Adventures with Invasive Species
Benjamin Shrader
About me

• My name is Benjamin Shrader

• I am 16 years old and in the 10th grade

• My alias is Commander Ben - The Invasive Hunter - and I help educate kids of all ages about invasive species
Planting the seeds

• Always fascinated with the natural world
• Enjoy creating stories of action and adventure
• Looking for a topic for a science fair project in the fall of 2010
Learning about invasives

• Learned about invasive species in Texas

• It was an adventure I wanted to be part of

• Good guys (native species) vs Bad guys (invasive species)
Becoming a citizen scientist

- Took the Texas Invasives online training course
- Attended workshops at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
- Learned about different species online and in the field
- Volunteered with the City of Austin for invasive species removal
Found and reported species

- Learned about invasive species through the **Invaders of Texas Program**, part of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
- Used their map to find nearby observations
- Reported new invasive species sites as a citizen scientist
Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Conferences

• Honored to have been selected to present at the 2011 conference at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas

• And at the 2014 conference at the Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas, Texas
Educating kids of all ages

- My blog
- Social media
- School and event talks
- And lots of videos!
Who will fell this titan?
The movie

• Science under the Stars video contest at the University of Texas Brackenridge Field Lab in May 2011

• Wanted to bring fun and adventure to science with my first video to educate kids about the Giant Reed

• Honored that my first video won first place
Videos for Good

• Created over 70 videos to help educate and encourage people

• **Native Plant Avengers** video focused on how to protect Texas wildflowers from Bastard Cabbage (*Rapistrum rugosum*)

• Was part of the *Lights. Camera. Help.* 2012 Focus on Good Film Festival
Native Plant Avengers
Invasive Hunter Academy
Creating the academy

• Wanted to teach kids about invasive species in a fun and engaging way with in-person activities

• Launched the Academy in 2012 during National Invasive Species Awareness Week at the U.S. Botanic Gardens in Washington D.C.
Multisensory approach

- The Academy provides a multisensory approach to learning about invasive species
- Helps everyone learn through different ways: visually, physical action, and creative crafts
Invasive Hunter Academy on the Road

- U.S. Botanic Gardens in Washington D.C.
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
- UT Austin Hot Science - Cool Talks
- St. Edwards University
- Milam County Nature Festival
TV and Print

- Central Texas Gardener
- Science Weekly
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Magazine
Awards

- 2014 Outstanding Citizen Scientist of the Year from the Texas Invasive Plant and Pest Council

- 2013 Outstanding Terrestrial Invasive Species Volunteer of the Year from the National Invasive Species Council (NISC)

- 2013 International Young Eco-Hero from Action for Nature
What's next

• Creating more videos and bringing the Invasive Hunter Academy to more events
• Sharing my experiences with science and dyslexia
• Finishing high school!
• And more adventures with invasive species...
Thank you!

- Thank you for attending my presentation
- Visit my blog at commanderben.com and keep up the fight against invasives!