



Invasion of the habitat snatchers

Invasive plants in Kootenay National Park and how you can help

Wildflower Season

Ah... summer at last, and time to enjoy the riot of colourful wildflowers that are flourishing after a rainy June.



But wait... not all the flowers you see are friendly. Some are actually invaders in disguise.

Troublesome Invasive Plants

Plants from other parts of the world, originally introduced as garden flowers, or for food and medicine, can become invasive in the natural environment. For some, their seeds arrived as stowaways on shipments, hitchhiked along traffic routes, or floated down waterways. They look harmless, and are often mistaken as wildflowers.

What's the worry?

The plants and animals here in the park evolved together as a dynamic system for thousands of years. Invasive plants have no natural predators (e.g. insects) or diseases in their new home. They spread quickly through natural ecosystems by aggressive seed production and growth, and out-compete our native plants. Silently, almost invisibly, native habitat is lost.

What Parks Canada is doing

This summer you'll see the invasive plant management crew hard at work, pulling, cutting and spraying the invasive weeds throughout Kootenay. The team may be small but they are mighty. They use the most effective and efficient treatments for each weed species. All decisions are guided by ecological knowledge and principles.



Parks Canada's aim is to maintain native plant and animal diversity by preventing the introduction of invasive plants, and by eliminating or controlling them where practical. Here are two targeted invasive plants:

Knapweed



Knapweed is a known invasive plant found mainly along the 93S highway in Kootenay. Knapweed seeds are transported long distances by vehicles coming and going. We actively control knapweed... in an effort to preserve our native roadside plants such as lovely wood lilies and to be a good neighbour and not provide a Knapweed seed-bank. Knapweed can be pulled out as it has a large taproot.

Orange Hawkweed



Orange Hawkweed may be pretty but it is definitely not friendly. It is a pushy and aggressive habitat snatcher... sneakily spreading underground through long rhizomes and on the surface by seed. It soon forms dense continuous mats that allow no native plant neighbours. Mowing serves to stimulate underground expansion so herbicide is the only control option. Please help us detect this invader!

How you can help

Learn to identify invasive plants. Report sightings (especially along hiking trails and in the backcountry) to 250-347-6174 or or llyk.fire-feu@pg.gc.ca. If possible, include date, location (GPS if known), number of stems and area covered (or estimate), and photo (optional).

Prevent the spread of invasive plant seeds. Avoid camping or travelling in weed-infested areas. Wash your bike or hiking boots before and after venturing onto the trails. If you hike with a dog, keep it on-leash on trails and brush it free of seeds and burrs upon return. If you travel with horses, carry only weed-free hay into the backcountry.

