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Invasive Species Awareness Week Calls Attention to Troublesome Species

Helena, Mont -- [National Invasive Species Awareness Week](https://www.nisaw.org/) (NISAW), held February 20-26, 2023, is an international event to raise awareness about invasive species, the threat that they pose, and what can be done to prevent their spread. The term "invasive" is used for aggressive species that grow and reproduce rapidly, displace native species, and cause major disturbance to the areas in which they are present. An invasive species can be a non-native insect, terrestrial or aquatic plant, disease, aquatic organism, or animal.

Here are a few of the invasive species of concern in Montana:

* Ventenata is a noxious winter annual grass that impacts Montana’s native landscapes. It will degrade rangelands, pastures and crops by decreasing agricultural production and increasing the risk of soil erosion. Ventenata is found in west and southwest Montana.
* Zebra and quagga mussels can cause significant damage to infrastructure by clogging pipes used for hydropower, irrigation, and water treatment plants. They disrupt the aquatic food chain and impact recreation boating and fishing. Invasive mussels are established in North and South Dakota and other eastern and southern states.
* Feral swine will impact agriculture producers through damage to crops, predation on livestock, and as a vector to spread diseases. Feral swine are rampant in southern US states with no chance of eradication and Canadian wild pig populations continue to expand.
* Emerald ash borer beetles threatens ash trees in Montana’s urban communities, shelterbelts, and woody draws. Their larvae feed on tissue underneath the bark killing the tree. While not yet found in Montana, it is one of many tree-killing beetles that can travel long distances on firewood.
* Eastern heath snail is a small land-dwelling snail that feeds on a wide range of crops, can clog harvest and processing equipment, and will transmit plant and animal diseases. This snail is found in Cascade and Judith Basin counties.

In recognition of National Invasive Species Awareness Week, the Montana Invasive Species Council and the Upper Columbia Conservation Commission will be hosting an education and outreach event at the State Capitol in Helena on February 22, from 10 am to 2 pm. Also in attendance will be the agencies and organizations involved in the detection, prevention and control of invasive species in Montana. For more information about the event contact MISC Administrator Liz Lodman at 406- 444-0547 or liz.lodman@mt.gov.

The [Montana Invasive Species Council (MISC)](https://invasivespecies.mt.gov/misc/) is a statewide partnership working to protect Montana's economy, natural resources, and public health through a coordinated approach to combat invasive species.

The [Upper Columbia Conservation Commission (UC3)](https://invasivespecies.mt.gov/uc3/) fosters coordination between water resource managers within the Columbia River Basin in Montana, as well as provincial and state partners to enhance early detection and rapid response efforts that prevent the introduction and/or further establishment of aquatic invasive species.

For more information about MISC and UC3 visit [invasivespecies.mt.gov.](http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cardd/montana-invasive-species-program/misc/the-2018-governors-summit-on-invasive-species) For information about National Invasive Species Awareness Week visit [nisaw.org](https://www.nisaw.org/).

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