

Alien invasion

Parrot invasion

It may sound strange to you but Britain is constantly being invaded by aliens. There are strange creatures from foreign places [frequently](#) arriving on the British Isles. Except these aren't the aliens you are probably thinking of. The kinds of aliens arriving in the UK are plants and animals.

Where they come from

These alien species landing on the shores of Britain are also known as exotics, non-indigenous, non-natives and invasives. They may be new types of grass, insects, fish, amphibians, crustaceans, fungi and many others. Some of them arrive 'on the wind', some come with the currents of the sea, others are introduced either [intentionally](#) or [by accident](#) in the luggage of a traveller returning from a sunny holiday in an exotic location.

One colourful example of this is a bright bird called *the monk parakeet*.



Where they are now

It's possible to walk around Kilburn in North London and hear the squawk of this green invader from the trees and sky above. If you look up, you are likely to see lots of them swooping around the trees in London's parks and gardens.

The monk parakeet is originally from South America but is now found all over Europe and there are as many as 100,000 in England, 7,000 of which can be found in one very large colony in the south of England.

What people think

Some people think they make England's usually grey skies romantic and colourful but others disagree. Farmers complain that they are fighting a [constant](#) battle with the hungry birds' appetite for crops. The British government has decided to do something about this invasion. More than 70 kinds of plants, birds, reptiles and mammals that have managed to breed and build populations in the UK have now been outlawed by the British Government. This means that it is now a crime to [release](#) any of these animals and plants into the wild in the UK.

Consequences

The consequence of what can happen if action is not taken can be seen with the case of the red squirrel in the UK. The invasive grey squirrel, bigger and more aggressive than the red squirrel, has led to the disappearance of the red squirrel in certain areas. Now, tens of thousands of grey squirrels have been shot by local farmers and game keepers in collaboration with the government in an attempt to [protect](#) the habitat of the red squirrel.

Cost

Wildlife minister Joan Ruddock estimated that this invasion costs Britain around £2 billion per year and with climate change things are going to get worse before they get better! Watch out! There may be aliens living near you!