

Invasive species aren't always unwanted

By Erica Goode, New York Times

Invasive species are bad news, or so goes the conventional wisdom, encouraged by persistent warnings from biologists about the dangers of foreign animals and plants moving into new territories.

Conservation organizations bill alien species as the foremost threat to native wildlife. Cities rip out exotic trees and shrubs in favor of indigenous varieties. And governments spend millions on efforts to head off or eradicate biological invaders.

"I think the dominant paradigm in the field is still a 'when in doubt, kill them' sort of attitude," said Dov Sax, an associate professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at Brown University.

But a growing number of scientists are challenging this view, arguing that not all invasive species are destructive; some, they contend, are even beneficial. The assumption that what hails from elsewhere is inherently bad, these researchers say, rests more on xenophobia than on science.

Read the whole story