



## Fact sheet: Biological Invasion

White ants arrived in the 1840s.

People have brought plants and animals to St Helena that has changed the island forever. Some have become competitors and predators that upset the natural balance. Over 60% of the island is now covered by eroded rock and introduced plant species.

The first sailors left behind animals and plants to provide fresh supplies for their journeys. Goats flourished and devastated the island's native plants for hundreds years. Rats from ships quickly became a major problem, particularly for the island's birds.

This pattern continued through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Flax was introduced and has crowded out endemic trees. White ants arrived in the 1840s and their initial attack reduced Jamestown to near ruin. These insatiable pests continue to threaten anything made of wood.

Other introduced pests, such as the fruit fly and white weed, have greatly reduced the island's agricultural potential.

Some introduced species have had less disastrous effect. Potatoes, yams and vegetables brought here by early settlers continue to feed saints today. Mynah birds from India and doves and canaries from the East Indies still bring pleasure with their colour and song.