

Information Technology - a Vital Tool in the Conservation of Species

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The Millennium Ecosystems Assessment lists invasive species as one of five direct drivers behind biodiversity loss. The recently published analysis of the 2008 IUCN Red List shows that invasive species are the third most severe threat to mammal and bird species, the fourth most severe threat to reptile species and the fifth most severe threat to amphibian species. Invasive species do not respect borders and their threats are significant. To successfully tackle these global threats, adequate and accurate information is essential. This knowledge then underpins the capacity for effective decision making and implementation of invasive species management actions.

Invasive species data and information are recorded by different sources in different ways and at different times and scales. Researchers, practitioners and decision makers require this data and information in aggregated collections for analysis and synthesis. Reliable data and metadata is required for predicting biological invasions, for early warning and for monitoring trends. Global species databases, inventories and planned integrated networks are some of the ongoing initiatives in the field of introduced species data and information sharing. Rapid changes in digital technology and increased global connectivity can provide practitioners with an extraordinary opportunity to handle the unique challenges of biodiversity informatics by providing new tools for both biodiversity conservation and information dissemination to suit the changing needs of the user.

In this presentation I will discuss the sharing of invasive species information, both data and good practice. I will review existing global initiatives, including the IUCN ISSG Global Invasive Species Database, and assess the potential of innovative approaches to disseminating invasive species data and information.