

The Inside Story on Protecting Nature in

# Oregon



Nature Conservancy volunteers scan the north central Oregon prairie at Boardman Grasslands, searching for and removing non-native, invasive knapweed. Non-indigenous species threaten nearly half of the 958 at-risk or endangered plants and animals in Oregon. © Adam Bacher

## Invasive species step into the limelight

*Oregon is beset with invasive species. To reverse a disturbing trend, the Conservancy and partners are launching a statewide awareness and action campaign.*

Several years ago, Mandy Tu strolled along the shores of Lake Erie in Ohio. It wasn't on her itinerary, but she went there anyway to see zebra mussels, a non-native bivalve notorious for ransacking North American waterways. It was worse than she thought: shells, a couple inches thick, blanketed the sands.

The zebra mussels aren't in Oregon – yet. But, Tu warns, they have been spied on boat trailers passing through the state. If they gain a foothold, the toll could be enormous.

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# Invasive species in the limelight ...



Mandy Tu, invasive species ecologist for The Nature Conservancy, reacts to overwhelming numbers of zebra mussels clogging the shores of Lake Erie in Ohio. Though not in Oregon yet, this non-native bivalve infamous for devastating habitats, other animals and man-made structures, epitomizes the grave threat posed by invasive species to our lands, waters, wildlife and economy. © TNC

(continued from p. 1)

Tu, invasive species ecologist for The Nature Conservancy, isn't the only one rattled by the threat of invasives. Recently Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB), the Oregon Invasive Species Council, SOLV, the Conservancy and others have partnered in "Stop the Invasion," an Oregon invasive species awareness and action campaign set to launch in April.

Scientists have long grumbled that invasive species – non-native flora and fauna that displace our native plants and animals – endanger forests, grasslands, streams, estuaries and our economy.

And the statistics are staggering. Non-indigenous species threaten nearly half of the 958 at-risk or endangered plants and animals in Oregon. And just 21 invasive weeds cause \$83 million dollars of damage annually to Oregon agriculture.

But it wasn't the figures, necessarily, that convinced Jeff Douglas to cook up the partnership. Douglas, station manager for OPB, noticed that many stories on "Oregon Field Guide," OPB's popular outdoor and nature program, were about invasive species. He percolated the idea to create a documentary on the impacts of invasives in Oregon. But not just a documentary.

As conceived by Douglas, the program would integrate a statewide effort to expand awareness and would include a call to action. "The Silent Invasion," OPB's documentary, premieres April 22 and will spearhead an education and action campaign.

"Normally, the airing of a program is the end of a project," Douglas said. "But in this case, the airing of the program is the beginning of the project. Then it will mostly be up to our partners to do the heavy lifting to pull this thing off."

Partners including the Conservancy are developing new resources. "GardenSmart Oregon," a booklet recommending alternatives to invasive plants for the yard and garden, will be available in April.

On the ground, the Conservancy has been tracking and controlling invasive species for years. A new approach is the Early Detection and Rapid Response program, which trains local residents and land managers to identify and report new invasions before they become established – essentially getting ahead of the curve.

Other partners are in the act. SOLV is mobilizing volunteers to combat invasives statewide. The

## Easy things YOU can do to prevent invasions ...

- ▶ Make sure you are using only non-invasive plants in your garden!
- ▶ Clean your boat thoroughly before, after and between launches!
- ▶ Clean your boots before and after hiking!
- ▶ Don't pack a pest when traveling!
- ▶ Don't release aquarium fish and plants, bait or other animals into the wild!
- ▶ Volunteer at your local natural area to remove invasive species. Help educate others about invasives.



Oregon Invasives Species Council is leading a state-side assessment of resources, capacity and unmet needs to address the problem (see interview, page 3). The Salem Statesman Journal newspaper is publishing a monthly series on invasives and developing a related Web site and curricula for school children. All to reduce the footprint of invasives in Oregon and save our state's extraordinary natural heritage.

Tu is encouraged. "It's very exciting," she said. "People can take steps to do things at big and small scales, and it all benefits biodiversity and habitats."

Small-scale work isn't too small for Douglas. Several years ago, he began to recognize the problem in his own neighborhood. He noticed a natural area near Fanno Creek where 50 percent of the plants didn't belong. He called the city for help, but began working to rectify the problem – alone. Since then, Douglas has been clearing English ivy, blackberry and other invasives. When the weather's nice, he's out there working several times a week.

It's easy for anyone to make an impact, he said. Pull ivy. Clean the bottom of your boat. Shake the seeds off your hiking boots. "[Invasive species] is an issue, even more than with global warming," he said, "where the individual can make a big difference."

## Want to know more?

- ▶ **Watch** "The Silent Invasion," an OPB documentary premiering on Tuesday, April 22 at 8:00 p.m.



- ▶ **Go to** [nature.org/oregon](http://nature.org/oregon) for more information, tips and volunteer opportunities
- ▶ **Go to** [nature.org/initiatives/invasivespecies/](http://nature.org/initiatives/invasivespecies/) for more information and links



- ▶ **Look for** the free "GardenSmart Oregon" book in garden stores this spring

# Q&A with Steve Buttrick, the Conservancy's science and planning director

*Oregon Invasive Species Council's collaborative partnerships are key to stopping the invasion*

## Can you tell us about the Oregon Invasive Species Council?

The council was created by our state legislature eight years ago. Its main functions are: to create and publicize a system for reporting invasive species; to increase awareness of the problem and ways to address it; to develop a statewide plan of action; and to administer funds for eradication, prevention and education projects.

## Who is on the council?

There are five ex-officio members who represent agencies with lead roles in invasive species management: the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Portland State University, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Forestry, and Oregon Sea Grant. In addition, there are eight appointed members from local governments, tribes, industry and other groups with an interest in invasive species. I'm currently in my second term of serving on the council for The Nature Conservancy.

## What is the council doing now?

The council is uniquely positioned to create a coordinated and cost-effective approach to preventing

and containing invasive plants and animals across Oregon. We've been raising funds to hire a council coordinator and to support a statewide assessment of the problem. This analysis of laws, authorities and activities in Oregon will evaluate roles and responsibilities, assess current levels of effort, identify gaps and unmet needs, and put a price tag on what it's going to take to effectively address this threat to Oregon's lands and waters.

## What happens after the assessment?

The council will use the results to build a detailed action plan – Oregon's first blueprint for how to slow or halt the spread of invasives. Not everyone gets excited about plans, but I am. This one will really make a difference. Among other things, it will expand education and outreach strategies to increase public awareness and get more people involved in solving the problem.

## How can we get involved now?

The council welcomes public attendance and input at meetings. For meeting schedules and agendas, visit [www.oregon.gov/OISC](http://www.oregon.gov/OISC). You'll also find a detailed list of the 100 most dangerous invaders in Oregon there.

And if you spot a potential invasive species in Oregon, please call the toll-free Invasive Species Hotline at 1-866-INVADER (1-866-468-2337). You're also welcome to call this number if you have a question regarding a specific invasive pest.

## Invasives are by definition bad for the environment. In spite of that, do you have a soft spot for any of them?

Some invasives can be quite beautiful to look at, like purple loosestrife for example, but not at the expense of everything else.

## Your state tax refund can help

Remember you can help protect Oregon's ecologically important lands and waters this season by donating some or all of your state tax refund to The Nature Conservancy. Just follow the steps on the Oregon Personal Income Tax Forms and inside the instruction booklet. Your refund can be a gift to future generations. Questions? Call us at 503 802-8100. Thank you!

# Create income for today. Leave a legacy for tomorrow.



Agate Beach, Oregon © Kim Lepre/TNC

Looking for a way to ensure the natural places you treasure are protected while you take care of yourself or your family? The Nature Conservancy offers gifts that provide you with income for a period of years or for your lifetime. These gifts can be funded with cash, stock, mutual funds or real estate. Some benefits are:

**Dependable Income Stream:** Elect to receive a fixed income and, in some cases, an income that seeks to index inflation.

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**Immediate Tax Savings:** Qualify for an income tax charitable deduction.

**Advance Conservation:** Help protect our natural world for future generations.

For more information, please contact Wes Milligan, director of planned giving, at 503 802-8100 or [wmilligan@tnc.org](mailto:wmilligan@tnc.org). You can also fill out this coupon and mail it in the enclosed envelope.

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Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people.

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## The Nature Conservancy in Oregon

Member Households  
23,859

Last Great Places  
Society Members  
74

Acres protected  
494,268

Acres managed  
140,417

Preserves and cooperatively  
managed areas  
46

Coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*),  
one of several endangered species  
threatened by invasive species in Oregon

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## Last Great Places Society

We extend our deep appreciation to members of Oregon's Last Great Places Society – and to others listed here who have contributed gifts of \$10,000 or more since December, 2006 – for maintaining The Nature Conservancy's capacity to preserve the diversity of life on Earth.

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## “Weed Watchers” help slow spread of invasive species

Habitats across Oregon got a boost last year thanks to the Conservancy's first-ever “Weed Watcher” volunteer team. Armed with plant identification skills, keen eyes and patience, over 100 volunteers scanned landscapes regularly to prevent the establishment of new invasive plants by spotting and reporting them early. After volunteers reported findings – like yellow starthistle at Lower Table Rock



“Weed Watcher” coordinator Tania Siemens explains differences between invasive and native grasses at a training last year. © Mandy Tu/TNC

Preserve and garlic mustard at Camassia Natural Area – Conservancy ecologists strategized how to best respond. Lessons learned from this new approach, part of the Conservancy's Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) program, are also being shared with agency partners and others working to eradicate invasives.

“Detecting and controlling invasives early is like preventive medicine for nature,” said Tania Siemens, EDRR coordinator. “Weed Watchers’ play an integral role in addressing invasive problems before they’re insurmountable.”

For more information about how you or your team can help protect Oregon's ecologically important lands and waters – including a “Weed Watcher” training and several other opportunities to combat invasive species – please see our 2008 Volunteer Newsletter, inside.

## The Nature Conservancy



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