

BIOrdinary expands our understanding of biodiversity by focusing on places marked by habitation, trade and agriculture.

Essential to our needs for food, shelter and resources, these ordinary places currently fall outside global biodiversity agendas.

We explore biodiversity dilemmas in five ordinary places that involve migrant species – tea plants, mosquitos, fish, oysters and mink. Researching the intertwined social and biological histories leading up to these dilemmas and local communities engagement with these crises, BIOrdinary asks: what would a more just and democratic biodiversity agenda entail?

**HOME**

Department of  
Social Anthropology  
Stockholm University

**PERIOD**

4 years

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### The missing 70%

Current biodiversity agenda aims at protecting 30% of the surface of the planet, largely in ecological hotspots.

BIOrdinary turns attention to the missing 70%. With the help of anthropological tools, we explore shifts in biodiversity in ordinary places, marked by human activity.

### Case studies: species on the move

The project's five empirical cases studies explore biodiversity dilemmas involving species influxes tied to colonial histories. The case studies underline how the trajectories of migrant species are entangled

with imperial sea routes and domestication processes. Scapegoated by global biodiversity protection, these species are integrated into environments and social, political and economic life. There are no easy answers or quick fixes to the biodiversity dilemmas evolving in these places.

Global warming has added a new dimension to environments with migrant species. Due to differences in genetical makeups, alien and endemic species react differently to climate-induced changes. Some species thrive, other suffer. We cannot rule out that migrant species will survive future heat-waves, while local species perish.

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*“Mobile species have their own histories. Some of them moved of their own accord. Others were brought along by humans or hitched a ride on infrastructural projects and international trade.”*

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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

	WORK PACKAGES	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
2023	WP1: Perspectives More-than-human histories of species mobilities	1. Documenting unique species trajectories, and environmental and social histories leading up to biodiversity dilemmas.
2024	WP2: Practices Vernacular Understandings	2. Understanding diverse communities' engagements with unfolding shifts in biodiversity.
2025	WP3: Policy Democratizing Biodiversity	3. Envisioning a more just, inclusive, and democratic biodiversity agenda.
2026		

## Imperial routes

Transatlantic trade and colonial cultivation practices set in motion global sociobiological processes that unevenly redrew the map of human/non-human relations. In this project we examine their aftermath: the life trajectories of species displaced by trade, infrastructural projects, domestication, plantations and aquaculture.

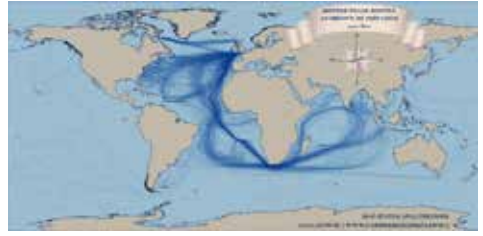
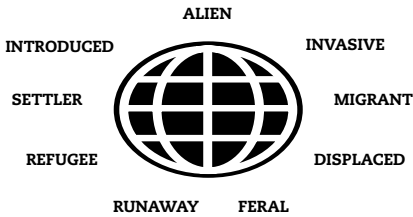


ILLUSTRATION JAMES CHESHIRE

## The trial of species

How we talk about new species in our environment influences our responses to them. Mobile species have their own histories. Some moved of their own accord. Others



were brought along by humans or hitched a ride on infrastructural projects and international trade.

What responsibility do we have for migrant species? Should we eradicate them to protect native species or learn to live with them? Who decides when a migrant species is an intruder or a climate refugee?

## Biodiversity for whom?

The larger aim of BIORdinary is to formulate a more just, inclusive and democratic biodiversity agenda, based on local understandings and practices that involve living with migrant species and multispecies justice.

## FOCUS & APPROACHES

- Social, cultural, & biogeographical processes.
- Species mobility, imperial trade & agricultural expansion.
- Historical & ethnographic research in field sites.
- Archival research & literature review.
- Learning with & from affected communities: understandings, practices, adjustments & solutions: protecting, 'living with' & eradicating.
- Ethnographic research: residents, civil society, public actors, scientific communities & the private sector.
- Problematizing biodiversity.
- Dialogue with stakeholders, affected people & the public.
- Findings from WP1 & 2, outreach activities & summer schools.

## ACTIVITIES

- Co-edited volume
- Peer-reviewed articles
- Conference participation
- Seminar series
- Reading groups
- Workshops in the field
- Yearly summer schools
- Participation in cultural & artistic projects
- Co-authoring a children's book

## RESEARCH TEAM



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**Case 5: Runaway Mink**

## CASE STUDIES

*BIOrdinary is based on five case studies. They explore drastic ecological shifts involving influxes of species and climate change. The non-native species at the centre of these shifts are only relative newcomers, introduced through imperial shipping routes and infrastructure projects.*

### **Case 1. Travelling Tea Plants in East Africa**



British settlers brought the Assam tea plant from India to East

Africa, turning dense forests into monocultural plantations. Climate change and plant breeding reducing the tea species' genetic diversity have now made these plantations highly vulnerable. Tea plants have also escaped into nearby forest and become "invasive."

### **Case 2. Emergent Ecologies in the Mediterranean Sea**



The Mediterranean Sea is undergoing one of the world's largest marine

transformations. The Suez Canal, dug to shorten the route between East and West, has become a "highway" for tropical marine species (jellyfish, rabbitfish, crustacea and algae), in search of new habitats.

### **Case 3. "Invasive" Mosquitos in Urban Singapore**



*Aedes aegypti* mosquitos, originally from Africa, are a highly effective

vector of dengue and zika that are increasingly making urban Singapore their

home. However, large-scale technoscientific projects to eradicate this 'invader' in the name of public health run the risk of also catastrophically reducing biodiversity.

### **Case 4. Migrant Oysters on the West Coast of Sweden**



These molluscs, imported from Pacific Ocean to aquafarms in Europe,

escaped these facilities and hitchhiked on warming sea-currents to the Western shores of Sweden. Accused of outcompeting local species and being a nuisance to the leisure industry, they are also a potential new marine nutrient.

### **Case 5. Runaway Mink in the Stockholm Archipelago**



Mink was first brought to Sweden from North America for the com-

mercial exploitation of their fur in the 1920s, before they absconded from captivity or were released by people. Mink now threaten the diversity of several native species, particularly birds, in the Swedish archipelago.