

Alien Invaders in Our Backyards



Dean Pearson

Research Ecologist and Deputy Program Manager, Wildlife and Terrestrial Ecosystems Program

CURRENT RESEARCH

Understanding the effects of exotic species to mitigate their impacts

Anyone who has traveled abroad will probably remember the hassle of declaring foreign items like soil, food, plants, or insects to the US customs. Although troublesome, this painstaking process is critical because even the most harmless plant, like cheatgrass, in its native region can suddenly become monstrous in a foreign environment, and travel is one of the many ways foreign species are introduced to a native soil. Dr. Dean Pearson, Research Ecologist and Deputy Program Manager of the Wildlife and Terrestrial Ecosystems Program at the Rocky Mountain Research Station, therefore combines efforts with collaborators to stop the effects of these organisms that are threatening individual native plants and animals, greatly reducing ecosystem functions and consequently placing a heavy economic and ecological impact on species, systems, and resources. Exotic species introductions cost well over 100 billion dollars annually in lost revenue and mitigation costs in the US alone, and understanding these processes are critical to learning how best to mitigate this threat.

Dr. Pearson's work involves understanding how natural systems function in order to better manage these systems for conservation and the resources and services they provide to humans, like fresh water, wood products, forage for livestock. With a talented colleague named Ms. Yvette Ortega, land managers, and a group of collaborators at the University of Montana and universities in Argentina and Turkey, Dr. Pearson is among the few research groups tackling this problem from the basic to the applied levels and from global to local, taking novel approaches to invasion ecology that will help move the field forward. By studying over forty plant species in...

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AFFILIATION



USDA Forest Service

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. in Organismal Biology and Ecology 2005, University of Montana
- M.A.S. in Organismal Biology and Ecology 1995, University of Montana
- B.S. in Wildlife Biology 1992, University of Montana

AWARDS

- National Forest System Invasive Species Program Award for Landscape Restoration and Rehabilitation Against Invasive Species, March 2012
- Visionary Science Publication Award, Rocky Mountain Research Station, January 2013
- National Academy of Sciences, Kavli Fellow Recipient, 5 November 2010
- Presidential Early Career Award for Science and Engineering (PECASE), July 2009
- Deputy Chief's Early Career Scientist Award, March 2009

RESEARCH AREAS

Environment, Ecology, Global Policy

FUNDING REQUEST

Your contributions will support the continued research of Dr. Dean Pearson, at the Rocky Mountain Research Station, as he addresses the efficacy of his management tools to mitigate the threats posed by exotic species introduced across our borders. Donations will help fund the \$50-100K/year required to run large-scale field experiments and international research, supporting field workers, vehicles, and travel. Help secure our borders by partnering with him!