Title: Aliens From Earth: When Animals and Plants Invade Other Ecosystems
Author: Mary Batten
Illustrator: Beverly J. Doyle
Publisher: Peachtree Publishers, Ltd., 2003
Pages: 32

Summary

Batten, an award-winning science writer, offers a fascinating look at what can happen when a foreign (alien) plant or animal enters an ecosystem where it doesn't belong. Striking double-page spreads of beautiful artwork add visual excitement to Batten's text. In all ecosystems, the plants and animals are interconnected and depend on each other for food or other life-sustaining elements. When another organism enters that ecosystem, it can upset the balance. Batten discusses the problem of alien invasion in general and also gives several specific examples. Some of the invasions were accidental, as when a plant or animal was present on a ship and introduced into the environment upon arrival at the ship's destination. Some were the result of intentional transplanting of an organism to solve a problem; but in solving one problem, another was created. One example that has occurred here in Louisiana that she describes in the introduction of kudzu into the United States. Kudzu, which is a fast-growing vine, was introduced by the Japanese at their exhibit in the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Americans began planting the vine in their gardens and later it was used to prevent erosion of farmland. Now it is causing severe damage to forests in the southeastern U.S., including Louisiana, where it can grow up to a foot a day covering trees and keeping them from getting needed sunlight.

Author's Biography

Mary Batten, an award-winning science writer, has written numerous children's books, many of which focus on environmental problems. She also writes for television and film and was nominated for an Emmy for her work with 3-2-1 Contact, a science series produced by the Children's Television Network. Born in 1937 in Smithfield, Virginia, her first "field station" was the peanut farm where she grew up. As a child, she played in the woods and waded through forest streams, learning much about nature and gaining respect and appreciation for all living things. In her own words, she tries "to convey the excitement I feel about our extraordinary planet, the diversity of life, and the
responsibility that humans have to care for the other species with which we share our
global habitat." She lives in Smithfield, Virginia with her husband, Ed Bland, who is a
composer. They have two grown children, Robert Bland, a writer, and Stefanie Bland, a
dancer.

Illustrator’s Biography

A nature-lover all her life, Beverly Doyle earned a degree in fine arts from Framingham
State College, then continued her studies at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena,
California. She specializes in wildlife illustration. She currently lives in Morrison,
Colorado.

Other Titles by Mary Batten

Nature’s Tricksters. Sierra Club Books/Little Brown, 1992
Hey Daddy!: Animal Fathers and Their Babies. Peachtree, 2002
Who Has a Belly Button? Peachtree, 2004

Related Titles

Ecosystems and Environment by Ann Fulick
Exotic Species: Invaders in Paradise by Brenda Z. Guiberson
Food Chains and Webs by Holly Wallace

Classroom Connections

- Examine several alien invasions that have impacted Louisiana.
  - Kudzu: A fast-growing vine, kudzu was introduced by the Japanese at
    their exhibit in the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia,
    Pennsylvania. Americans began planting the vine in their gardens and
    later it was used to prevent erosion of farmland. Now it is causing severe
    damage to forests in the southeastern U.S., including Louisiana, where it
    covers trees and keeps them from getting needed sunlight. The vine is
    right at home in the warm climate and can grow up to a foot a day.
  - Nutria: These large rodents were brought to Louisiana in the 1930's to
    boost the fur industry. Later, they were introduced into the wild, where
    they have caused widespread damage to Louisiana's coastal wetlands by
    eating wetland plants.
  - Grass carp: Grass carp was introduced into Caney Lake in northeastern
    Louisiana to control the growth of the hydrilla, a plant which threatened to
cover the lake, causing problems for recreational activities. But this worked so well that now the carp population needs to be reduced so that all needed vegetation can grow back.

- Water hyacinths: Water hyacinths, like the hydrilla, cover a body of water and not only hinder boat travel but also affect the oxygen level in the water.

- Pick an ecosystem and prepare a chart showing the interrelationships among the various plants and animals.
- Have students pick an animal or plant discussed in the book and prepare a report about it.

**Web Sites**

Invasive Species

http://www.invasivespecies.gov/

This is a great website that has information about the federal government's activities and programs related to invasive species – impacts, responses, species profiles, related agencies and organizations.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries: Nutria

http://www.nutria.com/site.php

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries site has information on the nutria, the fur industry, and the state's nutria control program.

Mary Batten

http://www.marybatten.com/

Mary Batten's site includes reviews of the book, a summary, bibliography of the author, and links to other information on other books by the author.

National Science Teacher Association - Recommends

http://www2.nsta.org/recommends/product.asp?id=13772

Contains a review of the book by a science teacher.
Learn vocabulary, terms and more with flashcards, games and other study tools. Terms in this set (10).

- invade: to enter by force in order to take over.
- aggressive: taking over a space forcefully.
- research: the study and collecting of information about something.
- contaminate: To harm by touching something.
- alien: strange or foreign to the area.
- migrate: to move from one place to another.
- species: A group of organisms that are closely related.
- precaution: (n.) care taken beforehand; a step or action taken to prevent something from happening.
- import: to carry into the country or area.

Find many great new & used options and get the best deals for Aliens from Earth: When Animals and Plants Invade Other Ecosystems by Mary Batten (2008, Paperback) at the best online prices at eBay! Free shipping for many products! Booklist: "This visually striking and readable title describes what happens to ecosystems when alien plants or animals are introduced by accident or intention. The examples throughout are thought-provoking, the illustrations outstanding, and the concluding words on steps to take to keep aliens out are helpful and practical. Doyle, who specializes in environmental art, provides handsome, double-paged portraits of animals both native and new to their natural habitat, using a footnote to clue readers into which are which. Fascinating."