

## Identifying Invasive Species

Age: Middle School to High School

### Objective

- To teach children what invasive species are and why they are damaging to ecosystems
- To identify some invasive species local to your area

### Background Lesson

Invasive species, also known as non-native or exotic species, are flora and fauna that have been transported to areas that they did not originally belong to. In Ontario, zebra mussels, round goby and purple loosestrife are a few examples of these invasive species. Plants and animals do move over great distances to populate new areas, however, natural land barriers prevent wide movements to allow complete distribution across the world. Humans have changed the natural balance of these barriers. Global movement of humans has allowed organisms and seeds to be transported in ship's ballast water, on clothing and in cars as we move large distances. Humans in some cases have introduced new species on purpose because an exotic species has been found attractive. Purple loosestrife is an example of this. It was brought over from Europe in the 1800's for use in landscaping.

### The Activity

#### Materials

Writing materials, field guides or watch cards ([invadingspecies.com](http://invadingspecies.com) has all kinds of free resources that can be downloaded or ordered)

#### Plan of Attack

1. Take a walk in a wooded area or stream. A local conservation area may be a good place to start. Collect samples for closer inspection of local invasive species found in your community. Use local resources such as field guides that can be found in your local library, news papers or check websites for relevant information on invasive plants and animals in your area. A really good website to reference is the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters sponsored website [invadingspecies.com](http://invadingspecies.com). This website can be used before the field work for students to research, or there is access to resource materials that are free of charge that students can take into the field for reference.
2. When in the field, students should work in small groups to identify as many invasive species as they can and record their findings.

3. The work to be done once back in the classroom, is to write a report on an invasive species that they discovered in the field. Their reports should look at questions such as how might their invasive species have been transported to that area and what positive and negative impacts the species has had on the environment. The major focus of this exercise is to determine what authorities are doing to combat invasive species and how your students can become involved in helping with control efforts.

4. With the research reports finished, students should be encouraged to share what they have found and learned with each other, and about different ways they can participate in controlling invading invasive species.

One Fish at a Time