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## **New data concerning the presence of alien species in the wetlands of Sicily and their potential impact on the aquatic habitats**

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### **Abstract**

The Mediterranean wetlands support a very significant plant diversity, including many endemic and threatened species. Currently, these environments are severely threatened from human activities, among them drainage, climate change, pollution and invasion of exotic species. The latter issue deserves particular attention, as often only limited data are available on the spread and real impacts caused by the naturalization of alien aquatic plants. The inventory of the wetlands of the Mediterranean islands, produced as part of the Mediswet project, allows to obtain interesting data also on the distribution of exotic hydrophytes. As for Sicily, field surveys and bibliographic searches carried out for this project have ascertained the presence of seven exotic hydrophytes, including two new records for the island. The analysis of the distribution of these species has revealed that some of them are currently limited to only a few sites and in particular to small artificial ponds or canals. However, their monitoring and eventual eradication is of fundamental importance to prevent a further spread, since as it is known in other Mediterranean territories their expansion can have significant ecological and socio-economic impacts on natural wetlands.