

# Grade Level: 6-8

## Balancing Act

### Post-lesson Activity

#### Time Allotment

30 minutes

#### Materials

Per student:

- Invasive Species Around the World worksheet
- Internet or library access
- Pencil and paper or computer

#### Advance Preparation

Make copies of the worksheet.

#### Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Be able to define the 6 vocabulary terms listed.
- Describe how an animal becomes an invasive species.
- Describe how an invasive species can impact an environment.

#### Sunshine State Standards for Late Elementary

Science:

Big Idea 17: Interdependence

- SC.7.L.17.3

Big Idea 4: Science and Society

- SC.8.N.4.1

Social Studies:

Geography Standard 3:

- SS.6.G.3.2

#### Vocabulary

Invasive species	Exotic species
Ecosystem	Food Chain
Habitat	Adapt

#### Background Information

**Invasive species** are organisms that have successfully established a colony of reproducing individuals outside of their traditional native range. Usually,

invasive species are hardy, can have a large number of offspring, are not picky eaters and have other features that allow them to **adapt** quickly to new situations. Invasive species are a major concern in Florida, where more exist than any other state in the US except Hawaii.

An organism may be beneficial in their native **habitat**, but they can have a devastating effect on habitats where they have been introduced. Their ability to adapt to a new habitat can disrupt food chains and alter entire **ecosystems**.

Sometimes invasive species are accidentally introduced into a new habitat as stowaways in cargo or equipment on cars and trucks, airplanes or boats and ships. This is how the brown rat spread around the world from Norway. Other times invaders are introduced into a habitat intentionally as a form of pest control or an unwanted pet, such as the red-ear slider.

Though Florida has a large number of invasive species, many Florida natives have become invasive in habitats around the world. Saltmarsh cordgrass, an important source of shelter and food for Florida salt marsh animals, is invasive along the Pacific coast where it destroys foraging areas for birds in mud flat habitats.

All organisms have value in their native ecosystem. They are part of natural cycles, such as food chains, and help to maintain balance. However, as an invasive species the same organism may disrupt these cycles and upset the natural balance.

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Not all non-native organisms are invasive. Those that can be found in an environment but aren't part of a breeding population are called **exotic species**. Exotic species have the potential to become invasive only if they reproduce in enough numbers to alter an ecosystem.

#### Initial Discussion

1. Define the term "invasive species" and list a few examples. Brainstorm characteristics that invasive species have in common (can adapt quickly, not picky eaters, etc).
2. Discuss how an invasive species can harm an ecosystem by disrupting a food chain. Ask the students why invasive species aren't a problem in their native habitat.

#### Hands-On Activity

3. Hand out an Invasive Species Around the World worksheet to each student.
4. Instruct the students to select 2 organisms from each box to study, or assign 4 organisms to each student.
5. Students should research their organism to find out 1) its native range, 2) where it is invasive, 3) how it became invasive, 4) a food chain involving the animal in its native range and 5) any other features that enabled the organism to become invasive.

#### Assessment

Collect Invasive Species Around the World worksheets for grading.

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#### Extension

Have students create an informative poster, flyer or pamphlet to educate the public about the danger of one invasive species they have researched and suggest a way to prevent that organism from becoming invasive in another habitat.

## Invasive Species Around the World

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Invasive species aren't only a problem in Florida, they cause problems world wide! Choose 4 invasive species from the boxes below (two from each box) to learn more about. On a separate sheet of paper, record where they come from (native range), where they are invasive and how they became invasive. Also describe any special features that helped the organisms become invasive and a food chain in which they naturally exist.

### Invasive Species from Florida

#### Animals

- Cattle Egret
- Bluegill Sunfish
- Bullfrog
- Sailfin Molly
- Eastern Gray Squirrel

#### Plants

- Prickly Pear Cactus
- Pond Apple
- Grape Caulerpa
- Saltmarsh Cordgrass



### Invasive Species from Other Places

#### Animals

- European Starling
- Feral Cat
- Canadian Goose
- Marine Toad
- Red Ear Slider

#### Plants

- Kudzu
- Water Hyacinth
- Watercress
- Brazilian Pepper