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Welcome to program 67 of Shortwave Radiogram.

I'm Kim Andrew Elliott in Arlington, Virginia USA.

Here is the lineup for today's program, in MFSK modes as noted:

1:31 MFSK32: Program preview (now)
2:45 Disappearing wetlands put planet life at risk*
8:18 MFSK128: Invasive raccoons in Japan*
12:38 MFSK64: New species of fish emerges from ocean depths*
16:37 Images of the week*
27:05 MFSK32: Closing announcements*

* with image(s)

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VOA NEWS

Report: Disappearing Wetlands Put Planet Life at Risk

Lisa Schlein
27 September 2018

GENEVA - A new report warns that wetlands are disappearing three times faster than the world’s forests, with serious consequences for all life on earth.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is a global treaty ratified in 1971 by 170 countries to protect wetlands, which are ecosystems inundated by water, such as swamps, bogs and floodplains.

Unfortunately, the goal of this treaty is under threat. Ramsar Convention officials report about 35 percent of the world's wetlands have been lost between 1970 and 2015.

State of crisis

Unless this situation is urgently reversed, Ramsar Convention Secretary-General Martha Roja Urrego warns the world will be in a state of crisis because wetlands are critical for all aspects of life.

"All the water that we use for consumption, irrigation and for hydro-electricity comes directly or indirectly from wetlands," Urrego said. "Secondly, wetlands also have a main function in filtering waste and pollutants, so they act as the kidneys of the world. They filter the waste."

Urrego says wetlands also are essential in regulating the global climate as peatlands store twice as much carbon as the world's forests.

Several factors

The report finds wetland loss is driven mainly by such factors as climate change, population increase, changing consumption patterns and urbanization, particularly in coastal zones and river deltas.

Authors of the report say biodiversity also is in a state of crisis. They say more than 25 percent of all wetlands plants and animals are at risk of extinction.

Scientists say without biodiversity, there is no future for humanity, because the air people breathe, the water they drink and the food they eat ultimately rely on biodiversity in its many forms.

https://www.voanews.com/a/report-disappearing-wetlands-put-human-planet-life-at-risk/4589416.html

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Image: Described as the "Everglades of the north," the wetlands along the Kankakee River in Indiana and Illinois have mostly been drained for agriculture. From bit.ly/2NOjoSj ...

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From Deutsche Welle:

Raccoons wreak havoc with agriculture and native species in Japan

> Originally brought to Japan as pets, raccoons are being released into the wild when they become too big. Now it has become too difficult for Japanese authorities to control them. Julian Ryall reports from Tokyo.

Julian Ryall (Tokyo)
25 September 2018

They are large and frequently aggressive. They can decimate farmers' crops and suburban gardens. They are being blamed for damage to infrastructure and the wooden homes that are still common across rural Japan.

Raccoons may look cute and cuddly, but they are rapidly becoming a menace across the country.

And they are just one of 148 species that are on the Environment Ministry's list of invasive alien creatures that are causing similar havoc with local flora and fauna.

"Our research shows that raccoons have expanded their habitats threefold in the last decade," Haruka Yamaguchi of the ministry's

Task Force for Countermeasures Against Invasive Species, told DW.

The statistics suggest that raccoons are now found in 44 of the nation's 47 prefectures, and are particularly unwelcome in crop-growing regions.

"We are providing funds to prefectures so they can produce booklets and other literature to educate people about stopping raccoons spreading into more areas, while the farm ministry is providing funds for electric fences and other deterrents," Yamaguchi said.

"It is a constant battle," she added.

No natural predators

The other problem is that foreign species that lack natural predators in Japan are encroaching on the habitats of local creatures and taking over their ecosystems, in extreme cases putting them at risk of extinction.

One of the most at risk are the insects that are indigenous to Chichijima Island, a tiny speck of land about 1,000 kilometers south of Tokyo, which has become a new home to the green anole lizard, a rapacious, fast-breeding invader.

Some of the insects on Chichijima are not found anywhere else in the world, and there has been a knock-on effect among other inhabitants of the local ecosystem.

Most worryingly, the lizards appear to have found a way to traverse the channels that separate Chichijima from the rest of the Ogasawara archipelago, which was recognized as a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site in 2011. In 2013, the first lizards were found on Anijima Island, which is 500 meters away across a channel.

Experts believe the first lizards were brought to Chichijima by US military personnel when they were stationed on the island in the 1960s, while they may be spreading through the archipelago in tourists' backpacks on the small ferries that crisscross the local waters.

The Celastrina ogasawaraensis, a butterfly designated as a nationally protected species, and the indigenous Ogasawara dragonfly have both been driven to the brink of extinction on Chichijima by the lizards. The plight of local insect life has also been felt by a number of unique species of birds and bats.

Trapping program

The Environment Ministry has placed 36,000 traps in the southern part of Anijima, while a fence is also being erected in an effort to halt the lizards' occupation of the island.

Other foreign creatures have taken up residence in different parts of Japan, with colonies of red back spiders, native to

Australia, found in Kawasaki, Okinawa and Osaka, while infestations of venomous fire ants have been discovered in shipping containers imported from China and Southeast Asia. Despite the authorities' best efforts to screen arriving freight and destroy any unwanted arrivals, fire ant queens have been found in areas around Japanese port cities.

Large-mouth bass, which were imported to stock lakes for sport fishermen in the 1920s, have escaped and decimated local populations of freshwater fish, while American bullfrogs and Mississippi crayfish have also escaped captivity to multiply rapidly.

"Right now, the biggest problems seem to be the raccoons and the civet cats, which were brought here in the late 19th century to produce fur," Kevin Short, a professor specializing in environmental education at the Tokyo University of Information Sciences, told DW.

Animated TV show

"We get plenty of raccoons here in Chiba Prefecture, where I live, but they only became popular in the 1970s because of an animated television show about a raccoon called Rascal," he said. "People started keeping them as pets, and the pet importers could not get enough of them."

"The problem is that while baby raccoons are cute and friendly, they are big, heavy and aggressive when they become adults. And it becomes impossible to keep them in the average Japanese apartment, which is small and not designed to be a home to that sort of pet," he said.

"So owners had a choice; they could take them to the city to be euthanized – it was not a choice for most people because they had formed an emotional attachment to their pets," he added.

"So they did what they thought was the best thing and they released them into the wild. And now we're seeing the results of that."

And given that many of these imported species are adaptive by nature, Short believes that they will continue to multiply in Japan's countryside and that little can be done to stop that from happening.

https://www.dw.com/en/raccoons-wreak-havoc-with-agriculture-and-native-species-in-japan/a-45630198

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Image: The Rascal the Raccoon animated character helped

popularize the adoption of raccoons as pets in Japan ...

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From New Atlas:

New species of neon fish emerges from the "twilight zone"

Michael Irving
26 September 2018

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), more than 80 percent of the world's oceans remain unexplored – so it's not surprising that new species keep turning up from the deep. Now researchers from the California Academy of Science (CAS) have discovered a new species of fish that looks pretty hard to miss with its neon green, pink and yellow coloring.

The new fish was collected from reefs at St. Paul's Rocks, an archipelago off the coast of Brazil, at a depth of about 400 ft (120 m). That places it in what some scientists call the "twilight zone" – the region of the ocean below the range of most divers but not as deep as robotic submarines go to. As a result, this area remains relatively unexplored.

While trying to rectify that issue, the CAS divers stumbled onto this vivacious fish. It was found that males are yellow in color with bright pink stripes, while females seem to be mostly a blood-orange color. While that might seem a bit too flamboyant for natural selection to favor, the researchers say that's not the case at those depths.

"Fishes from the twilight zone tend to be pink or reddish in color," says Hudson Pinheiro, an author of a study describing the new species. "Red light doesn't penetrate to these dark depths, rendering the fishes invisible unless illuminated by a light like the one we carry while diving."

The new fish species was named Tosanoides aphrodite, after the Greek goddess of love and beauty

After getting it back to the lab (possibly using the CAS's SubCAS device to safely transport the specimens to the surface), the team examined the animal's anatomy and DNA to determine that it was indeed a brand new species. In honor of its technicolor skin, it was dubbed Tosanoides aphrodite, after the Greek goddess of

love and beauty.

"This is one of the most beautiful fishes I've ever seen," says Luiz Rocha, an author of the study. "It was so enchanting it made us ignore everything around it."

So far the new fish has only been spotted in this one small speck of the Atlantic Ocean. Tosanoides aphrodite joins a few other new fish species discovered in recent years, including three new species of snailfish found in the Atacama Trench, and another that just happens to be the deepest-dwelling fish ever found.

The research was published in the journal ZooKeys.

Source: California Academy of Sciences

https://newatlas.com/new-species-fish-neon/56513/

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This week's images ...

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Sunset in Edinboro, Pennsylvania. Photo by Jack Widner ...

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Lake Michigan waves hit the pier at St. Joseph, Michigan. From
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An airplane flies in front of a full moon in Sydney, Australia.
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Male deer run in a field near Kozliki, Belarus. From
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Our painting of the week is by Bianca Nampijinpa Turner. From

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I'm Kim Elliott. Please join us for the next Shortwave
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