

## PREDICTING THE POTENTIAL SPREAD OF *ELAEAGNUS ANGUSTIFOLIA* L. IN THE FOREST-STEPPE ECOSYSTEMS OF UKRAINE

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The expansion of *Elaeagnus angustifolia* L. in Ukraine has countrywide character. Still, there are certain regions, which are not occupied by this species, but are surrounded by its populations or single individuals. Thus, there was created a map with distribution of this species within the northern and western boundaries of its area in order to determine the "white spots" which can be occupied.

To reveal the potential to grow and invade new territories there were chosen five populations of *E. angustifolia* within the northern and western boundaries. They were conducted an age analysis of each population, dividing the plant groups into 8 age stages: juvenile, immature, virginile, generative (g1, g2, g3), subsenile, and senile. Basing on the contribution of each stage to the population, there were developed conclusions about the population stability, regression or extension.

Results indicated that northern populations are old and regressive; therefore, they have less potential to spread. The forest zone is located next to the northern boundaries of *E. angustifolia* area, thus this species has little danger to the northern ecosystems. The western populations were young, numerous, and extensive. Moreover, the neighbouring Precarpathian area includes only several separated individuals of *E. angustifolia*. Thus, it indicates that the potential of western populations to occupy new territories is high, and they could be a serious threat to the Precarpathian ecosystems.

KEYWORDS: *ELAEAGNUS ANGUSTIFOLIA*, PRECARPATHIAN, INVASIVE SPECIES, PREDICTION, AGE ANALYSIS, FOREST-STEPPE ECOSYSTEMS