This week your child is reading *Mystery at Reed’s Pond*, a story in which children learn how introduced species are harming a local pond.

**Vocabulary on the Go**  One of the story characters has “extra-sharp eyes.” With your child, sit quietly at a window or outside in your yard, a park, or other natural area. Observe nature with extra-sharp eyes. What do you notice? Use some of these words to discuss your observations.

- appreciate
- effort
- average
- inspector
- resources

**Overgeneralization?**  Consider the following generalization about the environment: *People’s actions always endanger native wildlife.* Talk about this statement with your child. Do you feel it is an accurate take on real life, or is it an exaggeration? Are there exceptions to this rule? Why might this be an overgeneralization?

**Tip!**  A generalization is a broad statement that is true most of the time, and often includes the words *most, usually, or often*. An overgeneralization is too broad and not based on *all* evidence.

**Wanted: Invaders**  Kudzu plants, purple loosestrife, and zebra mussels are just three of many destructive species that have invaded North America. Use books or websites to find a list of different invasive species. Then choose one and learn more about it.

Help your child make a Wanted poster to show how to recognize the invader and what its “crimes” are. Include a picture of the invader and a description.

**CHALLENGE**
**A Bird Pest** Read and discuss this article with your child.

**Blame It on Shakespeare**

If you live in the United States, you have probably seen flocks of dark starlings swooping down out of the sky. What you probably didn’t know is that at one time, there were no starlings in the United States. Starlings were first introduced into North America in 1890 when some misguided people released 50 pairs of starlings in Central Park in New York City.

Believe it or not, these folks were fans of the playwright William Shakespeare. They wanted to introduce into the United States all of the bird species mentioned in Shakespeare’s works. The starling was just one of them! From these few birds, the starling population in North America has grown to over 200 million. They now live in all fifty states.

Starlings are bold, aggressive birds that drive other birds out of their nests. They have also been known to attack other species and eat their eggs. As a result, starlings have driven down the population of other species as their population has grown. All this because of Shakespeare!

**Bird Watch** Use a bird field guide to identify birds that live in your area. Then use books or websites to learn more about them.

**Book Links**

- *Pale Male: Citizen Hawk of New York City*, by Janet Schulman

**Internet Challenge** In the story, a new species of turtle gets introduced into a pond with native turtles. Help your child search the Internet for information about turtles that live in your area.