



Audubon CONNECTICUT

185 East Flat Hill Road
Southbury, CT 06488
Tel: 203-264-5098
Fax: 203-264-6332
www.audubon.org

TESTIMONY OF AUDUBON *CONNECTICUT*
SANDY BRESLIN, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
FEBRUARY 23, 2009

Audubon Connecticut, a part of the National Audubon Society with more than 10,000 members statewide, works to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats using education, science and conservation, and legislative advocacy for the benefit of people and the earth's biological diversity. Through our network of community-based nature centers, protected wildlife sanctuaries, and local volunteer Chapters, we seek to connect people with nature and inspire the next generation of conservationists.

**IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 5277 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE INVASIVE PLANT COUNCIL**

Chairman Roy, Chairman Meyer and members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. Audubon Connecticut *strongly supports* House Bill 5277, *An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Invasive Plant Council* that seeks to enact a series of technical changes that will improve efforts to control the introduction and spread of invasive plant species in our state. We applaud the Environment Committee for the support it has shown for this critical effort in past years and join the members of the Invasive Plants Council in urging passage of this legislation this year. The Council has been proposing these changes annually since 2004.

Invasive species, including invasive plants, are second only to development in the threat they pose to Connecticut's native habitat. Forty-two percent (42%) of threatened and endangered species in the U.S. have suffered declines due to competition from nonnative invaders. The economic costs incurred because of nonnative species reach billions of dollars in this country each year.

Established in 2003, the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council has made substantial progress in identifying and listing plants that are invasive or potentially invasive, and the General Assembly has acted promptly to ban these plants. But there is much more to be done.

H.B. 5277 reflects the recommendations that the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council has been promoting since 2004 that will improve efforts to control the spread of invasive plant species in the state by:

1. Extending enforcement authority to the Department of Agriculture and Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station. These agencies support this recommendation.
2. Allowing transport of invasive plants for eradication, research and educational purposes
3. Clarifying that the reproductive parts of invasive plants are also banned. This would curtail the extensive decorative use of invasive plants such as Oriental Bittersweet, and lessen the opportunity for dispersal of their seed in the natural environment.
4. Removing water lettuce from the list of banned plants. Experts tell us that this plant cannot reproduce successfully in our climate.
5. Preempting municipalities from prohibiting invasive plants from July 1, 2009 through October 1, 2014 ensuring uniform regulation of invasive plants statewide.

The habitat destruction wrought by invasive plant species is of great concern to all conservation agencies and organizations that own and manage open space lands in our state. Passage of H.B. 5277 will allow us to improve our effort to combat invasive plant species, but there is still much more to be done.

This Environment Committee was instrumental in creating the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council and in promoting its early action to control the spread of invasive plant species in Connecticut. We urge the Committee to re-engage with the Council, especially around the issue of target dates for action on further bans of invasive plant species such as **Japanese Barberry** and **Winged Euonymus** that continue to be sold and planted in our state, at the same time that landowners such as Audubon, other nonprofit conservations groups such as Southbury Land Trust, and agencies like the Connecticut DEP - - all of whom manage land for wildlife habitat - - are spending significant time and money to remove these plants from our native landscape.

We urge the Environment Committee to *support H.B. 5277* and thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important matter today.