



Workshop Discusses, Eats, and Plots Against Alien Invasives

The Hoosier National Forest was a sponsor of a successful workshop to raise the awareness of the threat of alien invasive species in southern Indiana. Landowners learned to identify invasive plants,



Kitty Perkinson, White River RC&D serves garlic mustard lasagna while Hoosier botanist Kirk Larson pours autumn olive wine at the invasive workshop.

"This has been an incredible day, it has surpassed all my expectations," one participant said as she got off the bus at the last stop. "I'll be weeks digesting everything I learned here and going through my packet of information!"

Others commented that they felt armed and ready to go home and do battle with the invasive species on their property.

"I certainly have all the information on what to do now," another lady commented, "now I just need the time and energy to get going."

What they didn't lack was enthusiasm. Having spent the day discussing and strategizing how best to attack the problem, they were fired up and ready to get started. They were even armed with recipes on how to go home and cook up many of the invasives they might find and eat them.

The evaluation forms for the workshop reflect that viewpoint, with very high ratings across the board. The March 24 workshop was initiated by the White River RC&D Forestry Committee. They invited the Lincoln Hills, Historic Hoosier Hills, and Four Rivers RC&D Forestry Committees to partner with them to sponsor a workshop on invasive species.

The partner list grew to 15 co-sponsors including US Forest Service State and Private Forestry, The Nature Conservancy, Weyerhaeuser, and the Indiana Forestry and Woodland Owners Association.

The workshop was attended by 123 adults and 13 children. A separate concurrent children's program on invasives was held as well. With the generosity of the sponsors, we were able to keep the costs minimal to encourage maximum attendance.

The lineup of speakers was impressive with a full morning and early afternoon on what were the threats, how they could be identified, which could be realistically controlled and prevented, and how to develop a management plan. Speakers covered not only alien plants but also insects and pathogens that plague Indiana woodlands.

The group was also visited by two different invasives – a hydrilla plant wondered through mid morning looking for an aquatic stream to invade, and at lunch a very large emerald ash borer (a.k.a. forester Todd Dempsey) strolled in having just crawled out of a pickup full of Michigan firewood in the parking lot.

At lunch those who attended were treated to a buffet luncheon which included garlic mustard lasagna and garlic mustard salsa. A taste of autumn olive wine was served as well. Although State Park Inns normally do not allow alcohol, they agreed to allow the autumn olive wine as a novelty as long as we had a person controlling the amount consumed to only a taste.

Hoosier botanist Kirk Larson served as bartender but noted the quantity consumed of the autumn olive wine didn't prove a problem.

"Most people wrinkled their nose and compared it to Listerine or worse," Larson said.

A fun twist was the children's program. Public Affairs Specialist Teena Ligman and Forest Interpreter Stacy Duke provided a program for children on invasives while the adult program was going on upstairs.

"We thought it would be a way to encourage more family participation and get kids involved," Ligman said. "We were hoping for more kids but the group we had were great and really seemed to get a lot out of it."

A field trip followed in mid afternoon with five stops, allowing people to view Japanese honeysuckle infestations and how it had damaged trees, air potato, garlic mustard, burning bush which had moved out from the old inn landscaping to dominate the forest understory, and most poignantly vinca or periwinkle groundcover.

The Park had treated vinca in 2006 and the group could see the line between treated and untreated areas. Spring wildflowers were coming up again abundantly in the treated areas. In the untreated areas – there was nothing but a blanket of green vinca.

"That stop told the whole story," said Ligman. "Some of the women were saying the periwinkle was beautiful, but everyone admitted that the solid cover was alarming, especially when you could look over and see the vast diversity of what the vinca had taken over."

It was also a story of hope.

"Once treated," noted Ligman, "the diversity came back. The invasives CAN be beaten."

The other exciting piece from the workshop, according to Ligman, is that it moves us a step closer to establishing cooperative weed management areas (CWMAs) in southern

Indiana.

Ellen Jacquart from The Nature Conservancy did a short presentation on CWMA's and on the evaluation form participants were asked if they'd be interested in working with a CWMA in their area. Fifteen people who returned the evaluation forms indicated they would be willing to help.

"So the next step," said Ligman, "is that the RC&D Forestry Committees will work with Ellen to plan a meeting exclusively on CWMA's and how we might best go about forming one or more CWMA's in southern Indiana."

Ligman is hopeful.

"All those people gave up their Saturday to learn about alien invasives, and they were asking if we would do this again," she said. "They wanted to tell their neighbors to come next time. They were enthusiastic. They wanted to take their woodlands back from the aliens and they saw the value of banding together to do it."

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