Aspen Forest Ecosystem

Distribution: Aspen ecosystems are found throughout North America in a variety of ecoregions. In Michigan, they are primarily found in the northern lower and upper peninsula regions.

Description:
- Aspen forests provide more forage resources for animals than are found in coniferous forests, therefore they support a large number and diversity of species.
- In addition to large and small mammals, birds found in aspen forests include a variety of warblers, indigo bunting, least flycatcher, yellow-bellied sap sucker, pileated woodpecker, and others including ground-dwelling birds, woodcock and ruffed grouse.
- Food sources for these birds include berries, insects, and worms.

This activity is based on the interactions between these organisms in the aspen ecosystem.

Buckthorn

Habitat: roadsides, pastures, old fields, and woodlots

U.S. Distribution: East Coast and Midwest, limited areas of California and Oregon.

Quick Facts: Buckthorn spreads quickly through seeds distributed by birds and wildlife; it crowds out native shrubs and understory plants. It is a host for certain viruses, fungi, and insects. It does not provide any nutritional value to birds that eat it.

Native vs Invasive Species

Native:
- **ALL** naturally-existing organisms are native **SOMEWHERE**.
- Within an ecosystem, organisms have a niche (role) regarding interactions with one another.

Q: What are some of these roles?
- These roles develop through co-evolution with other organisms

Invasive:
- An organism that is new to an area (often brought in by people but might also travel through animals, air, and water)
- An organism that did not co-evolve with the other organisms within this area
- Causes harm to: an ecosystem, other organisms (including people), or economies.

Q: Why might an organism that is not from the area be able to cause harm there?

Stewardship – How can you help?