

Official response regarding the proposed addition of *Lampropeltis getula* to the list of Invasive Alien Species of Union concern

Finnish Association of Registered Exotic Animal Societies (SEEL ry) is opposed to adding *Lampropeltis getula* to the list of Invasive Alien Species of Union concern

The proposed inclusion on the EU-list is generally contradictory, as numerous other species of the same type, both plants and animals, could be listed on the same grounds.

In the majority of the EU- countries *Lampropeltis getula* is not a potential alien species. It might only be considered as such in the southernmost Mediterranean parts of the union (EU 2017, p.10, 71-76) where theoretically it might be able to form natural populations. Thus only six of the member states of the EU (EU 2017, p. 11-12) are to be considered as potentially threatened by this species.

It is worth mentioning that even in these countries, the suitable areas where reproduction might occur are limited as the species' juveniles and offspring do not survive winter periods (EU 2017, p.10-11).

As an oviparous species, the seasonal changes in most European countries, especially in the North, constitute a strong barrier against the reproduction of *Lampropeltis getula* in nature. During the incubation period consisting of 60-90 days, the eggs require a constant temperature at 25-28°C and the right humidity throughout the incubation for them to be able to develop. Any eggs or hatchlings would also be threatened by numerous predators (EU 2017, p.11, 30).

Globally, snakes of the genus *Lampropeltis* are one of the most popular pet snakes of all time. Their active behaviour, appearance, safety and ease of care make them excellent pets and there are thousands of enthusiasts and breeders of *L. getula* and its various subspecies throughout the EU. The species is one of the most common pet snakes in Finland, as well, as in all the European countries. *L. getula* and its subspecies also belong to the snake selection range of pet stores.

Due to the great popularity of the species, the inclusion of *Lampropeltis getula* to the union list would cause numerous problems for all involved. The breeders, the pet shops, and the great numbers of EU citizens who keep *L. getula* and its subspecies as a pet.

It is worth noting and realizing that keeping them as pets are already so large-scale, that it is challenging to eradicate them, whereby with the ban, activities easily become dark and goes so-called under the ground. In addition, the species would continue to be bred and marketed in non-EU countries such as Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

A local problem on a remote island should be considered and dealt with as such by the national groups of the states concerned. After all, Lampropeltis getula -proposal has insufficient and weak justifications. This will cause problems for numerous citizens throughout the EU and thus erode more citizens support for this important IAS-work.

Source:

European Union. 2017. Study on Invasive Alien Species – Development of risk assessments to tackle priority species and enhancement prevention. Final Report. Annex 4: Risk Assessment for Lampropeltis getula. Available:

https://pureportal.inbo.be/portal/files/14061934/KH0118040ENN.en.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0NnwxAJsd3wEzX4ozUoRA42_jrJpms9yY0uMUmfwDd4rKdPjT2hcrE_sk [referred to 16.11.2019]

1.1.2021

Finnish Association of Registered Exotic Animal Societies (SEEL ry.)

Chairman - Christian Moisander

<https://seel.fi/wordpress/>

Finnish Herpetological Society (Suomen herpetologinen yhdistys ry.)

Chairman - Niko Selin

www.herpetomania.fi

Finnish Reptile Enthusiasts Association (Suomen herppiharrastajat ry.)

Chairman - Marjo Suvanto

www.herppi.net