

Keep Texas Wild



ALIEN INVADERS!

Some plants and animals don't belong in our natural areas.

» DAMAGE DOERS

WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF SOME POLAR BEARS got loose in Texas? Sounds silly, but they wouldn't live long unless we rounded them up and sent them back to the North Pole. But what if ants from South America crawled off a cargo ship along the Texas coast and easily found what they needed to survive? Year after year, they would reproduce and multiply. They might even attack Texas ants and reduce their numbers, kill baby animals of all kinds and sting humans repeatedly. Believe it or not, all that has actually happened. Today, biologists list the imported red fire ant among the state's many "invasive" animals and plants. As you'll learn, invasives hurt our natural world so we need to do what we can to keep them out of Texas!

PHOTO © DERRICK HAMRICK / ROLFENPCOM

Mediterranean gecko

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» MOST UNWANTED ANIMALS



THE COSTS to prevent, monitor and control invasives across the U.S. are \$13 billion a year!

FERAL HOG



NUTRIA



EUROPEAN STARLING



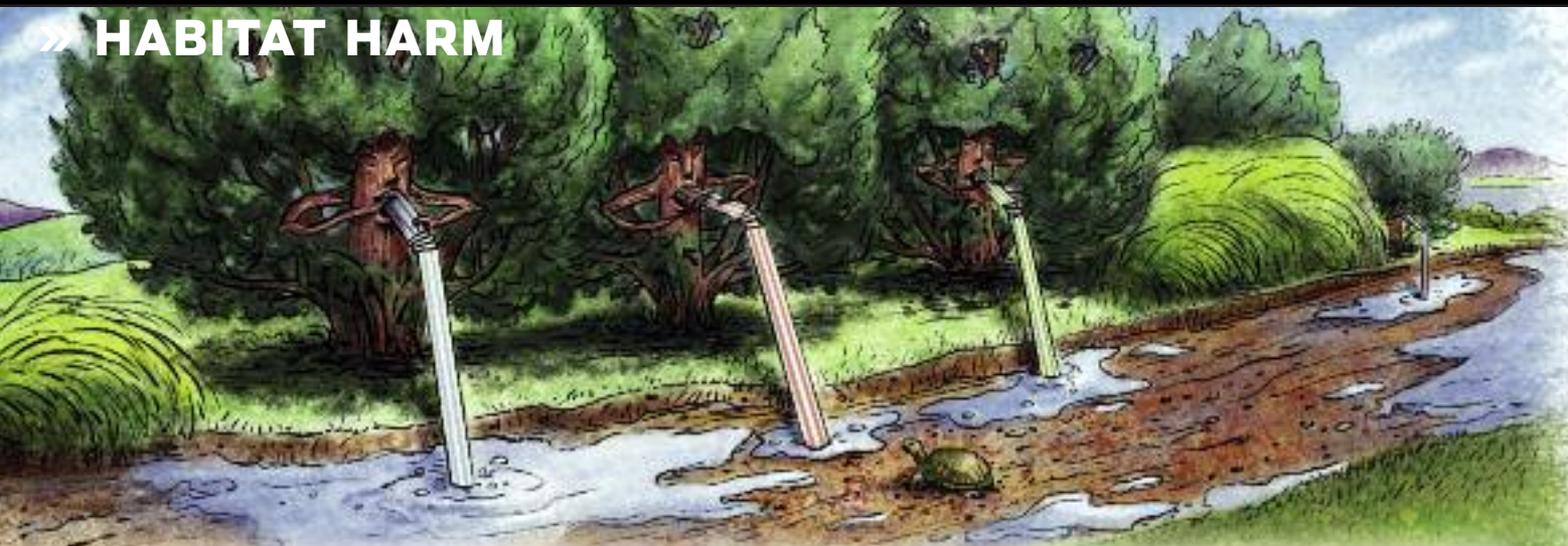
RED IMPORTED FIRE ANT



AFRICANIZED HONEYBEE

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» HABITAT HARM



ALONG A RIVER OR IN THE DESERT, certain insects, birds, reptiles and other animals live among the grasses, plants and trees. Together, those plants and animals are considered to be “native” because they’ve lived in the same place long before humans arrived. But what happens if an invasive plant takes root? In West Texas after 1900, people planted a European tree called

saltcedar along the Rio Grande River. They hoped the trees would keep their riverbanks from washing away. Instead, the saltcedars — which thrived and gradually grew out of control — used so much water from the river that, in later years, it went dry in places. Their thick branches also blocked the sun, killing native plants that grew nearby. Now, no one likes saltcedar!

»MOST UNWANTED PLANTS

Did you know?

HOW MANY INVASIVES ARE IN TEXAS?

- 79 plants (includes 12 aquatic/wetland plants)
- 10 mammals
- 4 birds
- 7 fishes
- 11 insects
- 11 mollusks and crustaceans

WATER HYACINTH

HYDRILLA © DERRICK HAMRICK / ROIFNP.COM

PHOTO © JAMES H. MILLER / USDA FOREST SERVICE

CHINESE TALLOW

PHOTO BY TPWD

GIANT SALVINIA

PHOTO © STEVE DEWEY, UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

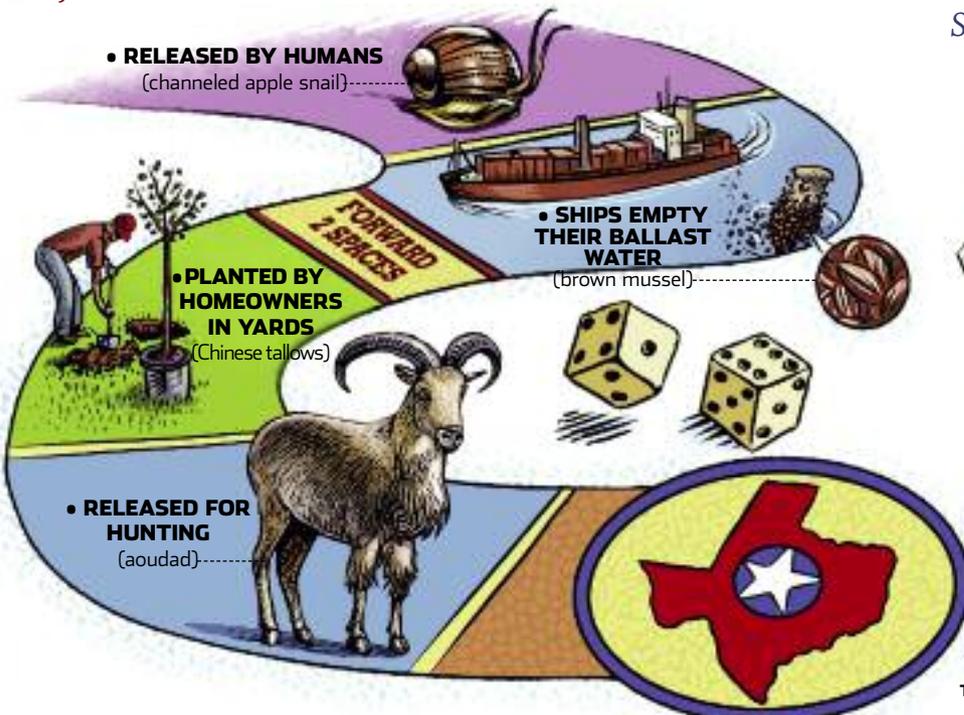
SALT CEDAR (IN BLOOM)

PHOTO BY TPWD

HYDRILLA

»HOW DO INVASIVES GET TO TEXAS?

JUST A FEW WAYS...



»ACTION PLAN

WHAT'S BEING DONE TO STOP INVASIVES?

- * **SOME PLANTS AND ANIMALS ARE LEGALLY BANNED.**
- * **INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS.**
- * **EXPERTS ARE RESEARCHING THE PROBLEMS.**

ILLUSTRATION BY CHET PHILLIPS



Spike's Activity Page



>> WILD MATH



IN EAST TEXAS, many people are working hard to remove an invasive aquatic plant called giant salvinia from Caddo Lake. If not controlled soon, this floating fern from South America could cover the entire lake and endanger the lake's native fish, birds and wildlife. Imagine that you're a biologist who wants to know how long it will take giant salvinia to fill the lake. The first week, you see 2 acres of the plant. Each week, the area doubles. So, the second week, there are 4 acres (2 X 2). How many acres of giant salvinia will there be in Week 3? Week 4? How far can you go? Can you figure out how many weeks it will take to fill a 10,000-acre lake?

>> ECO EXPERTS

AFTER LEARNING HOW HURTFUL INVASIVE PLANTS CAN BE, several Austin 10th graders decided to take action in 2006. Instead of sleeping late or playing video games on a Saturday, they put on heavy gloves and removed as much bamboo as they could from Bright Leaf Preserve, a 200-acre natural area not far from downtown Austin. A year or so later, the concerned teens – led by 17-year-old Jordan Sessler – formed their own organization called EcoTexas as a way to continue their fight against invasives in Texas. “Today, after lots of hard work at Bright Leaf, we’ve restored three acres of native forest,” says Sessler, who’s now a student at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. “By this year, we will also finish removing all invasive plants on 60 acres at Zilker Preserve. Plus, we’ve cleared invasives at dozens of other parks, too.” As if all that’s not enough, EcoTexas volunteers work to stop the spread of invasive plants by educating people. “For instance, 85 percent of invasive plants are planted by people in their yards,” Jordan explains. “If we can just keep getting the word out, then hopefully they’ll buy native Texas plants instead. We have to protect our natural environment for the sake of our children and grandchildren.”

PHOTOS COURTESY ECOTEXAS

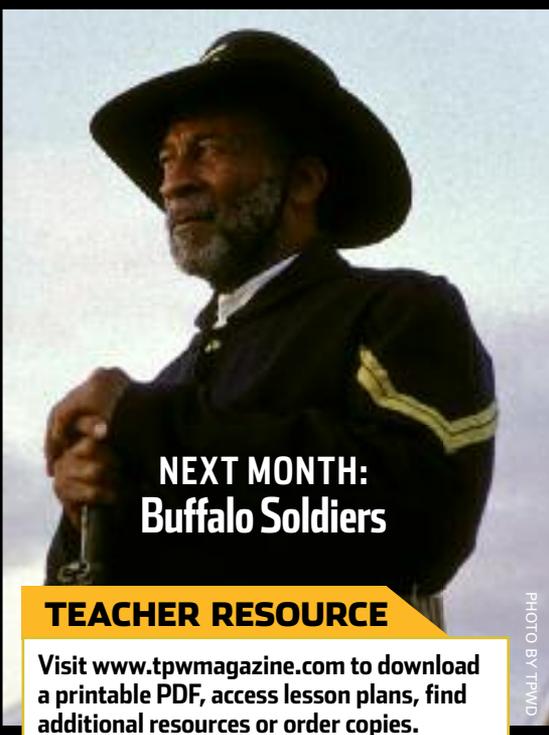


>> KEEPING IT WILD

NOT ALL NON-NATIVE PLANTS are invasive. For instance, your parents may grow crape myrtles for their colorful blooms. Although they're not Texas natives, those crape myrtles aren't invasive because they just won't grow well outside a tended yard. However, you may have some invasive plants in your yard. Look to see if you any of these common ones. If you do, ask your parents about replacing them with the suggested Texas natives.

 Nandina	»»	 Turk's cap
 Chinese tallow	»»	 Bigtooth maple
 Chinaberry	»»	 Mexican plum
 Pyracantha	»»	 Evergreen sumac
INVASIVE		NATIVES

NANDINA © CHRIS EVANS; RIVER TO RIVER CWMA; CHINESE TALLOW © JAMES H. MILLER; USDARS; CHINABERRY ©



**NEXT MONTH:
Buffalo Soldiers**

TEACHER RESOURCE

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