

**Presenter: John Gaskin, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Northern Plains Agricultural Research Laboratory, Sidney, MT**

John Gaskin received a BA in Biology at UC Santa Cruz, then a PhD in Evolution and Population Biology from Washington University in St. Louis. He currently manages a USDA Agricultural Research Service lab in Sidney, Montana. For the last 15 years the focus of his research has been the population genetics and molecular systematics of invasive plants. Specific goals of this research are to find out which genotypes of exotic plants are invading, where these plants originated from, which native and exotic species they are most closely related to, and where the invasive genotypes are distributed in North America. John also has a strong interest in hybridization and invasion, and how novel hybrids can influence invasion and resistance to biological control agents. His research intentions are to enhance biological control program efficacy by making sure that the genetic diversity of an invasion is represented in tests of current and proposed biological control agents, and that all native plants closely related to the invasion are included in host-specificity tests. Invasive taxa of interest include saltcedar, rush skeletonweed, hawkweeds, pepperweeds, Russian olive and teasel.