

Islands & Invasive Alien Species

As an island nation with dispersed and isolated geographical characters, Maldives limits immigration of new species, allowing established species to evolve with few strong competitors and predators. However, through human activity invasive alien species can be introduced causing dramatic changes to the island ecosystems. Island ecosystems are more prone to invasion by alien species with the lack of natural competitors and predators.

Being a small island developing state the issue threatens the fragile ecosystem, livelihood, economy and the wellbeing of its citizens.

Common pathways for the arrival of IAS

Ship ballast water, hull fouling, cargo containers and packaging materials, unprocessed commodities such as timber/agricultural goods, imported food species such as fish, horticultural/plant imports, waste material, military activities, and biological agents to combat pests.

Island Birds & IAS

Invasive alien species are stated among the most common threat to the avifauna of islands. Introduced rats, cats and diseases are accounted for half of the global bird extinctions over the past 500 years.

Invasive alien plants and trees have decreased water supplies for nearby communities and increased fire hazards in South Africa (McNeely et al., 2001; van Wilgen et al., 2001; Petit et al., 2004)

Australian Acacia species, such as *A. cyclops* and *A. saligna*, have radically altered nutrient cycling regimes in nutrient poor ecosystems due to their ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen (van Wilgen et al., 2001).

Island birds & IAS

Invasive species are among the most common threat to global avifauna and islands in particular. Invasive alien species, mostly from introduced rats, cats and diseases are responsible for half of the global bird extinctions over the 500 years.

Bird Life International

ScrewPine. *Pandanus*

Screwpine or locally referred to as Kashikeya have been one of the core ingredients in many delicacies in Maldives. With the absence of common staple foods in the World War II, it is known that Maldivian communities relied on Screwpine to fill the void.



The native species of the screwpine are now threatened with the introduction of alien specimens. It is believed that these specimens were first introduced from a Caribbean country and distributed throughout the Maldives. Since the introduced screwpines had preferable features over the natives, farmers tend to promote the introduced foreign species of screwpine. At present the local vegetable and fruit market is occupied by these alien specimens, side-lining the natives.