Module
Field Preparation

Group Projects

Initially during training and for several planned outings after the initial training, we suggest the project be carried out in groups with designated leaders supervising data collection. After these group outings, volunteers can choose to be part of a small group that works together to monitor specific sites. For organized, small group outings, you will need at least one field kit (GPS unit, digital camera, and other resources). Only one GPS and camera is needed per group outing. One person from each group should be in charge of entering the data into the web-based data form after returning from the field. The data record should include the names of all participants in the small group.

Individual Projects

Volunteers may choose after initial training to work individually either at assigned sites or on personal hiking/camping/birding outings. Volunteers choosing this method should still have a companion with them in the field for safety reasons.

Local Networks

We encourage teams to form a network of local partners involved in invasive species prevention, monitoring, control, and eradication. Monitoring sites will be chosen based on recommendations and requests from these local partners. In some cases, this may be an organization requesting help with early detection in previously unmonitored areas. Other sites may include areas that underwent eradication previously and the purpose of monitoring will be to determine eradication success. It is our goal to target areas that are most in need of monitoring.

We also encourage volunteers to collect data when out in the field on recreational outings. It is important that you be aware of the rules regarding public vs. private property and various agency requirements for data collection.

Public and Private Land Issues

The goal of the EDDMapS Program is to have many eyes detecting and reporting invaders in as many places as possible. However, we have to be mindful of both public land rules and regulations and the rights of private landowners.

Public Land - Some agencies have very strict rules concerning collection of data and specimens on public property. For example, the National Park Service requires researchers to obtain permits for these kinds of activities. When in doubt about the public ownership of a property you plan to survey or the rules of collecting data on public lands, contact the agency responsible for the management of that property. We
think you will find that most, if not all, public land managers will be supportive of efforts to detect invasive species on publicly held lands.

**Private Land** - It is important that we respect the rights of private landowners and do not trespass on their land without their specific permission. Keep in mind that Public Rights of Ways (ROW) like roads are not considered private land. Many of your surveys will be along these ROWs.

**Field Safety**

Due to the field-oriented nature of the data collection, your work will present you with the inherent physical risks posed by walking in a natural environment and getting to field sites. We recommend you follow these suggested safety precautions:

- Avoid walking through areas where you cannot see your feet. Thick vegetation may hide venomous animals or uneven terrain from view.
- If searching for species patches from a vehicle, always go in teams. Vehicle drivers should pay attention to the road. Passengers can look for target species.
- When surveying on roadsides, pull vehicles far off the road, taking care to park on a firm surface. Be aware of passing traffic and stay clear of traffic lanes while collecting data.
- Bring a cell phone (but be aware that many remote areas are out of service range) and carry a topographic map or trails map of the area in which you are hiking.
- Always hike with at least one partner and inform someone not in your party of where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Bring sufficient water and sun protection.
- If you have known allergies or other medical conditions that might require you to take medications in the field, then bring your medications with you.

We would never ask you to perform a service that is beyond your comfort level. If you are ever concerned about field conditions on any outing, please tell your satellite leader.
Preparation for Field Work

Prior to visiting your field site for data collection make sure you have **good maps** and directions for getting to your site. Remember to fill up your vehicle’s gas tank and bring extra water, particularly if you are traveling far from inhabited areas. If you plan on working far from trails and roads, you should also have topographic maps of your area with you. **Make sure that you have permission to be in that area.** If you are unsure whether collecting data in a particular area is permissible, it is better to err on the side of caution.

Make sure that you **let someone know where you will be going and when you expect to return.** This is important to do even when you are with a group of people. You should always **have a companion when working in the field.**

**Check the weather** before you head to the field site. You should not work in adverse weather conditions such as thunder and lightning storms. Be aware of the danger of flash floods particularly if you are working in riparian areas, washes, or flood prone areas. While it may be sunny and clear where you are working, precipitation can produce flash floods that are swiftly carried down washes to areas away from the center of the storm.

Make sure you bring **plenty of water, sunscreen, a hat, appropriate clothing and footwear, and a first aid kit.** Many of you will be walking off trails and roads so protect your legs and feet with long pants and closed-toe shoes. If you have a cell phone, bring that with you. Keep in mind that you may be in remote areas where you are out of service range. This is why it is so important to let someone know where you are going and when you will be back. If you have known allergies or other medical conditions that might require that you take **medications** in the field, make sure you put those medications in your field pack.

**Check your field equipment** before you leave. Turn on your GPS units and cameras to make sure they are working properly and have good batteries in them. Bring extra batteries with you just in case. Make sure your pencils are sharpened and that you have sufficient blank data sheets for the number of areas you plan on visiting. Check that you have your EDDMapS handbook, a working sharpie pen, and your datasheets. At a minimum, make sure you bring the most important components with you: datasheet, pencil, GPS unit and camera.
When you arrive at your field area…

Once you have reached your destination, you will want to make sure that you bring all needed items with you in a pack, particularly if you are leaving your vehicle behind. Many unfortunate hikers and researchers carefully bring their cell phones, enough water, and blank datasheets only to leave them in the vehicle and find those items needed are miles away. Make sure your vehicle is parked in a safe place – far enough from the road that it does not impede traffic and does not block roads, driveways, etc. After strapping on your backpack and locking your vehicle you will be ready to enter the exciting world of scientific data collection.

Animals which are large and/or venomous can be found throughout Georgia. Be aware of your surroundings. Avoid walking through areas where you cannot see your feet. Be comfortable with the area you are working in. If you are leaving roads and trails, make sure you have good maps, a compass, and feel confident with map navigation.

Field Kit Contents

A well-equipped field kit should include the following:

- Backpack
- Camera
- Camera memory card
- USB card reader and cable
- Extra batteries
- GPS Unit
- Clipboard
- Blank data sheets
- Species ID cards (if available)
- EDDMapS handbook
- Pencils/sharpie pens
- Maps
- Seed removal brush
- First Aid kit