

Marine alien species of Cyprus

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Biological invasions in marine habitats represent a recognized global threat with a strong impact on biodiversity and local economies. The Mediterranean Sea is one of the most severely affected regions by biological invasions, fostered by the opening of the Suez Canal, fouling and ballast transportation along shipping lines, aquaculture, and aquarium trade. The aim of this work is to present an updated inventory of the aquatic alien species of Cyprus, based on a thorough compilation of existing information (from scientific and grey literature, technical reports, scientific congresses, academic dissertations, websites, unpublished/personal observations), that will provide a baseline account of the current situation in the island. A total of 125 marine alien species have been reported in Cyprus up to June 2009, of which 78 are considered as established, 32 as casual, and 15 as questionable or cryptogenic. Among the reported alien species, 42 were molluscs, 26 fish, 19 annelids, 15 phytobenthic species, 13 crustaceans, and 10 belonged to other taxonomic groups. The total number of reported marine alien species of Cyprus is lower than that of most of the neighboring countries in the Levantine Sea (Egypt: 212 alien species, Israel: 389 alien species, Lebanon: 262 alien species, south Turkey: 257 alien species), except Syria (119 alien species). Approximately 22% of the established marine alien biota in the Levantine Sea, has been reported as established in Cyprus, indicating that the number of marine alien species in Cyprus will probably increase in the future.