



Alien Invasion

These invaders may not be from another planet, but they can still do a whole lot of damage! Discover what happens when plants or animals are transported from their native area to a new land with no competition.

Objectives: Campers will be able to:

- Understand the dangers of invasive species
- Know animals have specific habitat requirements
- Explain the effects of people moving plants or animals to a new environment

Supplies:

- Paper
- Writing utensils
- Ad Libbed Aliens print out
- Egg Carton, paint or markers, pompom (optional), googly eyes (optional)

What is an invasive species?

What happens if we move an animal or plant out of its native habitat and into a new habitat? What is the difference between introduced and invasive species? Why are invasive species a problem?

Introduced or foreign species are those that are brought by humans or animals into areas where they did not exist previously. An invasive species is one that can outcompete native species and can take over the habitat of the native species. We have invasive species here in Wisconsin but they cause problems all over the world. Certain ecosystems, like islands, are particularly vulnerable because there is smaller space to overtake, and the animals who have adapted to survive on that island are usually very unique to that space and cannot be found in other places.

Invasive species can be devastating to local populations of plants and animals, and can also impact some of the species we have at the zoo. Your challenge is to imagine that you have discovered a new island with many unique and previously undiscovered species. Scientists and visitors will soon be visiting the island to study the new species and to participate in eco-tourism. What biosecurity measures do you put in place to make sure no new species are introduced to the island?

Activity 1: See if you can identify who is a native plant and who is an invader, with this online guessing game [found here](#).

Activity 2: Fill out this fun Madlib created by WEEB and Wisconsin DNR found on the last page of this activity guide.

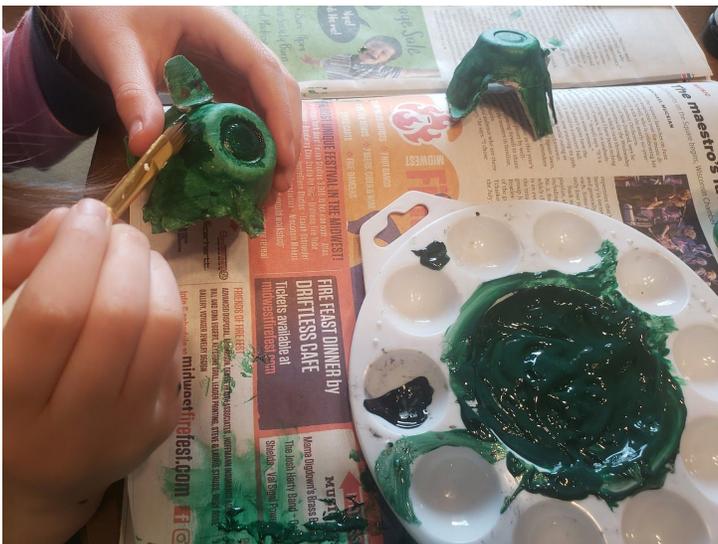
Activity 3: Tortoise Craft

Our giant Aldabra tortoises are native to a small island atoll, only 60 square miles. The plants and animals on the Aldabra islands, like those in most other island ecosystems in the world, evolved in a small, closed system. Every plant and animal in that ecosystem has a role, or niche to play, and all species are in balance with each other. When humans started sailing ships to new islands they brought with them new seeds and plants, vermin such as rats and insects, and agricultural animals or pets, such as goats or cats. These new species were introduced to the ecosystem and without any natural predators or competition from others, they were able to move in and quickly take over, outshining any native species for the available food and water resources.

Introduced rats are a big problem on the Aldabra islands where Aldabra tortoises live, like the ones found at the zoo.

Craft: Cut one section of a cardboard egg carton - get adult's permission or help with this part! Cut four turtle legs into the cardboard, then paint it green or brown or whatever color you want your tortoise to be! We also painted darker scutes, or plates, on the top of the shell.

If you have a pompom, you can glue that one for the tortoise's head. We also glued on googly eyes! If you don't have a pompom, you can just cut another piece of egg carton, paint it and glue it on.



Activity 4: Challenge time! Now that you have had a chance to think about invasive species, how will you protect your island? Create a biosecurity plan to keep your island safe from any introduced or invasive species.

Zoo Connection
Meet our amazing aldabras Rick and Tom!

Rick is our male aldabra tortoise. He is slightly larger than Tom, our female. Rick weighs about 500lbs and Tom weighs about 300 lbs. They are both in their early 40s and we expect them to live long healthy lives. Aldabras have lived to be over 140 years old, scientists still are not certain of how long they can live because we have not been studying them long enough to truly know. Come visit Tom and Rick in the Herpetarium at the zoo, and meet them up close on one of our Gentle Giants Behind the Scenes tours!



Look! It's Superplant!

Faster than a speeding _____ (noun).

More powerful than a _____ (means of transportation).

Able to _____ (verb) _____ (adjective) trees in a single bound.

Look! Up in the _____ (place)!

It's a/an _____ (animal). It's a/an _____ (means of transportation).

It's Superplant!

Yes, it's Superplant - strange visitor from _____ (place) who came to America with powers and abilities far beyond those of normal plants. Superplant - who can change the course of

_____ (adjective) forests, _____ (verb) trees with its

_____ (adjective) vines, and who, disguised as bittersweet, a/an

_____ (adjective)-mannered vine, fights the never-ending battle for

_____ (noun), _____ (noun) and the American

_____ (noun).

Truth is stranger than fiction!

Oriental bittersweet is a superplant from Asia. It goes about daily life disguised as an attractive vine with yellow and orange fruits. Homeowners and craftspeople plant it for use in landscaping, flower arrangements, and holiday wreaths. But unlike Superman, its other life is sinister! Oriental bittersweet readily escapes from cultivation and invades forested areas. It can strangle shrubs and trees. It can cover tall trees in a season, causing them to collapse from the weight of its vines. It smothers understory plants and steals the light. Superplant it is, but don't expect it to fight any battles but its own!

The Great Cover-Up

The other day, _____ (name of person) stepped out of the house for some fresh air.

_____ (same person) was tired, so he/she stretched out under a/an

_____ (adjective) tree to rest. He/She fell into a deep sleep just like that old guy in the story named _____ (teacher's name). He/She slept like a _____

(noun) for _____ (number) weeks.

When _____ (same name) awoke, he/she could not move a _____

(body part). Vines wrapped around _____'s (same name) _____

(body part) and _____ (body part). Above his/her head, _____ (same

name) saw _____ (color) flowers in the dim light. The tree was gone and so was his/her

_____ (adjective) house. Was this a dream?

Truth is stranger than fiction!

Kudzu is a vine from eastern Asia. The Japanese government introduced the plant to Americans at a Centennial Exposition in 1876. Its abundant vegetation and sweet-smelling flowers made it a popular ornamental plant. Our government promoted it as a plant to feed livestock and to help control soil erosion, but it quickly escaped and took over!

Kudzu can grow up to 12 inches in one day. It grows right up telephone poles and tree trunks. Kudzu covers the landscape and smothers every other plant in its path. Other plants simply can't grow, because kudzu grows so thick that it blocks the sun. When the native plants die, the animals that depended on them can't find the food and shelter that they need to survive. Just like in the story, kudzu is taking over the landscape!

Kudzu is moving north and has invaded Illinois. It has not reached Wisconsin -- yet! Stay tuned!

Fields of Screams

The _____ (last name) family went on a/an _____ (adjective) hike to visit a favorite field of wildflowers. When they arrived, they _____ (verb ending in "ed") in shock. The wildflowers were gone and the field was covered with _____ (color) plants. The plants were _____ (verb ending in "ing") and _____ (verb ending in "ing") with _____ (something you drink) dripping off of their leaves. When little _____ (boy's name) reached out to touch a plant, it gave him a/an _____ (adjective) _____ (noun) on his little _____ (body part). Suddenly, a _____ (part of a plant) went flying through the air and landed on big sister _____'s (girl's name) _____ (piece of clothing). The whole family turned and _____ (verb ending in "ed"). As they _____ (verb ending in "ed") down the path, the _____ (same part of plant) jumped off big sis's _____ (same article of clothing) and turned into a whole new plant. Next year, the whole field might be invaded!

Truth is stranger than fiction!

Leafy spurge is a very invasive plant from Eurasia. It can completely take over fields and pastures. The plant looks like it is dripping with milk, but the white liquid is really a toxic latex. When an animal eats a leafy spurge plant, the inside of its mouth can become covered with small, irritating scratches. If you touch it, it can cause a bad skin rash. Be extra careful not to get the milky latex in your eyes; it can even cause blindness! Leafy spurge spreads by roots and by seed. When leafy spurge fruits are ripe, they explode, sending the seeds up to 15 feet through the air!