

THE RIVER RAT

"AND YOU REALLY LIVE BY THE RIVER? WHAT A JOLLY LIFE!" "BY IT AND WITH IT AND ON IT AND IN IT," SAID THE RAT. "IT'S BROTHER AND SISTER TO ME, AND AUNTS, AND COMPANY, AND FOOD AND DRINK, AND (NATURALLY) WASHING. IT'S MY WORLD, AND I DON'T WANT ANY OTHER. WHAT IT HASN'T GOT IS NOT WORTH HAVING, AND WHAT IT DOESN'T KNOW IS NOT WORTH KNOWING. LORD! THE TIMES WE'VE HAD TOGETHER! -WIND IN THE WILLOWS



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TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2009

The Dark Side of Beer's Best Ingredient...

In Wisconsin, the delightful nectar created by the brewing of barley, malt and hops is not just a beverage, it's a way of life. Domestic Pilsner, American Pale Ale, English-style Bitter...you name it, we have it. And in the trinity of primary ingredients, the hop is arguably the best and most vital. Providing bouquet and a bit (or a lot) of bitterness, hops make Wisconsin's state drink great.



Problem is, not all hops are hopalicious (kudos to [Ale Asylum Brewery](#) in Madison for coining that word...). Some don't do anything but grow crazily and overtake riverbanks. And by some I mean Japanese hops. And not the kind you'll find in Sapporo.

Japanese hops do not produce the very useful fruit used to make delicious pale ales. These invasive plants, instead, have spiny little hairs along their stem and leaves that grab onto innocent river rats. And they hurt.

Big deal, you say? What's the problem, you think? The problem is these neutered nettles cover everything once they're introduced amongst native vegetation. And their shallow, wimpy root structure does little to help hold soil in place, leading to streambank erosion.

Japanese hops have only been found in four



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Have fun, look great and help

counties in Wisconsin.

The largest infestation is on the Little Platte River in Grant County, Wisconsin. Local landowner, fellow river rat, and outdoor recreation specialist at UW Platteville, Mark Sethne, led an outing last week for DNR and River Alliance to help them attempt to wrap their heads around this problem.

Currently, no one's really sure the extent of the infestation by our spiny, invasive "friends." So, the River Alliance of Wisconsin and the Friends of the Platte River aim to get to the bottom of this by monitoring throughout the watershed in canoes and kayaks. If something isn't done quickly, we can expect this infestation to spread to the Mississippi River.



Want to help? Then attend the **Project RED** (riverine early detectors) training on Sunday, August 30 at the Dickeyville Community Center from 1:00pm to 5:00pm. You'll learn how to monitor for Japanese hops and 14 other invasive

species, visit the Little Platte infestation, and come away better equipped to keep your rivers free of invaders. And when the training is over, I'm sure it won't be hard to talk your fellow trainees into enjoying the fruits of *good* hops at a local Dickeyville establishment...

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