

July 23, 2008

Meet The Beetles...

The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority is turning to Mother Nature to help control an invasive plant species in the area.

Purple Loosestrife is a European plant that was introduced to North America in the 1800's. For a time it was sold as an ornamental garden plant until its harmful effects were noticed. Loosestrife is extremely prolific and can take over the habitat of other natural plants. It thrives in wetlands and can also destroy essential habitat for wildlife such as ducks.

Control methods include manually removing the plants by the roots. But because their seeds can lie dormant for more than a decade, this is not the most effective way to get rid of Purple Loosestrife. Chemical applicants are not practical because of their potential harm to the environment. The only known natural predator is the Galerucella beetle. The tiny insect feeds only on Purple Loosestrife and not any other plant.

On Thursday July 24, 2008 the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority will release a small colony of Galerucella beetles on a patch of Purple Loosestrife located on the Thunder Bay Expressway, half a kilometre EAST of the Red River Road/Dawson Road intersection. It is hoped the release of the beetles will halt the growth and spread of Loosestrife in this area which includes a drainage ditch that feeds into the McIntyre River and McVicar Creek.

The Authority is also investigating the possible release of more beetles on other patches of Loosestrife subject to consultation with affected landowners.