



# Alaska Region Invasive Species News

*February - March 2007*

## Got Weeds -- Snip 'em!

The Alaska Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plants Management (CNIPM, aka "snip'em") was formed in 2000 to "work for the statewide management of noxious and invasive plant species in Alaska." More than three dozen federal, state, local, and private organizations, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, signed an MOU committing to share their expertise, work collaboratively, and use their authorities "toward achieving sustainable, healthy ecosystems that meet the needs of society."

weed free forage and mulch certification program, a calendar of events, Alaska weed regulations, links to a variety of invasive plant brochures and K-12 educational resources, cooperative weed management areas (CWMAs), and a contact directory of CNIPM members. CWMAs are a citizen driven model for organizing effective weed management programs at the local level. For more information, visit <http://www.alaskaswcds.org/-Noxiousweeds.html>.

CNIPM operates as an informal group, with monthly information-sharing conference calls and an annual meeting, which generally rotates between Anchorage and Fairbanks.

As the CNIPM website notes, "Alaska is in a unique position to prevent a severe problem with invasive plants. Prevention is much cheaper than control."

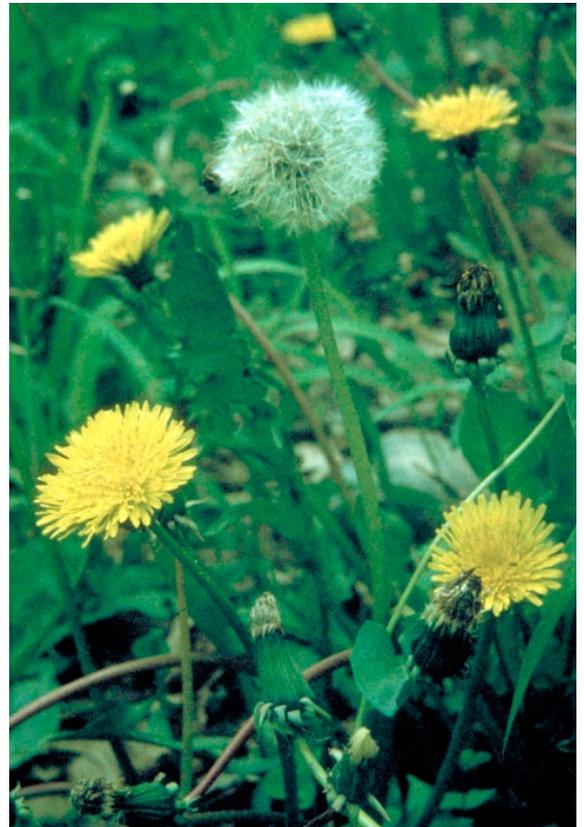


Marta Mueller/UAF-CES

*Bird vetch*

One of CNIPM's first efforts was to develop a statewide strategic plan to "heighten the awareness among all citizens" and "bring about greater statewide coordination, cooperation and action that will halt the introduction and spread" of invasive plants. The CNIPM website <http://www.uaf.edu/ces/cnipm> provides a link to this statewide plan.

Other topics covered on the CNIPM website include: invasive plant identification and basic information, Integrated Pest Management, Alaska's



Bonnie Harper-Lowe/FHA

*Common dandelion*

Identifying outbreaks early and responding to them quickly can reduce management costs. This takes coordinated efforts among many groups."

Since the number of new invasive plants found in Alaska continues to rise each year, the importance of staying in touch through CNIPM will only increase. As spring approaches (really!), I encourage you to visit the CNIPM website and when those weeds emerge -- "snip'em!"



Corlene Rose/CES

*Canada thistle*

### **Northern Pike** (*Esox lucius*)

Northern pike are native to waters north and west of the Alaska range, but are not native to southcentral Alaska where they have become invasive. Apparently first introduced to the Susitna River drainage by illegal stocking, pike have now spread into neighboring waters, lakes in the Anchorage area, and several upper Kenai Peninsula lakes.



*Northern pike eating trout*

ADFG

In their native range, pike are an important subsistence food and great fun to catch because of their aggressive strikes. The favorite target of their aggressive predation is other fish. Unfortunately, in southcentral Alaska that often means that trout and salmon are their food of choice – but they'll eat almost anything, from sticklebacks to

ducklings and even bald eagle chicks unlucky enough to fall in the water!

Concern for the impact of invasive pike on native species has led our partners at the ADFG to develop a management plan for invasive northern pike in Alaska. That plan is posted on their website and

is currently out for public comment (<http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/region2/pike>).

The consequences of not taking action to control and manage invasive pike can be substantial – ranging from halting trout stocking programs, to dramatically altering ecosystems, to severely hampering habitat restoration efforts.

It is illegal in Alaska to transport live fish without a permit. Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) asks that you report illegal stocking immediately to their local offices, or by calling Fish and Wildlife Safeguard (800-478-3377).

### **Norway Rat** (*Rattus norvegicus*)



Microsoft

Norway rats are not Norwegian! They are native to China, but have spread almost worldwide and are also known as brown rats, cellar rats, or sewer rats. Despite this rat's remarkable adaptability, Anchorage remains the largest port in the country without an established rat population.

Rats really DO flee a sinking ship. In fact, rats first arrived in Alaska by fleeing a Japanese ship that wrecked in 1780 on what is now Rat Island. Over 200 years later, the island's seabird colonies are gone but the rats remain.

Rats are a uniquely severe threat to island ecosystems. Islands make up 1.3% of U.S. land area, but account for over 50% of all U.S. species extinctions. Rats contribute to half of all U.S. bird and reptile extinctions. So, rats on islands is a particularly potent recipe for extinction. However, these same statistics make islands unique conservation opportunities. On islands, we can remove invasives and restore ecosystems. In fact, Alaska Maritime Refuge has begun experimental rat eradication trials on some Aleutian islands to restore seabirds and other native wildlife. Just imagine Rat Island without rats – we can!

A newly formed "Stop Rats Outreach Team" has developed some great outreach materials and is even supplying

"rat kits" to vessel captains to help them keep their ships rat free. Check out <http://www.stoprats.org> for lots more information on rat prevention, rats and wildlife, rats in town, and how to report a rat sighting (varies by location).

Our partners at ADFG are drafting a statewide rat management plan. Watch their website for an opportunity to comment (<http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/special/invasive/invasive.php>). As this issue went to press, new regulations were adopted by the Alaska Board of Game that will help with rat prevention (visit: <http://www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us>).

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