

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.

Information on aspen forest ecology from:

U.S. Forest Service (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/beauty/aspen/ecology.shtml>)

Michigan DNR (https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/publications/pdfs/huntingwildlifehabitat/landowners_guide/habitat_mgmt/forest/Aspen_And_Birch.htm#:~:text=to%20nine%20inches,-Species%20that%20use%20this%20stage%20of%20the%20aspen%20forest%20as,%2C%20deer%2C%20and%20ruffed%20grouse) and

University of Colorado Boulder (<https://www.colorado.edu/asmagazine/2021/03/02/understories-quaking-aspen-vary-dramatically-among-habitats>)

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?

