

# Spotted Knapweed

*Centaurea stoebe*

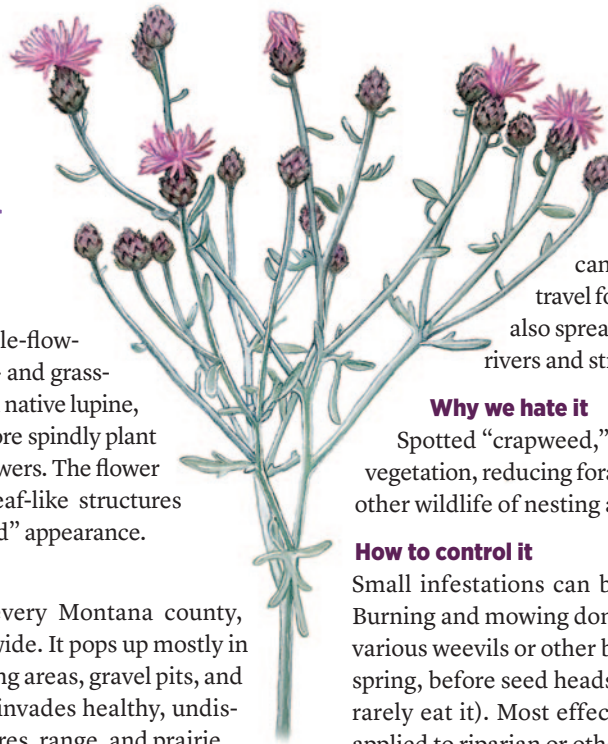
## What it is

Spotted knapweed is a weedy purple-flowered plant that can take over range- and grasslands. From a distance it looks like a native lupine, but closer examination reveals a more spindly plant with lavender or pink thistle-like flowers. The flower heads are surrounded by small leaf-like structures called “bracts” that create a “spotted” appearance.

## Where it’s found

Spotted knapweed is found in every Montana county, infesting 2 to 5 million acres statewide. It pops up mostly in disturbed soils at mining and logging areas, gravel pits, and construction sites. The plant also invades healthy, undisturbed plant communities in pastures, range, and prairie.

Illustration by Liz Bradford



## How it spreads

Spotted knapweed disperses via its abundant production of seeds, anywhere from 500 to 4,000 per plant, that take root in any disturbed ground. Seed heads can get caught in vehicle undercarriages and travel for hundreds of miles before dispersal. Seeds also spread in hay, gravel, and road fill and by way of rivers and streams when the plant grows along banks.

## Why we hate it

Spotted “crapweed,” as some people call it, muscles out native vegetation, reducing forage for livestock, elk, and deer and robbing other wildlife of nesting and cover habitat.

## How to control it

Small infestations can be eradicated with careful hand pulling. Burning and mowing don’t work. There’s been some success using various weevils or other biocontrols. Grazing by goats and sheep in spring, before seed heads form, can keep infestations down (cattle rarely eat it). Most effective are broad-leaf herbicides (not to be applied to riparian or other environmentally sensitive areas). ■

*Learn more about noxious weed control at [mtweed.org](http://mtweed.org).*

## THE MICRO MANAGER

# “Management Plans”

*A quick look at a concept or term commonly used in fisheries, wildlife, or state parks management.*

FWP managers often preface statements with “according to our management plan” or “based on our management strategy” when recommending certain actions. That can puzzle anglers, hunters, and others who wonder why a plan developed years earlier guides management decisions today.

Management plans and strategies are documents that guide decisions for five, ten, or even more years. They bring together historical and contemporary information, and then project likely scenarios and the best actions by FWP staff for managing the species, park, or fishery under different conditions.

For example, the Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan, last updated in 2020, lists abundance and angler catch rate goals for various game fish species in reservoirs near and downstream of Townsend. It then outlines

management strategies, such as adjusting perch and walleye harvest regulations under certain conditions, for achieving those goals.

During the multiyear process of developing or updating a management plan, various drafts are released for public review and comment. FWP considers all public comments and recommendations, as does the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission, which reviews and approves all FWP management plans. Once approved, a new or updated plan gives FWP managers a roadmap for deciding how best to manage elk, for instance, or the Bighorn River.

Existing management plans can’t be altered, ensuring that FWP analysis and public input approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission are respected and considered. But the plans’ recommendations aren’t completely set in stone, either. All plans and strategies allow for some revised management recommendations based on changing conditions or information, known as “adaptive management.” ■

