

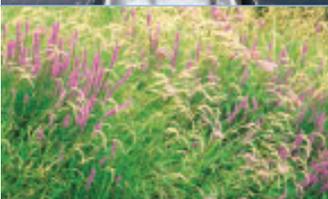
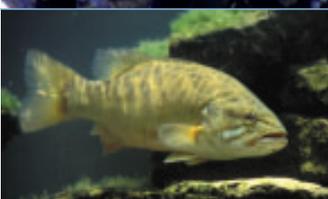
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The Introduction of Non-Native Species

Non-native species are organisms that are living outside of their natural range. The introduction of non-native species is a lot like pollution. Non-native species can harm or destroy native species because they compete with them for food and water, or hunt them for food.

There are many examples of non-native species in British Columbia. **Table 1** lists several of them.

Table 1 Non-Native Species in British Columbia

Species		Description
bullfrog		large frog that was brought to British Columbia to be raised as restaurant food but was released when there was no market for frogs legs; eats native species of frogs, ducklings, garter snakes, songbirds, and even mice
domestic cat		pet that kills large numbers of songbirds
Atlantic salmon		non-native salmon that uses up spawning space and food supplies of Pacific salmon when it escapes from fish farms
purple loosestrife		garden plant that spreads and quickly takes over moist marshy areas; crowds out native plants that provide food and shelter for local animals
red-eared slider		pet that competes with endangered native species of turtles when it is released into the wild
smallmouth bass		popular fish with fishers, who have introduced it (illegally) into lakes and rivers in many parts of British Columbia; competes for food and habitat with native fish; eats juvenile trout and coho salmon fry

It is usually humans who introduce non-native species, either accidentally or on purpose. Non-native plants and animals can arrive on boats, mountain bikes, or hiking boots. They can escape from farms, gardens, and pet collections. Some people deliberately release their pets into the ecosystem because they think their pets will be happier or because they are tired of looking after their pets. Other people knowingly commit a crime by bringing wild animals from other countries here as pets. Fortunately, many people are involved in the attempt to control the introduction and spread of non-native species.

LEARNING TIP

What is your reaction to what you have read about the introduction of non-native species? Check your understanding by comparing your reactions with a partner. Offer an opinion about what should be done about this problem.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Use an example to explain how the introduction of a non-native species can decrease biodiversity in an ecosystem.
2. Suppose that a class in your school has been studying insects. In a science kit, the students obtained some insects called stick insects, sometimes called walking sticks (**Figure 1**). Stick insects normally live in a tropical climate. They reproduce quickly and eat leaves. One day, you notice that the window near the cage is open, and the stick insects are nowhere to be seen! Should you be alarmed? Explain why or why not.

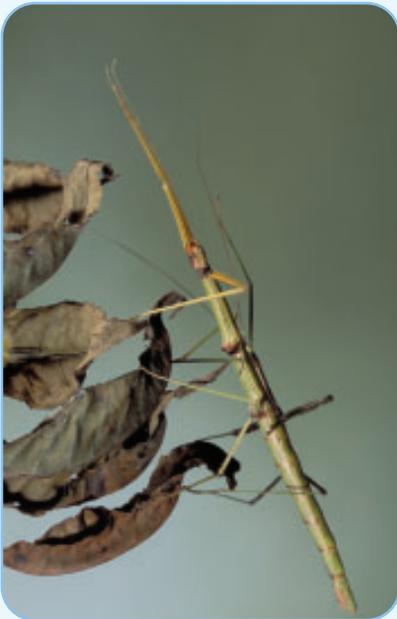


Figure 1

3. Your friend has always loved animals and has three pets: a cat, a corn snake, and a budgie. Lately, she has decided that it is cruel to keep animals in cages. She says that she plans to release all her pets into the wild where they will be free and happy. Write a letter to her, explaining all the reasons why this might not be a good idea.