Help Audubon Track Invasive Non-Native Animals

GREATER EVERGLADES REGION

Audubon FLORIDA

The ecological integrity of Florida's ecosystems face considerable risk from the continued spread of non-native plants and animals. Our state's role as a hub of U.S. import, coupled with our welcoming subtropical climate, allow stowaway and escaped species to flourish. While much attention is focused on Florida's invasive plants due to their potential economic impact, invasive animals are having devastating effects on Florida's unique ecosystems. Audubon has partnered with several groups throughout the state to help address this mounting threat. We are asking our fellow Audubon members and friends to be our 'eyes and ears' on the ground, reporting these and all non-native animals that have entered our natural areas. With your help, we can protect native birds and other wildlife!

Non-native animals threaten the natural biodiversity and ecological integrity of many of Florida's special places.

PHOTO: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Large Constrictors *(Burmese pythons, African rock pythons & others)*

Release of unwanted constrictors by pet owners has enabled these highly-adaptable snakes to invade many parts of Florida. They are fairly reclusive and eat a variety of animals. Amnesty programs relieve owners of unwanted pets while legislation aims to limit importation and sales, but existing breeding populations require control.

Tegus & Monitors

Several species of large carnivorous lizards have known breeding populations in the Everglades Region. Many of these species can exceed 4-6 feet in length. Their diet includes small animals and eggs of many species, threatening small pets and native wildlife, particularly burrowing owls and gopher tortoises. They are adept both on land and in water.

PHOTO: DENNIS GIARDINA, FWC

PHOTO: FIR0002/ FLAGSTAFFOTOS

PHOTO: NORBERT

Purple Swamphens & Sacred Ibis

Purple Swamphens (L) are larger than native Gallinules, and while they primarily impact wetland vegetation they are known to prey on small birds and eggs. Sacred Ibis (R) look similar to Wood Storks, but are larger than native Ibis with a curved bill and black head and legs. Their generalist diet can include eggs and nestlings of other birds and have been a particular threat to seabirds in other areas where they've been introduced.

Island Apple Snails

Island apple snails are becoming common throughout FL. Currently, we know little about their impact on aquatic systems or our native apple snail. Limpkins and Everglade Snail Kites feed exclusively on apple snails. Island apple snail egg masses are bright pink (compared to the pale pink to white color of native eggs) while adult shells are nearly indistinguishable from natives, aside from their notably larger maximum adult size.

PHOTO: CHARLES LEE

Stay up-to-date on invasive species issues by visiting Audubon Florida's News Blog — http://audubonfloridanews.org

Iguanas *(Mexican spiny-tailed, black spiny-tailed & green)*

Three large members of the iguana family are established in the Greater Everglades region. While iguana are generally herbivorous, they are opportunistic predators and may pose a threat to eggs of nesting wading or shorebirds, hatchling sea turtles and gopher tortoises. Juvenile iguanas tend to be more carnivorous than adults.

Non-Native Freshwater Fishes *(cichlids, armored catfish & others)*

Florida's matrix of interconnected waterways and sub-tropical climate have made it very easy for non-native fishes to spread and thrive. Most of these species prey on our native aquatic species (fish, tadpoles, shrimp, snails), threatening the integrity of our native streams, lakes and wetlands and often decreasing the diversity of native fishes.

Gambian Pouch Rat

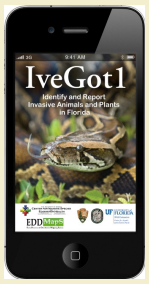
These very large rats (up to 3 feet long and 9 pounds) are established in the Florida Keys and threaten spreading to the mainland. With a keen sense of smell, they primarily eat fruits and grains but also eat insects, crabs and snails. Gambian rats reproduce very quickly, and they impact native plants, compete with native rodents, and carry disease.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Audubon chapter members, volunteers and friends can help in early detection and rapid response efforts by being alert to and reporting non-native species seen while birding or otherwise enjoying our natural areas. Sightings are monitored by scientists and land managers working to control the spread of animal invaders. These *free* tools are critical for helping identify and report animal invaders:

- **EDDMapS (www.ivegot1.org):** An online tool that provides distribution maps and species information, and a portal for online reporting of non-native plants and animals (efforts should be made to include photographs and GPS coordinates with sightings, whenever possible).

EDDMapS
Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System



- **IveGot1 Smartphone App:** A mobile app (iphone & Android) that allows you to easily report non-native species through EDDMapS (allows easy upload of geo-tagged smartphone phtographs).

- **REDDy (http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/reddy.shtml):** An online training resource for learning to spot, identify and report non-native reptiles using EDDMapS and the IveGot1 app.

REDDy
Introduced Reptile Early Detection & Documentation