

Guidelines for the Discovery of Non-Native Species

Based on UK guidelines for visitors upon finding a suspected terrestrial or freshwater non-native species within the Antarctic Treaty Area

Introduction

A species apparently new to the Antarctic Treaty Area may be (i) a recent natural colonist (e.g. by wind or bird transport), (ii) a recent human introduction (e.g. associated with cargo, clothing or personal belongings) or (iii) a long-term inhabitant that has never before been identified by science. It is important to know the colonisation history of a new species as this will affect how it is managed: for example, non-native species introduced by human activities should be eradicated if possible.

Determining which category a newly discovered species falls into is often difficult and it is essential that expert advice is sought at the earliest opportunity. The discovery of a suspected non-native species should be treated as a potentially serious environmental incident. Those new species that show clear signs of reproducing and increasing their distribution range are of greatest concern. Please follow the guidelines detailed below.

Deception Island Barley Watch

An example in recent history of non native species introduction occurred during the 2011-12 season when barley seeds were dispersed at Deception Island by a group of visitors.

While not known to be viable in Antarctica, if any barley is found, please report to IAATO (operations@iaato.org) and follow the guidelines below.

General guidelines

1. Ensure all recommended biosecurity/quarantine procedures are performed (boot washing/clothes inspection, etc.) to minimise the risk of distributing the newly discovered species or its propagules to other locations.
2. At the earliest opportunity, inform the relevant National Authority (i.e. the authority that issued the permit or authorisation to enter the Antarctic or alternatively the authority who has jurisdiction over any recognised expert in a position to eradicate the species) and send the information outlined in paragraphs 4-6 below.
3. Do not remove or eradicate a newly discovered species upon first finding it unless:
 - a) specifically directed to by a relevant national authority or a recognised expert,
 - b) removal can be achieved safely, or
 - c) it is a rodent, in which case **it should be eradicated immediately**.
4. Please take digital photographs of the newly discovered species as found initially. Include in the image an object for scale (e.g. pen or coin) and, if possible, take close-up pictures of any features (e.g. for plants this may include leaves, flowers and/or seeds).
5. General information to be recorded and supplied to the CEP and relevant national authority
 - a) location where new species was discovered including, if possible, the GPS co-ordinates
 - b) time and date of discovery
 - c) weather conditions
 - d) extent of snow cover
 - e) type of substratum colonised by the new species (e.g. moss/lichen/rock/mineral soil/organic material-rich soil/guano/etc.).
 - f) purpose of your visit to the location
 - g) contact details of (i) the members of the discovering party and (ii) their logistics coordinator (Base Commander and National Operator/Tour Leader and Tour Company)
6. If the newly discovered species is a plant, please also record:
 - the number of plants and/or the ground area covered
 - the presence of seeds or flowering structures
 - the relative sizes of the individual plant, i.e. are all the plant individuals roughly the same size, or is there a variety of plant sizes?