

Invasive Species



TWF RE

Invasive Species

What is an invasive species?

An invasive species is any living organism: bacteria, fungus, plant or animal; that is NOT originally from a specific location and is thought to cause it harm. This may not appear to be a serious problem, but invasive species are considered to be one of the most severe threats to wildlife, human health and economies around the world, costing billions of dollars each year.

What makes a species invasive?

Invasive species are biological invaders that have a rapid and aggressive rate of growth and reproduction and spread soon after introduction, potentially causing damage. It's generally thought that invasive species need to come from distant places such as other countries or continents, but in actuality, any distance that separates one ecosystem from another can be sufficient. A fish originally from a big lake can be considered an invasive species in a nearby smaller one because it competes with species of fish that are native to that area. Generally speaking, invasive species lack any natural predators, competitors and/or pathogens that would normally regulate their population. These lack of restrictions allow them to prosper and grow at the expense of native species and the ecosystem.

How does an invasive species spread?

Most invasive species are spread unintentionally as a consequence of human activities. The increasing global movement of people and exportation of products, facilitate the movement of species around the world quickly in shipments of food, household goods, animal and plant products, containers, packaging materials and in/on the human body. Here is lists of examples of how invasive species spread:



- ✓ Aquatic Transportation: Ships can carry aquatic organisms in their ballast water.
- ✓ Wood made products: insects can hide in small compartments found in wood.
- ✓ Decorative plants: Some plants can escape into the wild and become invasive.
- ✓ Pet trade and transportation: Some invasive species are intentionally or accidentally released pets.

Reading Sample



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Examples of the most destructive invasive species

Microorganisms:

- Avian Malaria: Avian malaria was introduced to Hawaii in exotic birds kept by settlers, and the vector southern house mosquito in water barrels of a sailing ship in 1826. It's introduction caused a major drop in the populations of native birds that had no resistance to avian malaria.

Plants:

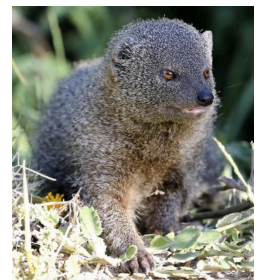
Ecobottle Sample



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Animals:

- The Small Asian Mongoose: Was introduced to Hawaii in the 1880s as a means of controlling the rat population. Instead, the mongoose decided to eat the local birds and turtles and due to their rapid breeding, their population soared. Currently they cause about \$50 million dollars in damages per year.
- Western Mosquito Fish: Native to the fresh waters of the Eastern and Southern United States, It has become a pest in many waterways around the world, following the initial introductions in early last century as a biological control for mosquitoes. Nowadays, it is not considered more effective than native predators of mosquitoes, but instead, this highly predatory fish eats the eggs



of economically desirable fish and preys on and endangers rare indigenous fish and invertebrate species.

Ecobottle Sample



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- The Long-Tailed Possum: In order to establish the fur trade, possums were introduced to New Zealand in 1837. Due to the island's lush vegetation and lack of predators, they thrived. Currently, over the course of one night, the estimated 35 million long-tailed possums will consume 12,000 tons of vegetation making them New Zealand's most despised mammal.

Reading Comprehension Questions:

1. What is an invasive species?
2. What
3. How has increased global travel boosted the spread of certain species?
4. How
5. Think of an example of how infectious agents (viruses, bacteria, etc.) could be introduced by an invasive species and why these agents could be so dangerous to the native population.
6. Out
7. Biological control
8. How did the introduction of the Small Asian Mongoose backfire?
9. Why
10. Summarize
11. Using your device, research an invasive species currently affecting your area. Describe how it arrived, what damage it causes and what is currently being done to reduce its population.

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