

Montana Audubon recognizes invasive or non-native species as those introduced to the landscape, like cheatgrass or European Starlings, and feral species, such as feral hogs and cats, the result of domestic animals becoming established outside of controlled environments. Some of these species, especially feral cats, directly affect birds through intensive depredation. Both invasive and feral species have the ability to do great harm to our ecosystem, and we are especially concerned about those that degrade wetland and riparian habitat, like Russian olive. Some also affect native wildlife through displacement or direct competition (such as competing for nesting sites). Because some invasive and feral species, like cheatgrass or zebra mussels, can affect the landscape at a large scale, they are capable of costing many millions of dollars in damage and many more millions to manage once established. Depending on the species and the habitat affected, this set of species has the ability to impact biological diversity, landscape-scale vegetative communities, predation and food webs, wildlife health and disease transmission, and even human health.



It is no surprise that invasive and non-native species are a leading conservation issue of our time. Early detection and preventing the spread of invasive species is one of the best approaches, as it is well known that once established, these species are nearly impossible, and very costly to eradicate. In addition, the impacts of non-native species are not equal across habitat types; we are especially concerned with non-native species in our waterways and across large portions of our intact prairie. And the negative landscape effects can be long-lasting.

Our advocacy regarding invasive and feral species varies greatly on a case-by-case basis, reflecting the general lack of regulation that deals specifically with their management; and in our state, management priorities can vary on a county-wide basis, calling for flexibility in our approach.

The policy of Montana Audubon regarding Invasive & Feral Species is to:

- Educate the public and decision makers about the effects of invasive and feral species on wildlife and their habitats
- Support the maintenance of native species on the landscape
- Discourage the breaking, plowing, or depletion of native landscapes
- Support financing for agencies and individual species management programs at a scale adequate to address the problem
- Support financial contributions for management to come from a mix of public, private, and government stakeholders
- Encourage continual and adequate monitoring for current and future invasive species
- Support science-based control or eradication efforts and the development of regulations focused on control or eradication of particular species
- Encourage natural eradication and management strategies over those that introduce poisons or chemicals to the landscape
- Encourage eradication and management strategies that are implemented in a way that is time-sensitive to the habitats and species they are seeking to protect.