The new invasive species

Environmental technicians consider the progress of exotic flora in the Principality to be stable

The narrow-leaved ragwort and summer lilac are the most spread out vegetation in the country

Two technicians evaluate the presence of the invasive plant called the narrow-leaved ragwort.

Anna Moles
HEAD OF DIVERSITY

"It is not a question of eradicating the foreign plant, but of having it under control"

"With the first interventions we managed to reduce the lilac by 85%"

The narrow-leaved ragwort and summer lilac are the most extensive invasive plant in the country, along with Buddleja davidii also called the summer lilac. This has been shown in the field trips that they carry out during the summer months to track foreign species in the territory, in which the head of the unit, Anna Moles, recalled: "It is not a question of eradicating the invasive species, but to have it under control.

To evaluate the expansion of the plant, the Unit’s technicians delimited three plots of nine square meters per year in the same area at the old Sant Antoni de la Grellà landfill. During the first years we intervened we weighed the plants and from one year to the next we reduced the quantity by 85% details Moles. The narrow-leaved ragwort grows in places where the land has been removed, we find it in abundance also in the old jiberta landfill, in the area of the Dos Valles tunnel and in the side of the road, explained the head of the unit. Originally from South Africa and in Andorra it started to be seen in the 90’s, it is believed that it reached Europe in wool pallets and from here the expansion has gone everywhere, especially with the seeds mixed with construction materials. This herb needs little water to live and competes with autochthonous nettles, although it does not pose a serious threat. The livestock does not eat it and now what we fear is that it continues to gain altitude due to climate change, in theory it will not rise to 1,600 meters" added Moles. Once the technicians evaluate the incidence of the plant, the most effective things to do is to rip it from the ground - with care as not to spread the seeds - "We also tried with phytosanitary treatments but we observed that the following year it grew the same or even stronger...

INCINERATION / The procedure consists of putting it in industrial waste bags of 100 liters and burn them at the Waste Treatment Center. Moles explained that during the summer they have been using the unemployed to eliminate the plants but that the economic recovery has wiped out the lists of the Employment Service and this year they had to hire an external company to do the job «during the month of July, the most effective period for the elimination process, according to the technicians."

ORNAMENTAL DANGER / The control of the summer lilac, the other most common foreign plant in the country, is reflected in the National Biodiversity Strategy, promoted in 2016. The plant is of Asian origin, introduced voluntarily for more than 30 years as an element of gardening, due to its attractive pink flowers. It fiercely competes with the traditional riverbank forests. Experts note that the control technique that works best is the cutting and immediate planting of autochthonous species in their place.

The pilot fish, the silent threat of Pessons

A fishing bait puts the aquatic ecosystem in danger and causes a massive proliferation of algae. The effects already can be seen at the first lake, where the water has taken a greenish tone.

In Andorra, it is prohibited to fish with live bait and, nevertheless, the first of the Pessons ponds is becoming green because there is a proliferation of the pilot fish a non-native species of fish, appreciated among many fishermen. The diet of the small and silent fish consists of small invertebrates that are around it, organisms traditionally eaten in the ponds of the Pyrenees, algae. Explains the head of the Landscape, Biodiversity and Environmental Assessment Unit, Anna Moles. With the disappearance of these little beings, algae can grow as much as they want and the consequence? "The water becomes green and this can already be seen especially in the first of the ponds," explained Moles. The most serious risk if the situation is not reversed is that the pond will become eutrophicated. Eutrophication is a phenomenon caused by the accumulation of nutrients in an ecosystem that causes the fatal lack of oxygen in the water therefore, preventing any living being from inhabiting there. For this reason, the unit that directs Moles participates this summer in a test in Pessons in the framework of a European project, coordinated by Limnoirpineus, which fights, among others, against this type of phenomena in the lakes of high mountains. The results of the study will allow to know the state of the situation in the country and design containment plans. Fortunately, Moles stated that «although there is pilot fish in Andorra there are no signs of the "Catalan barbel"», another species of fish that is used as bait and which is allowed in France and affects the vegetation of the lakes. Which is also causing serious problems in the Cerdanya and the Val d‘Aran lakes.
ENVIRONMENT

Escaldes, clean of chemical products in green areas by law

The Comú d’Escaldes is the first to ban these products in green areas

EL PERIÓDIC
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY
@elperiodicAD

Using chemical products in Escaldes-Engordany is forbidden. This has been confirmed by the councilor of Environment of the comú, Didier Aleix. Although it is not a measure that is expected to be applied in the whole country, Aleix believes that it is a matter of having initiatives, and that’s what we did.

The Comú d’Escaldes-Engordany started last year a campaign to stop using any type of chemicals to take care of the green areas of the parish. After the success it has meant, they have decided to continue with the campaign and study how to be more responsible in other areas of the environment.

“We believe it has worked, because no one has noticed, there has been no complaint and the green areas are still well-kept and, besides, we avoid certain damages caused by these chemicals, both for the children that play around and for the gardening team of the comú,” said Aleix.

He also explained that no alternative product is used, “we only use natural soaps and oils and we burn wastes,” said Llorenç Esquerra, responsible for green areas in the parish. The comú has confirmed that these measures have helped the grass change from English to lawn type, which is supposed to be softer when walking, although the difference is not noticeable visually.

One of the other aspects to be highlighted is the economic saving that is to stop using phytosanitary products.

“We have noticed a reduction of expenses, because these chemicals products are very expensive,” Aleix reminded, while explaining that the grass garden workers have had to get training again due to the habit change that demands the grass and plants.

“We have also saved on water,” Llorenç announced, before continuing to explain that “our work has been focused on promoting the growth and existence of organic life on the ground, and this means that there are more insects, which help the water to distribute better and eventually is stored more, which means more rooting of plants and, therefore, more resistance to erosion.” According to the responsible person for green areas of the comú of Escaldes, they have noticed that they spend half of the water they used to when using chemical products.

Using natural soaps and oils the Comú d’Escaldes spends half of the water they used to with chemical products.

From now on, according to Aleix, there is still room for improvement, both in this area and others. The councilor of Environment has promised that they will study how to reduce the use of salt to melt the snow during the winter without losing effectiveness or how to improve forestry in the forest area. Beyond these great challenges, Aleix mentions the example of France, which has already banned the use of chemical products in green areas and is expected to do so in agriculture by 2022. “Here in Andorra it is not forbidden, but it is in Escaldes now, everything starts with someone’s initiative,” concluded Aleix.

URBANISM

Vehicle access to Meritxell will be closed in August as requested

The request has been made by shopkeepers and restaurants of the area

EL PERIÓDIC
ANDORRA LA VELLA

The lower part of Avinguda Meritxell will remain closed for cars 24 hours a day throughout August. In fact, and despite the fact that the new commercial walk has already been opened after four months of remodelling works, access to motorized vehicles has not been authorized any day. As reported from the Comú d’Andorra la Vella, the decision was made after receiving several petitions from local businesses that would prefer the Avinguda to be always pedestrian. Also, the restaurants and bars on the lower part would be in favour, in order to be able to keep the tables that have been installed in Meritxell since the inauguration.

The comú announced they decided to lengthen the closure as the shopkeepers have requested during the month of August because of “the large number of people”, there is a shortage of parking spaces and bearing in mind that the population is already used to not circulating around the area because it was closed since April, when the embellishment work began.

The decision, however, was not publicly announced with the will to see how it worked. However, the capital’s comú said that this is not a pilot test and, in principle, the intention is that from September, with the beginning of the school year and the return to normality, Avinguda Meritxell will once again allow access to vehicles from 12:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. It is not planned, therefore, to extend the circulation ban or change the schedule established a couple of years ago.

CHANGES TO COLLECT GARBAGE

The new Avinguda Meritxell has also brought changes in the cleaning of the streets. With the closure of the road access, garbage trucks cannot access the lower areas of the new road. This is a change that, unlike the previous one, will surely not be modified. The comú indicated that the intention is to maintain the thoroughfare clean and that the fact of having the rubbish bins in front of the entrances to the flats of individuals and in front of the restaurants at night gives a bad image of the main commercial street.

The entity believes that neighbours have become used to go to the adjacent streets to throw away their garbage —as it has been during the four months of the works— and that, therefore, it is not necessary to change it back to how things were earlier. Regarding the garbage produced by restaurants and the shops in the area, the comú is studying which alternative can be implemented so that the rubbish can be thrown away without the bin being on the main street.

Although it is still being studied and a firm decision has not yet been taken, the comú’s intention with this issue is to maintain the area clean and, therefore, it seems that the option of not returning to the formula used before the embellishment works is already taken.

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SCAM IN THE REAL ESTATE SECTOR

Complaint for fraud against a man for renting a fake flat

The alleged author contacted the victims through Facebook

Ana Filipa and Vania Gutiérrez submitted a police report yesterday against a man who contacted them through Facebook trying to rent a fake apartment. The presumed fraudster asked the victims a cash advance of about 200 euros to make the reservation of the property. The man offered a furnished home in the centre, with three rooms for only 450 euros per month, well below the market price. Before seeing the apartment, he demanded 1,350 euros, equivalent to three months of rent.

The suspicion increased when the women discovered that the photos he had been sending them were the same as an apartment in Encamp. This was the straw that broke the camel’s back. He told me that the apartment was in Escaldes, but told Vania it was near the Government building, explained Filipa.

EXCUSES NOT TO SHOW THE FLAT

Gutiérrez received a message from the man, who contacted them through Facebook trying to rent a fake flat. Filipa said that the current renter would say that the owner had taken the opportunity to visit the apartment. As an excuse, the scammer would ask the victims a cash advance, request to make a payment through Bitcoin, the virtual currency. After sharing the information they had, they decided to contact the real estate agency and the Police. The police take advantage of the desperation of those who need a flat urgently, said Filipa, who keeps as proof of all the messages that were exchanged with the alleged author of the scam.

The police confirms to have arrested the same man three months ago for forging documentation

The police, through the Technology Crime Group, has received several complaints after several citizens received emails in which they tried to extort them. These messages, written in English or translated in Spanish, request to make a payment through Bitcoin, the virtual currency. The received email tried to make believe that a webpage of pornographic content has been visited and then inform the victims that their devices are infected and that they have stolen their personal information, such as contacts on social networks. They even ensure they have recordings made from the camera integrated into their computers and cell phones. The specialist group on technological crimes offers a series of tips to avoid becoming a victim of this type of frauds. They recommend not opening emails from unknown people or unsolicited. In addition to not answering them, they should also be deleted once received. The professionals also advise to be very careful following certain links and when downloading attached documents. Last but not least, never make effective the payment that is requested in these types of emails.

FRAUD

The police give an alert regarding extortions made through emails

The message requests a payment through Bitcoin, the virtual currency

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Resident caught at 207 km/h in France

MOTOR TRAFFIC OFFENCE

The French authorities pulled over a young Frenchman resident in Andorra last weekend who was driving at 207 km/h on a highway in the neighbouring country where the maximum speed was set at 130 km/h. The agents withdrew the Andorran driver’s license to the 25 year old young man because he exceeded the permitted speed by 77 km/h, in addition to imposing a fine of 750 euros and banning him of driving in French territory. Therefore, the way back to the Principality from where they were intercepted had to be driven by his travelling companion.
Upshaw and Whittington, two key pieces to raise Morabanc’s game

The team wants to take a step further in the Liga Endesa and the final squad is starting to show its true colours.

Reggie UPshaw
- He is a very talented and versatile player
- He has a lot of energy and his rebounds are excellent
- He has a good shooting ability especially from three’s
- He arrives in a great and ideal moment of his career

Shayne WHITTINGTON
- He can play well in any position in the court
- He has experience in the ACB with a season at Obradoiro
- He has spectacular ambition wanting to achieve big goals
- He has a Macedonian passport (not part of EU)

The return of Whittington

Undoubtedly, Shayne Whittington was very keen to return to the ACB after his unsatisfactory move to St. Petersburg. The 27-year old and 2.11 meter tall American center with a Macedonian passport played previously with Obradoiro. Coming to Andorra I was not the only option but it is the one I wanted - in Santiago I was very comfortable, leaving the ACB was an error and now I re-gret it - he admitted Whittington also revealed that Andorra is a good team ‘that fulfills my main goals, a good organization with quality’. He also recalled that ‘the trip we did a few days ago seemed a great way to meet the colleagues outside of the court getting to know them personally. On the other hand, he reiterated that he has the motivation to be a relevant player again after having a good season with Obradoiro. ‘Although things did not happen as planned in Russia, I am now more motivated than ever to go back and recover the role I had back then’ - he said. As it goes for the characteristics of the athlete, he can play in positions four (power forward) and five (center), it depends on my team’s needs and the opponent. Regarding the future, he is aware of the fact that the team has been growing and he is ready to adapt himself ‘to play in a league like the ACB, grow and that’s what we look for in a team’ he concluded.

The two players stand out for their versatility and want to take a step further with the MoraBanc team

The chemistry needed - he said. The American revealed that he chose Andorra for the country and the city and to play in a league like the ACB and a team that participates in the Eu-rocup. ‘I will have the opportunity to prove what I can achieve of all I add’ - in the first hours I spent with the team, I felt at home and I am very gra-teful for the reception, I’m good at adapting myself, I worked hard this summer and I am ready to play” - he remarked. He also commented that previous deficits helped him prepare mentally and overcome adverse situa-tions: this made me fight at 100%.

Adolfo Baines will be the coach of Inter d’Escaldes

Adolfo Baines is the new coach of Inter d’Escaldes. In addition, the entity also asks that ‘an agreement can be reached with ogodwil, given that for the Federation subsidies are very important, without which one could not do the work that is always done for the sake of national skiing’. However, the FAE trusts that a good agreement can be reached - and in any case, the Federation con-siders that a suitable and adequate so-lution can be found - he stated.

Francesc Solana, sports director of MoraBanc: «Our expectations is to remain as competitive as we have done in recent years and if we can improve even better»

«Our expectations is to remain as competitive as we have done in recent years» and ‘if our goal is what we achieved in the past season, we must keep that competi-tive edge’, this year there has been a change in management (mainly the coach) and we come with new dreams and illusions we want a con-nection with the fans and the results that we deserve’ - he stated. «Reggie is very mature for his age and we can take advantage of his ver-satility and energy, he will make lots of offensive rebounds. Shayne has experience and will bring us many things. I hope they have a good year with us and help us build a better te-am” he concluded.

The fight between Viladomat and the Government creates division with the Federation

The majority shareholder of Sattde and member of Grandvalira Nevado, responsible for blocking this econ-o-mic action. The Andorra Ski Fed-eration received a letter informing that the subsidy for this amount was blocked after an agreement had not been reached on the board of the en-tity to maintain it. It is not the first ti-me that Viladomat has done this and now the meeting will take place in September to re-examine the issue.