Species** leverages on the use of social media by involving professional DIYers from different European countries with an important presence in Youtube. As part of the campaign, they have produced explainer videos on how to craft different invasive species like the **water hyacinth, the common slider, the Siberian chipmunk or the ice plant**, using techniques such as crochet, watercolour, polymer clay or polystyrene. This aims to highlight the contrast between the highly damaging species in the wild and the harmless crafts.

Under the motto “**If you like it, craft it!**”, the campaign encourages people to create their own Invasive Species craft, engaging citizens under a positive and constructive message.

This is in contrast with most awareness campaigns about invasive species and biodiversity loss with predominant use of doom messages, which has proved to not be efficient in encouraging citizen action.

According to Iva Obretenova, Secretary of the Bern Convention, “help improve citizens’ sensibility towards nature conservation issues is one of the Convention’s main objectives. I am certain this Campaign will be a catalyst for many people’s realization their individual actions do make a change when it comes to limiting the spread of Invasive Alien Species.”

In Genovesi’s words, “invasions are a result of human action, and only changing our collective behaviors we can mitigate the effects of this threat.”

Invasive Crafted Species involves a media and social media campaign with the release of different tutorials as well as promotional spots in 4 European languages. The campaign will be centralised at www.invasivecraftedspecies.com and disseminated under the hashtag #BetterCraftIt in social networks.

Additional information to editors

Some information and figures on Invasive Alien Species in Europe

It is estimated that there are over 10,000 alien species present in Europe, out of which an alarming 15% represent important threats to native plants and animals. They have been found to carry diseases, devastate wild ecosystems and crops, and seriously harm biodiversity.

One of the causes for the establishment of these invasive populations is the unintentional or deliberate release of exotic species. These tend to be particularly destructive, as they initially invade fragmented ecosystems around metropolitan areas, where they thrive on the unused resources and the lack of competitors or predators. For instance, 9% of invasions affecting fish were associated with the introduction of ornamental plant varieties; and 10% of mammalian invasions have originated from the escape of pets. Additionally, 15 bird species and 9 amphibians/reptiles commonly kept in people’s homes have been found to be invasive.

Public awareness about the problem of Invasive Alien Species in Europe

According to the European Union surveys, only a third of Europeans think invasive species constitute a serious threat for biodiversity (52% of Spanish people, 36% of French people, 27% of Germans, 36% of Italians, 39% of British people, 30% of Belgians, 20% of Dutch people). In addition, it is worrying that only 35% of Europeans believe loss of biodiversity to be a very serious problem (42% of Spanish people, 33% of French people, 23% of Germans, 46% of Italians, 41% of British people, 24% of Belgians, 16% of people from the Netherlands).

The psychology of positive messages/framing in biodiversity campaigns

The constructive message of the campaign draws on studies highlighting the need for using a positive frame when calling on citizen's action. Indeed, [Tversky and Kahneman \(1981\)](#) found that there is a clear preference for messages positively framed; and [Verhoeven and Tonkens \(2013\)](#) show that positively framed messages are more likely to trigger positive feelings about being active citizens.

European Codes of Conduct

The Bern Convention pioneered intergovernmental cooperation in the field of invasive alien species with the adoption of the first European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species in 2003. Since then the Convention is promoting joint action of national authorities and actors from various relevant sectors such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry, Zoos, botanical gardens, hunting, angling, etc. The Convention provides guidance on how all these stakeholders can contribute to the fight against the spread of invasive alien species through the adoption of so called Codes of Conduct.

Recent regulation on invasive alien species

On August 2015, the European Commission enacted new legislation regulating invasive alien species in all member states. These regulations include restrictions on keeping, importing, transporting, selling, exchanging, breeding, growing, and releasing specimens of 37 of the most invasive species in the European continent.

The DIY trend in social media

The popularity of DIY (Do It Yourself) channels on Youtube has been steadily increasing in the last few years, retrieving over 46 million entries in search engines. Nowadays, crafting tutorials have millions of views and popular crafters have become influencers for a significant proportion of Internet users. Thus, their potential to promote awareness is very relevant.

Species crafted in the campaign

The following species have been crafted by the DIYers involved in Invasive Crafted Species:

Common slider: This reptile is native to the US and Mexico, but since the 80s has become popular as pets, distributed and become invasive around the world. In fact, many countries have banned their import and trading in order to stop its spread. One of the dangers it poses is their ability to transfer Salmonella to their owners, particularly children in close contact with it.

Water hyacinth: With its beautiful lavender and pink flowers, this is a popular ornamental plant. However, it is also one of the fastest growing plant species on Earth. Water hyacinths create huge floating mats in rivers and lakes, blocking the light and reducing oxygen underneath. This complicates the access of fish to their breeding sites, and strongly competes with local vegetation. Also, it hosts parasites that harm local crops and may be dangerous for humans.

Ice plant: Plant with dark green leaves and pink flowers plant introduced to Europe around 1680 for ornamental purposes. They grow rapidly and monopolise insects vital for pollination, as well as water, light, and nutrients, lowering soil quality. They often mix with related European species, and become even more invasive.

Siberian chipmunks: Small rodents with four light and five dark stripes running from head to tail. They are very popular as pets—between the 60s and 80s more than 200,000 specimens were imported from South Korea as pets. However, they can quickly invade places, and they compete with native woodland species; which puts them among the EU's 100 most invasive species

The Bern Convention

The Bern Convention is the European treaty for the conservation of, wild species and habitats on the continent. Since more than 30 years the Convention contributes to the sustainable development of life on our planet. It was signed under the auspices of the Council of Europe in 1979, and has since been ratified by 50 countries and the European Union itself. One of the main lines of action of the treaty is the fight against invasive alien species, which are an increasing threat to European biodiversity. On the performance of this campaign they have relied on [Scienseed](#), a science communication agency based in Madrid (Spain).

Video of the Bern convention: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVpN2_u7gms

Graphic material

Photos of the campaign can be downloaded here:

- <http://invasivecraftedspecies.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/waterhyacinth.jpg>
- <http://invasivecraftedspecies.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/invasivecraftedspecies.jpg>

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