

NJ Invasive Species
Strike Team

FoHVOS
FRIENDS OF HOPEWELL VALLEY OPEN SPACE

Mystery (Rose) Solved!

I can't tell you how many times I've uttered the phrase, "What the heck is that plant?". The Strike Team wants to stay on top of new invaders so that we can assess their invasive potential and communicate new threats to the conservation community.

For about five years, I've been seeing an unknown rose popping up throughout central Jersey. The showy reddish white flowers and robust growth (similar to Multiflora Rose) had me very nervous. I was sure that this was the newest cultivated rose species to menace our natural lands. My best guess was 'some kind of escaped rambling rose cultivar'. Lena Struwe, professor of botany / plant systematics at Rutgers University, is a member of the FoHVOS Community Conservation program and we got to chatting at the plant sale pick up in May. I mentioned the mystery rose and she generously volunteered to figure out its identification. Charles Barreca of Duke Farms facilitated a field visit and provided his observations on the plants habits and habitats.

It turned out to be Ozark Rose (*Rosa setigera*) – see [USDA Plants database](#). This 'near native' species (convenient term coined by Lena!) is native to our west but appears to have moved into New Jersey and increased in recent years. Although not considered native to NJ, we have no plans other than enjoying its blooms (and avoiding getting jabbed by its thorns). Our thinking is that it will likely be checked by its specialized insects and pathogens that are likely traveling east with the plant. This contrasts many invasive species from other continents that are often separated by their pests and pathogens, giving them a competitive edge over native species.

This month's Live and Learn is provided by Michael Long from Mercer County Park Commission, where he leads stewardship efforts across many thousands of county-owned lands. Mike discusses adaptive management of an impressive grassland bird habitat at Mercer Meadows (a.k.a. Pole Farm), where various techniques are employed from spot treatments of invasive species to the use of prescribed burning.

Strike Team Potluck Social – October 21, 2023 – FREE EVENT – [Register Here](#)

Purely for fun, enjoy eating wild edible recipes while spending time with colleagues, private landowners, hunters, and stewardship volunteers from around the state. If you aren't a forager, please show your shopping skills by bringing some interesting eats. The event will be held at a private residence located in Hopewell Township on October 21st from Noon to 2 pm.

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Strike Team Program Director

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Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space
Executive Director

Live and Learn

Stewardship through Adaptive Management

Invasive Presence at Mercer Meadows

The Stewardship Department of the Mercer County Park Commission (MCPC) manages several hundred acres of grassland at Mercer Meadows. In 2012, a 435-acre habitat restoration project was undertaken to improve the grasslands for native wildlife by planting native grasses and wildflowers. Today it supports a number of rare and threatened wildlife species, including grassland birds that rely on the large meadows to nest. Some management strategies used to maintain a diverse native herbaceous community include but are not limited to:

- growing season spot herbicide application targeting invasive species;
- periodic mowing or strip mowing in late winter to minimize disturbance during growing/breeding season for grassland birds and insects;
- forestry mowing, as needed, to reduce the presence of woody species in meadows; and
- occasional prescribed burning in late winter to reduce thatch, return nutrients to the soil, and to address presence of woody species.

In late July of 2022, the Stewardship Department realized there was a problem in the grasslands of Mercer Meadows. Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), an invasive plant native to Europe and Asia that was first introduced to the U.S. in the 1800s, had colonized large swaths of wet meadow in the park. By using a drone to delineate the area, the Stewardship Department identified over 45-acres dominated by the purple flowering wetland plant that required treatment.

Why is it a problem?



Purple loosestrife is a perennial that produces showy purple blooms from July through September which made it popular in gardens for decades and contributed to its spread. The plant is well suited to outcompete native vegetation as it adapts easily to various soil conditions and can form dense monotypic stands. It provides little value in the form of food or shelter for

native wildlife. Although the plant can spread vegetatively underground, most reproduction occurs by seed dispersal. A single mature loosestrife plant can produce over 2 million seeds every year!

What can be done about it?

Methods to control purple loosestrife include hand-pulling, herbicide application or biological control. The scale of the infestation precluded hand-pulling from consideration. Discovering its presence, flowering in late July, posed several problems: there was not enough time to coordinate the release of a biological control (beetles or weevils that consume loosestrife) or for herbicide application to be scheduled, performed and effectively kill plants before seed could be produced.

Loosestrife Treatment Locations for August 2022



Since none of these long-term control methods were viable due to the scale and timing, the Stewardship Department turned to a short-term solution: mechanical removal of the flowering loosestrife. By mowing the loosestrife-dominated 45-acres in August, the introduction of billions of seeds could be prevented. This decision to adapt the management method of the meadows to address site conditions was not without compromises:

- Mowing grasslands during the growing season when grassland wildlife is most vulnerable should generally be avoided;
- Park goers let us know they were upset about our decision to mow the purple flowering plants in the summer;
- Mowing is expensive and won't effectively control the perennial invasive plant; and
- Loosestrife presence will still need to be addressed with herbicide or biological controls in 2023.

Takeaways

Monitoring and data collection are essential aspects of adaptive management. If the loosestrife had been observed during monitoring earlier, herbicide application could have been coordinated and the cost of interim mowing could have been avoided. Data collected will inform better management decisions in the future. Estimated percent cover and extent of the loosestrife mapped with a drone in 2022 can now be shared with the invasive control contractor to ensure timely spot treatment occurs in early summer of 2023. Additionally, the problematic areas can be monitored in the future to measure effectiveness of control efforts. If efforts are not successful, adaptive management can be used to develop an alternative approach based on site conditions to reestablish a diverse native community in these wet meadows essential for grassland species.

Upcoming Events

Please contact [Mike](#) if you are interested in attending any of the following scheduled events.

- **August 16, 9:00am-3:00pm, Duke Farms Visitor Center**
 - New Jersey Nursery & Landscape Association, Summer Plant Symposium
- **September 30, 10:00am-3:00pm, Ely Park, Main Street, Lambertville**
 - Lambertville Goes Wild Green Fair
- **October 11, 7:00pm-8:00pm, Cranford Public Library**
 - Invasive Species Threats, Identification and Control
- **October 15, Time TBD, Rock Ridge Lake**
 - Invasive Species Presentation and Hike

Volunteer with us!

Looking for a volunteer opportunity?
The NJ Invasive Species Strike Team is the organization for you!
Visit our sign up genius below to share your interests with us.
Contact mvanclaf@fohvos.org for more information.

I'm Interested!

Volunteer Stewardship Teams Information

Consider a Membership Donation

The Strike Team needs your help to fight invasive species throughout New Jersey. By making a membership donation, you directly fund our efforts to keep invasive species at bay and protect our native plants and wildlife. Donate through the link below!

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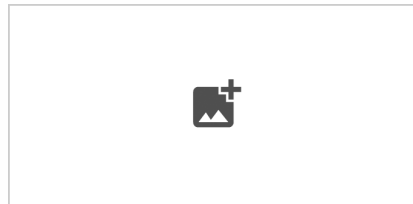
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