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.

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.
Becoming Interested in Biology

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:
