



The Galapagos

The eradication of red quinine

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The Galapagos are famous for their reptiles and birds. But much of the islands flora is equally interesting. And it's just as vulnerable to the impacts of humans.

Over the last centuries, almost 500 species of plant have been imported into the Galapagos, some for agriculture, some for gardens and some by accident.

Like the wild goats who compete with indigenous tortoises for food, so these newcomers compete with local plants for sunlight, soil and water.

Santa Cruz for example is home to a unique species of plant called 'Miconia', which is only found on one other island. Today it is under threat from the Red Quinine Tree. First brought on to the islands in the late 1940's. The Red Quinine tree is very hardy, and it reproduces so rapidly, that they were worried that it might wipe out the whole of the Miconia zone.

Today the National Park Service are actively engaged in a programme to eradicate Red Quinine. Injecting any seed bearing trees with cartridges filled with herbicide.

It's expensive, time consuming work. And there are many trees to kill. But scientists are optimistic that they may eventually eradicate the most damage newcomers.