

Mentoring & MinnAqua

Mentoring and Invasives; what an odd couple! Or is it...

by Michael Kurre, Mentor Coordinator

March 2012

[Download this article](#) [PDF](#)

What's the big deal? Well, the big deal is invasive species are sitting at the door step of our lakes, woods and in general, our ecosystem. And not only have they knocked on the door...they kicked the door in.

The list of invasives like: [zebra mussels](#), [spiny water fleas](#), [emerald ash borer](#), [Eurasian water milfoil](#), [common buckthorn](#), [earthworms](#) and [silver carp](#), are on a list that goes on and on and on like a bad movie. Every day in the headlines it seems another exotic species escaped, was released on purpose or by accident.

"What's the harm of these aquatic and terrestrial species to me?"

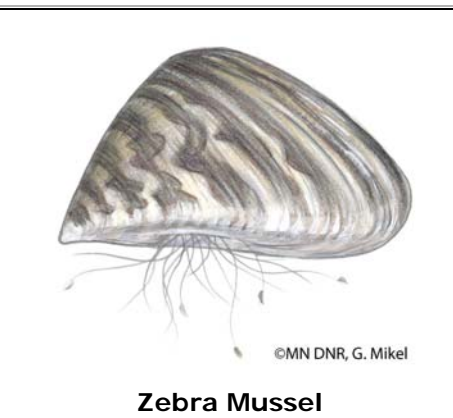
Therein lies part of the problem, 'if it doesn't affect me, I don't care'. Well we're telling you that it does make a difference and we all have a stake in the outcome of our environment. All parts of the ecosystem depend on one another and changing any one part will set off a chain reaction and not in a good way.

The balance of life in the outdoors as we know it in Minnesota could change drastically if we don't counsel our mentees!

Walleye, the number one angling experience in the region could be devastated by the [silver carp](#) who are voracious eaters and these carp would tip the scales in their own favor by devouring baitfish to a massive extent. Not to mention the economical impact on tourism and jobs if the quality of fishing were to take a nose dive and carp instead of walleye were king of waterways. Besides this leaping invasive would all but shut down water skiing and pleasure boating as we know it.



[Zebra mussels](#) filter enough algae to devastate the cycle-of-life for most minnows and popular game fish. And zebras would create a major maintenance issue each and every day in infested waters such as: scraping dock posts, props, boats and equipment. The damage will be extensive!

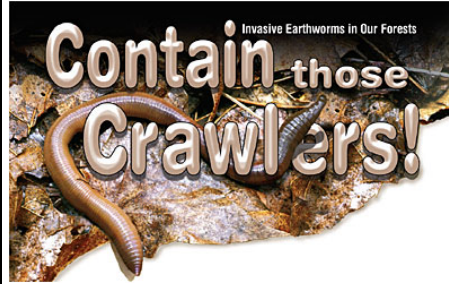


The [emerald ash borer](#) will eat its way through the landscape of Minnesota and change the forests for decades to come.



Emerald Ash Borer

There are no native [earthworms](#) in Minnesota; glaciers took care of that! With that said, at least 15 different earthworms have invaded our state including night crawlers, Canadian crawlers, leaf worm and angler worms. Studies conducted by the University of Minnesota and forest managers show that at least seven species are invading our hardwood forests and causing the loss of tree seedlings, wildflowers, and ferns.



The problem is a mentoring one and the definition of mentoring is: somebody who teaches a less experienced person about their job or a particular subject. This particular subject is invasive species and being a good steward of the lands and waterways.

As mentors and stewards of the state of Minnesota and Earth, we should be sharing information and projects with students, fellow educators and the public so we can slow down the spreading of these non-native species to give ourselves time to develop scientific resources to eradicate or at least keep-in-check the infestations as it relates to invasive species. Over time by mentoring our stakeholders about invasives; we will be able to create a better educational process, awareness, habits and understanding of how each and every one of us affect our environment.

We'll never make the connection to stewardship if somebody doesn't mentor the relationship. So, mentoring does play a part and goes hand-in-hand-in-hand with invasives and being a good steward. We each have a duty to take better care of the outdoors. For if we don't who will?

Here are some MNDNR links for more information on:

[**Stewardship in your backyard**](#)

[**Invasives Species**](#)

[**Discovering Your Outdoors**](#)