

THE INVADERS OF THE UNITED STATES

America is under attack by invasive species—animals and plants from other places that cause big problems. Here's a look at some of the most damaging—and what experts are doing to stop them.

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Wicked Weed

In the 1890s, seeds of a plant called spotted knapweed were accidentally brought to the U.S. The weed has since spread across Montana and other states. It takes over land where animals eat grass. Experts use chemicals, mowers, and knapweed-eating bugs to get rid of it.

Sneaky Bug

The Asian citrus psyllid [SIH-lid] was first brought to the U.S. in the 1990s. It's now found in several states. The insect spreads a disease that damages **citrus** trees and their fruits. In California, scientists have controlled the bug by closing off infested areas.

Vicious Mongooses

These weasel-like animals were brought to Hawaii in 1883. People hoped that they'd eat another invasive species—rats. The mongooses began gobbling up local birds instead. Traps and poison are used to control the animals.

Destructive Wild Pigs

European settlers first brought pigs to America in the 1500s. The pigs have since run wild, especially in Texas. They eat crops. They kill farm animals. They spread diseases. Scientists are trying to bring down their numbers by trapping and hunting them.

Pesky Birds

In 1890, European starlings were let loose in New York City on purpose. Today, there are 200 million of these birds. They destroy crops. They threaten other birds. They pose a danger to airplanes. Scientists have tried using poison and fireworks to control the starlings.

Hungry Fish

In the 1970s, Asian carp were brought to the U.S. to eat pesky water plants. The carp are now starving out local fish in the Mississippi River. Scientists are using barriers to block them from spreading.

Giant Snakes

Burmese pythons were first brought to the U.S. as pets in the 1990s. Now, they're gobbling up animals in Florida's **wetlands**. Scientists are working to catch as many of the snakes as possible.

WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?

Why are invasive species a problem? Why is it important to try to control them? Be sure to use details from the article and the map in your answer. Mention the invasive species on the map that's closest to where you live.

NOTE: ALASKA AND HAWAII ARE NOT PLACED IN THEIR ACTUAL GEOGRAPHIC POSITIONS.