

What Wildlife Watchers Need to Know!

Invasive species are taking over parks and natural areas throughout Pennsylvania, making wildlife watching difficult and damaging valuable habitat. Luckily wildlife watchers 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 or human health.

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

more difficult for people to watch wildlife and enjoy the outdoors.

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 wildlife watchers 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 watch wildlife in a landscape full of different shrubs, trees, flowers, and grasses, rather than in a boring field of the same invasive plant. But that is exactly what could happen if an invasive species appears... all other species 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 invasives in your area, so you can avoid walking through them. Visit <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm> to learn more.
- To attract wildlife to your yard, choose from a variety of native plants.
- To avoid disturbing soil, which can spread invasives, stick to designated trails instead of blazing your own.
- Clean off clothing, shoes, and equipment before leaving an area. Bag any dirt, seeds, and other plant parts and properly 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 wildlife club to get involved.

