

INVASIVE HITCHHIKERS

Fact Sheet # 5

What Birders Need To Know!



Invasive species are taking over parks and natural areas throughout Pennsylvania, making birding difficult and damaging valuable habitat. Luckily birders can play a critical role in slowing the spread of invasives.

“Invasive species” are non-native plants, animals, and pathogens that can cause harm to the economy, environment, and human health.

Invasive plants tend to grow quickly and thickly, potentially blocking trails.

This makes it more difficult for people to bird watch and enjoy other recreational opportunities.

Mile-a-minute, for example, is a vine that can grow up to a foot per day! It can quickly make trails impassable with its painful spines (*see photo below*).

Invasive species are also a concern to birders because they can ruin the beauty of Pennsylvania landscapes and lower biodiversity (the variety of living things in an area).

We need biodiversity to maintain healthy habitats. Plus it’s simply more interesting and exciting to bird watch in a landscape full of different shrubs, trees, flowers, and grasses, rather than through a boring field of the same invasive plant. But that is exactly what could happen if an invasive species appears... all other species, including birds and the insects they eat, may be chased out!



Make A Difference!

Now that you know why invasive species are a concern, what can you do to help minimize their spread? Luckily there are many small, easy steps you can take to keep invasives in check.

- Know how to identify some of the more common invasive species in your area, so you can avoid walking through them. To learn more, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm
- Monitor nest boxes for invasive starlings and house sparrows.
- Stick to designated trails instead of blazing your own.
- Choose native plants to attract birds to your yard.
- Clean off clothing, shoes and equipment before going to a new area. Bag any dirt, seeds and other plant parts and dispose of this in the trash.
- Volunteer to help prevent and control invasive species. Contact your local state park or forest office, conservation district, watershed group or birding club to get involved.

