

ENVIRONMENT: Online viewing, reporting system launched

You can help region battle invasive species

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The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is asking you to do your part in tracking invasive species.

The organization has just launched a web-based reporting and tracking program designed as a one-stop shop for Ontario invasive species information.

Invasivetrackingsystem.ca allows you to view invasive species, where they have been spotted, report sightings and browse an online field guide.

"It is most helpful to have the public and citizen scientists aid us in our collection of data by reporting these species to us," federation project specialist Philip Shaw said, adding that without the concern, dedication and participation of the public, the program would not be the success it is today.

York Region is no exception in dealing with infestations, such as the Asian long-horned beetle, box elder bug, giant hog weed, emerald ash borer and yellow headed spruce sawfly.

The best defence is being informed and aware of what is going on in your own back yard, according to York Region manager of natural heritage and forestry services Ian Buchanan.

"Every time you turn around, there seems to be a new bug or new plant you have to be careful of," he said. "They seem to be crawl-



SUN-TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

ing out of the woodwork, literally."

He is a believer in the idea that the more you look, the more you will find. Changing weather patterns could be to blame for the infestations. Warmer summers and more precipitation could be providing more opportunities for these invasive species to have a population explosion or increase their range of movement across the landscape, he added.

"People shouldn't be frightened, but rather be driven to get informed," he said. "Learn to identify species and how to contain an infestation because information really is the best prevention."

While the region is most concerned with regional property and forests for control and eradication of invasive species, it still wants to hear from you when tracking the movement of these species throughout the region.

"We are not equipped to investigate every call we get," Mr. Buchanan said. "However, if someone reports a species where we haven't seen it before, we may follow up to confirm."

The region is tracking the emerald ash borer, an exotic species that threatens all types of ash trees, and the yellow headed spruce sawfly, an insect that feeds heavily on spruce trees while in a larvae state and can kill the tree.

If you see an emerald ash borer in your neighbourhood, you can report it online.

WHAT TO DO

Emerald ash borer

- ▶ report it at inspection.gc.ca
- ▶ infested trees should be cut, chopped and burned or chipped on site

Yellow headed spruce sawfly

- ▶ to control a minor infestation, spray branches and tree with mix of 1 tbsp of dish soap to 1 gallon of water with a high pressure sprayer to knock feeding larvae to the ground and keep them from climbing in June

- ▶ report it to your local municipality or at invasivetrackingsystem.ca

Giant hog weed

- ▶ identify it with weedinfo.ca since it has many look-alikes
- ▶ contact a professional arbourist to treat or remove it safely

Box elder bugs

- ▶ remove infested trees
- ▶ spray trees in early summer when nymphs are feeding or hire a professional to do so

West Nile virus



Some mosquitoes carry West Nile virus and their bites may lead to West Nile virus infection. Clean up! The best way to keep mosquitoes away is to clean up areas of standing water around your home where they like to breed.

What you can do

- Clean up and empty containers where water collects (old tires, tin cans, flower pots, etc.)
- Change water in bird baths weekly
- Remove water that collects on pool covers
- Turn over items such as wading pools, wheelbarrows and small boats
- Clear leaves and twigs from eavestroughs, storm and roof gutters
- Unclog drainage ditches so that water flows freely
- Make sure swimming pool pump is circulating water
- Clear out dense shrubbery where mosquitoes like to rest
- Turn over compost frequently
- Check that door and window screens are tight fitting and in good repair
- Drill holes in the bottoms of containers so water can't collect

For more information on West Nile virus, contact York Region Health Connection

1-800-361-5653, TTY: 1-866-252-9933 www.york.ca/westnile

