Kleinbauer, I., Dullinger, S., Peterseil, J. & Essl, F. (2010): Climate change might drive the invasive tree Robinia pseudacacia into nature reserves and endangered habitats. Biological Conservation 143: 382-390.

Reference: Kleinbauer, I., Dullinger, S., Peterseil, J. & Essl, F. (2010): Climate change might drive the invasive tree Robinia pseudacacia into nature reserves and endangered habitats. Biological Conservation 143: 382-390.
Short reference: Kleinbauer et al. (2010)

First author: Kleinbauer, I.

Year: 2010 Abstract

Climate change might drive the invasive tree Robinia pseudacacia into nature reserves and endangered habitats

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Static networks of nature reserves disregard the dynamics of species ranges in changing environments. In fact, climate warming has been shown to potentially drive endangered species out of reserves. Less attention has been paid to the related problem that a warmer climate may also foster the invasion of alien species into reserve networks. Here, we use niche-based predictive modelling to assess to which extent the Austrian Natura 2000 network and a number of habitat types of conservation value outside this network might be prone to climate warming driven changes in invasion risk by Robinia pseudacacia L., one of the most problematic alien plants in Europe.

Results suggest that the area potentially invaded by R. pseudacacia will increase considerably under a warmer climate. Interestingly, invasion risk will grow at a higher than average rate for most of the studied habitat types but less than the national average in Natura 2000 sites. This result points to a potential bias in legal protection towards high mountain areas which largely will remain too cold for R. pseudacacia. In contrast, the selected habitat types are more frequent in montane or lower lying regions, where R. pseudacacia invasion risk will increase most pronouncedly.

We conclude that management plans of nature reserves should incorporate global warming driven changes in invasion risk in a more explicit manner. In case of R.

pseudoacacia, reducing propagule pressure by avoiding purposeful plantation in the neighbourhood of reserves and endangered habitats is a simple but crucial measure to prevent further invasion under a warmer climate.

climate: climate change Natura 2000 ecosystem: invasion, invador species nature conservation: management, plan Notes

Climate change might drive the invasive tree Robinia pseudacacia into nature reserves and endangered habitats I. Kleinbauer, S. Dullinger, J. Peterseil, F. Essl

Tartalom: Introduction Material and methods Study area Study species Species distribution data Reserve and habitat distribution data Environmental data Climate data and climate change scenarios Niche-based distribution modelling Calculating invasion risk for reserves and habitats Results Current pattern of R. pseudoacacia distribution and SDM evaluation Invasion risk of Austria as a whole Invasion risk of Natura 2000 sites Invasion risk of habitat types particularly sensitive to R. pseudacacia Discussion Climate warming and R. pseudacacia invasion Caveats Implications for management strategies Conclusions Acknowledgements References

Austria, Climate change, Endangered habitats, Invasion risk, Natura 2000, Reserve networks, Species distribution models

Címszavazva - GE

Publisher: Elsevier

Journal: Biological Conservation Location: ER Archívum (2010/P-018) Type: scientific paper Katalógusba vette: Gulyás Györgyi Katalógusbavétel időpontja: Thu, 04/07/2011 - 12:00