

Invasive Species Super Sleuth

In the late 1860's, it seemed like a good idea: Let's start a silk industry in the United States! Silk is a valuable cloth, in demand all over the world. And insects do most of the work! All we need to do is import some Gypsy moths from France, then sit back and wait for the money to start rolling in!

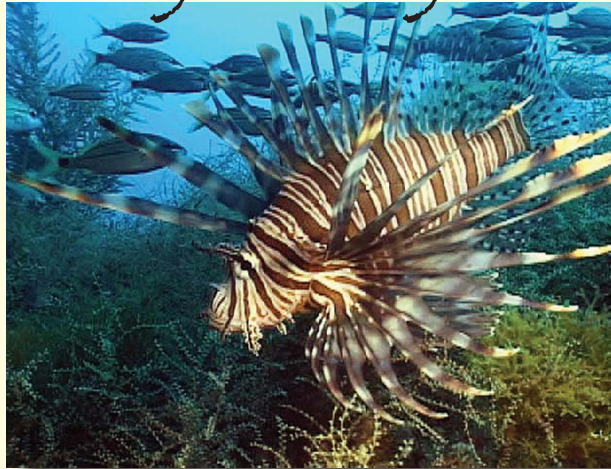
So, the moths were imported. Unfortunately, they escaped. Today, Gypsy moths are a major threat to U.S. forests.

Gypsy moths are one example of invasive species, and there are many more. About 50,000 alien species are already in the U.S. What's the difference between "alien" and "invasive?" An alien species is not native to a particular ecosystem. If an alien species causes economic and/or environmental harm or threatens human health, then it is called invasive.

What's the big deal? Invasive species can seriously threaten native species and entire ecosystems. Plus, the costs of environmental damage, economic losses, and efforts to control invasive species average \$138 billion per year—more than the cost of all other natural disasters combined.

What can be done? NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science are developing a group of experts that can help recognize alien species, hopefully before they become invasive. NOAA's National Sea Grant Office and state fish and wildlife agencies are partnering with the pet industry in the Habitattitude™ Campaign, which is about educating consumers about possible environmental consequences of aquarium and water garden hobbies, and how to be a responsible hobbyist. In addition, NOAA's Community-Based Restoration Program works with community groups to remove invasive plants as part of projects to repair damaged coastal habitats.

Here's how to learn a lot about aquatic invaders and have fun at the same time!



Lionfish are venomous fish from Indian and western Pacific oceans that have invaded East Coast waters Courtesy NOAA.

What You Will Need

Computer with CD-ROM drive or internet access

How to Do It

There are two ways to play Nab the Aquatic Invader! You may have received the game on a CD that came with this book. If you have the CD, load it into your computer and follow the directions. The other way to play is to use the online version of the game on the Sea Grant Nonindigenous Species Site (SGNIS) at <http://sgnis.org/kids/>.

Want to Do More?

1. Tell your teacher about the CD or the Sea Grant Nonindigenous Species Site. Maybe your whole class will get to play the game!
2. Check out the "Kids' Secret Headquarters" page (<http://www.sgnis.org/kids/kidsheadquarters.html>) for more aquatic invader activities.
3. You can find a LOT more information about invasive species on the Sea Grant Nonindigenous Species Site main page, <http://www.sgnis.org/>.

What You Will Do

Play a game called "Nab the Aquatic Invader!"

You will be a private investigator working with other detectives to catch suspected invaders including Louie "Sucker Mouth" Sea Lamprey, Zeke "The Prowler" Zebra Mussel, Purple "Lucky" Loosestrife, and Rocco "Ravenous" Ruffe.