



Help Protect Birds from Invasive Species in a Changing Climate

Birds make choices every day—from finding food to taking shelter. Their choices are finely honed for the native plant habitats that sustain them. But in a changing climate, their options become fewer. When invasive plants and animals take over native habitats, birds lose nesting habitat, cover, and insects to eat. Unfortunately, climate change tends to favor the rapid spread of invasive species that threaten ecosystems. The fast pace of change means we have to act quickly, too. Together we can detect invaders, prevent their spread, and create native plant havens for birds.

What is an invasive species?

A non-native plant, animal, or pathogen that harms the environment, economy, or human health.

How many invasive species now inhabit the U.S.?

More than 4,300 non-native species.

Why are invasive species harmful?

Without natural predators, invading plants and animals can spread unchecked, reducing or eliminating



Left: Planting an Aromatic Aster, a natural deer repellent. Above: Scarlet Tanager

native species and disrupting ecosystems.

Why is biological diversity important?

We depend on a diversity of other species to give us clean water, oxygen, topsoil, cures for diseases, and solutions to living sustainably.

How are birds, invasive species, and climate change all connected?

Many kinds of invading plants and animals can expand their ranges under

changing climates or tolerate extremes in climate. In contrast, most bird species require specific native plant habitats for survival. They rely on precise timing of flower blooms, insect hatches, and berry ripening for migration, nest building, egg laying, and more. As climate change upsets habitats and timing, invasive species move in to further weaken fraying ecosystems.



From top to bottom: Emerald Ash Borer Beetle, Bush Honeysuckle, Feral Swine, Phragmites

Ohio's Invasive Plants and Animals: Birders to the Rescue!

Meet a few contenders for Ohio's most-wanted list. As climate change kicks in, many invaders are expanding their ranges or benefiting from extremes of drought, flood, and heat that are tough for native species to handle. Learn about invasive species and spread the word to other birders. Every native plant you add and every invasive plant you pull makes a difference.

Emerald Ash Borer

The beetle larvae have killed tens of millions of Ohio's ash trees, and they threaten all of North America's native ashes. A single ash tree supports 150 kinds of moth and butterfly caterpillars that feed songbird nestlings. **Origin:** Asia. Likely transported in wood packing materials made of ash in 2002. Found in Ohio in 2003. **Control:** Early detection is the best option. Consult experts.

Bush Honeysuckle

The three species collectively called "bush" honeysuckle put out leaves earlier than native varieties, attracting songbirds to nest there in higher densities and inviting predators. The berries lack nutrients birds require for migration. The denser shrub layer also shades out native plants. **Origin:** Introduced in the 1800s from Eurasia. **Control:** Hand remove seedlings or small plants. Apply systemic herbicides. Prescribed burning can work in open habitats.

Feral Swine

In Ohio, feral swine directly harm birds by eating eggs and nestlings. Rooting for food disturbs the ground and attracts invasive plants like garlic mustard and bush honeysuckle. **Origin:** Introduced as livestock in the U.S. in 1539. In Ohio, escaped from farms and hunting preserves, and were illegally released for hunting. First reported in 1980s. **Control:** Ohio's state wildlife agency and USDA's Wildlife Services team up for a multi-prong eradication program where feasible.

Phragmites

The invasive subspecies of this reed forms an impenetrable wall in and around wetlands, preventing many birds from entering the waters, nesting, and feeding. Phragmites eliminates habitat diversity and is a severe problem in Ohio. **Origin:** The invasive subspecies was introduced in eastern U.S. in the late 1700s, likely from ships. **Control:** For early invasions, remove by hand. If established with roots, apply systemic herbicides in strict accord with label specifications.

How to Help

At Home:

- Learn to identify invasive plants.
- Remove invasive plants from your yard and add native plants that support bird life.
- Encourage your local nursery to carry native plants instead of invasives.
- Share your bird-friendly yard ideas with neighbors. Teach them how to identify and control invasive plants.
- Keep cats indoors where they are safe and cannot kill birds.

Away from Home:

- Join invasive plant pulls in your community.
- Clean your shoes and socks after hikes and put hitchhiking seeds in the trash.
- Wash your boat after use to prevent aquatic invaders from spreading to other waterways.
- Choose weed-free hay for horse trips.
- Don't pack a pest when traveling. Invasive insects can hide in fruits, vegetables, on pets, and even on firewood.
- Never release aquarium fish and plants, live bait, or exotic pets into the wild.