



Becoming Interested in Biology

Active Listening Questions:



- Why does Dr. Vitousek state that "there will be winners and losers" when invasive species are introduced to a new area?
- Did Dr. Vitousek always plan to study biology and become a scientist?

WHAT: At the start of his 1994 presentation "Biological Invasion Overview," Peter Vitousek describes why he cares about biological invasion and how the book *Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants* changed the course of his studies as an undergraduate student, inspiring him to become a biologist.



WHO: Dr. Peter Vitousek is an ecologist and professor at Stanford University, where he has been faculty since 1984. He has a PhD in biology and focuses primarily on nitrogen and phosphorus enrichment in soils and the

impact of invasive species. He is a Senior Fellow of the Woods Institute for the Environment. Dr. Vitousek began college as a Political Science Major but was inspired to change the focus of his studies after reading a Charles Elton book about ecology for an English class.

**"WE'RE BREAKING DOWN
THE REGIONAL
DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE
BIOTA OF EARTH."**

GLOSSARY TERM: BIOLOGICAL INVASION

When a species move into an area where it was not formerly present and establishes successful colonies, sometimes displacing native species in the process.



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SCIENTISTS ON THE SCIENCE OF GLOBAL CHANGE

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TAKING THE REINS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Discuss with a friend or record your thoughts in a journal.

- Dr. Vitousek quotes a passage that describes biological invasion as being like a "decisive battle of history" and asks "Will [this world] be a lost world?"

What do you think? Are biological invasions a threat to things society values or not?

- Dr. Vitousek mentions a book by Charles Elton that had a profound influence on a key decision in his life. What is a story (from a book, movie, or song) that influenced an important decision you have made in your life?

FURTHER READING:

Elton, Charles S. 1958. The Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. (1958) 2000.

Vitousek, Peter. "Biological Invasion as a Global Change." Biological Invasion as a Global Change. Ed. Susan Joy Hassol. *Elements of Change Series*. Aspen Global Change Institute p.66-67.