

# ECISMA Outreach 2012 – 2013

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University of Florida



**EVERGLADES CISMA**

# Innovations and Successes

- New products and publications
- Identification of outreach priorities
- Pet Amnesty Day partnership with FWC
- ECISMA newsletter edit & design
- Attitude survey of target group  
(Python Challenge participants)

# Publications and Products



**REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES**



[www.IveGot1.org](http://www.IveGot1.org)



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## Tegu fast facts

- Tegus are native to South America.
- The tegu's diet includes fruits, vegetables, eggs, insects, cat or dog food, and small animals such as lizards and rodents.
- Like many reptiles, tegus are most active during the daytime.
- The tegu is a large species of lizard and can grow up to 4 feet in length.
- In a burrow, a tegu can survive temperatures as low as 35°F (1.6°C).
- Tegus spend the colder months of the year in a burrow or under artificial cover.
- On average, a mature female tegu will lay around 35 eggs a year.
- In Florida, tegu eggs hatch early in the summer.
- Anything that attracts dogs, cats, or raccoons can attract a tegu!



Hatchling tegus have a green coloration on their head which usually fades within the first few months of their life. Photo by Dustin Smith, Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces.

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08/2012

Local populations of breeding tegus are now known to exist in three Florida counties: Miami-Dade, Hillsborough, and Polk. Monitoring these populations and stopping the spread of this species is vital to maintaining Florida's native wildlife. Scientists are concerned that tegus will compete with and prey upon Florida's native wildlife, including some threatened species.



This map shows credible sightings of Argentine black and white tegus in Florida.

## Be part of the solution!

- Don't leave pet food outside.
- Cover outdoor openings and clear your yard of debris to minimize hiding and burrowing areas.
- Report all tegu sightings to the exotic species hotline at 1-888-Ive-Got1 or online at [IveGot1.org](http://IveGot1.org).
- Don't release exotic animals into the Florida ecosystem. It's illegal and can be harmful to native wildlife.
- Be a responsible pet owner. Take the time to learn about an animal before you take one as a pet.

# Tegus in Florida



Dennis Gardina, FWC

## How You Can Help Stop The Spread Of An Invasive Lizard



Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission  
[MyFWC.com](http://MyFWC.com)

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# Burmese pythons and native look-alikes

Remember, native snakes play an interesting and vital role in Florida's complex ecology.

## Burmese Python

**NONNATIVE**

- Dark arrowhead on top of head
- Light line in arrow
- Dark wedges behind and below eye

### Burmese Python Characteristics:

- Smooth-scaled (shiny)
- Heavy bodied
- Dark, irregular blotches along back and sides
- Giraffe-like pattern
- Cream colored underside

## Corn Snake

**NATIVE**

- Black edges lines form V on head
- Rounded pupils

### Corn Snake Characteristics:

- Smooth-scaled (shiny)
- Alternating reddish, black bordered blotches on back and sides
- Black and white checkerboard pattern on underside

## Brown Water Snake

**NATIVE**

- Minimal pattern on head
- Rounded pupils

### Brown Water Snake Characteristics:

- Keeled scales (dull in appearance)
- Heavy bodied
- Alternating dark, squarish blotches along back and sides

All photos courtesy of Robin Bijlani, University of Florida

## NATIVE AND EXOTIC CROCODILIANS OF FLORIDA

Florida has two native species of crocodilians, the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) and American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*). These federally protected species are easily confused with exotic crocodilians found in south Florida, such as the spectacled caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*) and Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*). Some key features used to distinguish these animals are the shape of the head, the shape of the snout, and nuchal scute (bony plates in between head and shoulders) patterns.

### If you see an exotic crocodilian:

1. Take a photograph
2. Note the location
3. Report your sighting by calling 1-888-IVE-GOT1, visiting [www.IveGot1.org](http://www.IveGot1.org) or by using the IveGot1 smartphone app.

All crocodile sightings (native or exotic) should also be reported to University of Florida by calling (954) 577-6304.

### American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) - NATIVE



Very common in Florida; not necessary to report. Snout is much more broad and rounded than that of crocodiles; only top row of teeth visible when mouth is closed. Adults are a dark, dusky olive-black coloration.

### Spectacled caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*) - EXOTIC



**Please report to IveGot1!** Similar to the American alligator but with a triangular shaped head and slightly more pointed snout. "Spectacle" ridge on the snout in front of eyes. Dark brown or olive coloration.

### Crocodiles of South Florida

Crocodiles (left) are sometimes confused with alligators (right), however they are easily distinguishable by comparing their heads/snouts. Crocodiles have a pointed, narrow snout and their bottom teeth are visible when the mouth is closed. Alligators have a rounded, blunt snout and only the top teeth are visible when the mouth is closed.



### American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*) - NATIVE



Please report to University of Florida. Narrow, pointed snout; fourth tooth on bottom row visible when mouth is closed. Irregular nuchal scute pattern. Dark olive-brown and dark olive-green in coloration.

### Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*) - EXOTIC



**Please report to IveGot1 and University of Florida!** Very difficult to distinguish from the American crocodile. Narrow, pointed snout (slightly more broad than an American crocodile). Symmetrical osteoderm pattern on back. Dark olive-brown or dark gray in coloration.

Authors: Seth C. Farris, Michiko A. Squires, Brian M. Jeffery, Frank J. Mazzotti

**UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA** Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences  
IFAS Publication WEC \_\_\_\_ 2013



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# Newsletter

VOLUME 4 MAY 2013



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officials hold up a skin from a 21-foot Burmese python at the Python Challenge Awareness and Awards event. From left: FWC Press Secretary Susan Smith, Public Information Coordinator Carli Segelson, Officer Bobby Dube, Regional Director Chuck Collins, Nina Segelson, and Officer David Bingham. *Photo credit: Alicia Wellman, FWC*

## Results of the 2013 Python Challenge™ Will Help Develop Management Options

by Frank Mazzotti, UF, Kristen Sommers and Jenny Ketterlin Eckles, FWC

For the first time, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) held a month-long competition to remove Burmese pythons (*Python molurus bivittatus*) from state lands in south Florida. From January 12 through February 10, 2013, the general public and individuals previously permitted by the state to remove pythons competed separately for cash prizes for the longest and most pythons harvested. Twenty-four permit holders registered to compete in the competition along with 1558 members of the general public. Ultimately, 68 Burmese pythons were removed from state-managed lands (Table 1); that is the most Burmese pythons removed from state lands over the same time period from any other year. Permit holders captured 42

Burmese pythons and the general public removed 26 pythons.

The primary goal of the 2013 Python Challenge was to raise public awareness about Burmese pythons in Florida and how people can help limit the impact of this and other invasive species. In addition to this educational component, the competition provided scientific data which FWC will apply to gauge the effectiveness of using an incentive-based model as one tool to address an invasive species management problem. All pythons captured during the competition were received by staff from the University of Florida Ft. Lauderdale Research and Education Center.

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Table 1. Number of Burmese pythons removed from state lands open to participants in the 2013 Python Challenge.

State Lands	Number of Burmese Pythons Removed
<b>Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Lands</b>	
Big Cypress Wildlife Management Area (WMA)	6
Everglades and Francis S Taylor WMA	28
Holey Land WMA	0
Rotenberger WMA	0
<b>South Florida Water Management District Lands*</b>	34

\*Only python permit holders were allowed to remove Burmese pythons from South Florida Water Management District lands during the competition.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Pet Amnesty Day in Broward

- 10/20/12
- Treetops Park in Davie
- 34 animals surrendered



# Outreach Events

- Sept. 17, Oct. 1, 2012: Palm Beach State College panel discussion
- Oct. 13–14: Florida Sportsman Expo, West Palm Beach
- Oct. 16–19: Partners in Conservation Award Ceremony, Washington D.C
- Nov. 3: Reptile Day at Miami Science Museum
- Jan. 12, 2013: Python Challenge Kickoff
- Jan. 11–12: Everglades Coalition conference
- Feb. 16: Python Challenge Awareness & Awards Event
- Mar. 9: Broward Water Matters Day
- Mar. 10: Davie Airboat Show
- Apr. 6: Miami River Day
- Apr. 20–21: Lauderdale Airshow
- Apr. 20–21: Party for the Planet at Zoo Miami
- Apr. 27: Deerfield Beach Earth Day
- May 18: Everglades Nonnative Fish Roundup



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# Outreach Priorities

## (top 10)

- Develop a “traveling trunk” of invasive species materials
- Reach out to surveyors, water managers, and other “eyes on the ground”
- Redesign website to target general public as well as professionals
- Reach out to legislators and decision makers
- Set up donation fund for ECISMA
- Reach out to farmers
- Create an ECISMA tagline and “brand”
- Reach out to homeowners’ associations in targeted areas
- Attend more community events
- Develop new “prey pyramids” for lionfish, tegus, etc.

# What's Next?

- Discussion: How to Reach Decision Makers?
- Nonnative Fish Fact Sheet

# Don't Let It Loose



## Exotic Pet Amnesty Day

September 21, 2013

Sawgrass Nature Center & Wildlife Hospital  
3000 Sportsplex Drive, Coral Springs, FL 33065  
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

- Surrender exotic pets that can no longer be kept
- No penalties for unlicensed or illegal exotic pets
- See live exotic animals up close
- Talk to experts about being a responsible pet owner
- Surrendered pets will be adopted out the same day
- Adopters must pre-register at [MyFWC.com/Nonnatives](http://MyFWC.com/Nonnatives)



Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission  
[MyFWC.com](http://MyFWC.com)

For more information visit: [MyFWC.com/Nonnatives](http://MyFWC.com/Nonnatives)  
or call 1-888-Ive-Got1 (1-888-483-4681)

# Thank you!

ECISMA Outreach Volunteers and Collaborators

Stuart Krantz, Chuck Bargeron, Christa Barlow,  
Liz Barraco, Robin Bijlani, Todd Campbell,  
Vanessa Campoverde, Andrew Derksen, Jane Dozier,  
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# Python Challenge

## Experience & Attitude Survey

### Participants:

- Online survey (49 closed-ended, 8 open-ended questions)
- 660 respondents (42% response rate)

### Non-participants (for comparison):

- 77 attendees of Awareness & Awards Event
- Paper survey (16 closed-ended questions)

*Next step: General public*

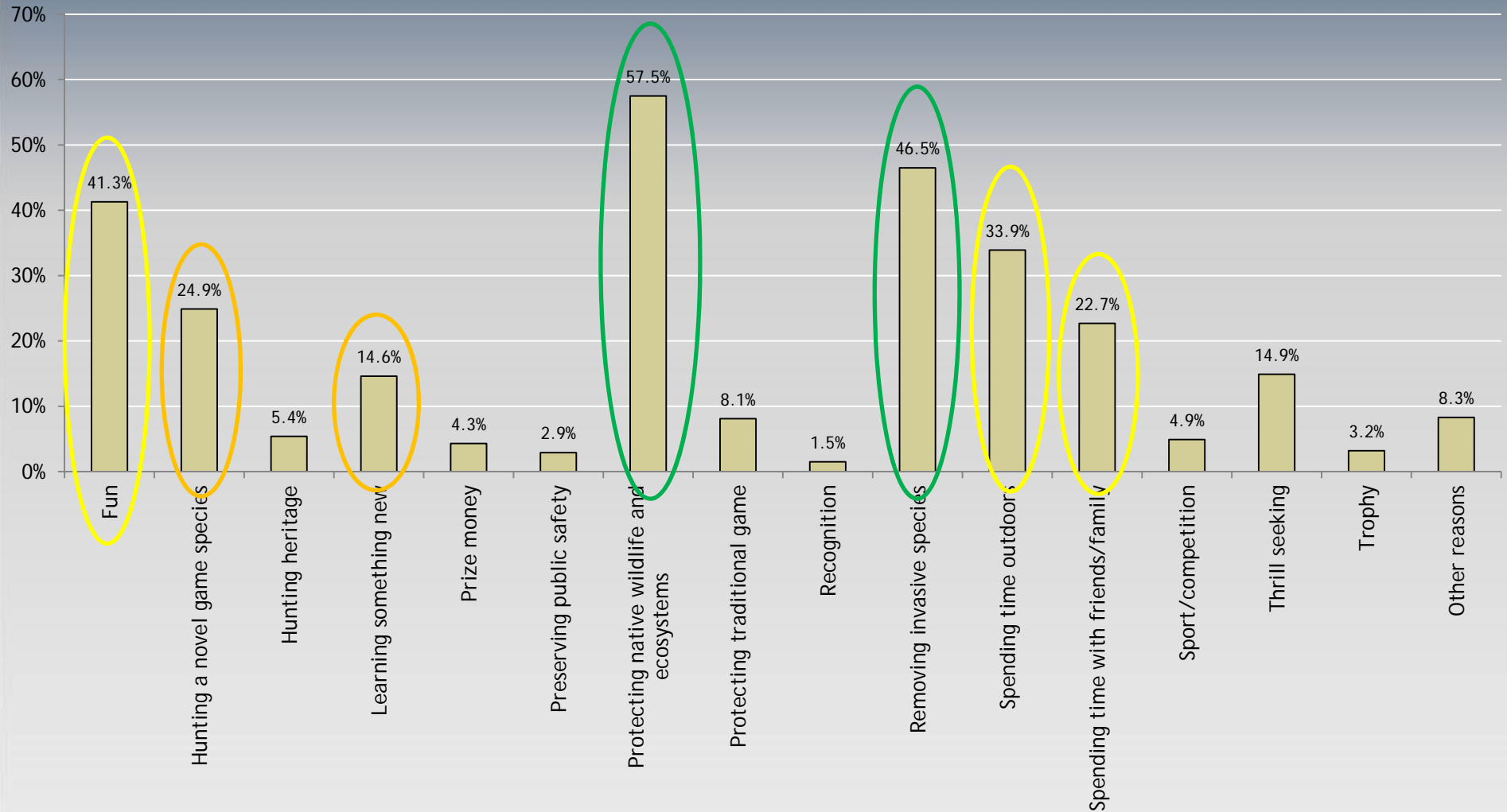
# Survey Objectives

- Understand target audience
- Determine if the Python Challenge met its educational objectives
- Establish baseline to assess change over time
- Improve future events

# Who are the participants?

- 92% Men
- 89% White, 11% Hispanic/Latino
  - 2% Native American, 2% Asian, 1% Black/African American, 1% Other*
- Mean age 43.5 (range 18–81)
- 27% Bachelor's degree, 29% graduate school
- 82% FL residents
- 78% hunters (13% had hunted pythons)
- 35% herpers
- 64% visited WMAs before

# What motivates them?



# The Python Challenge communicated its message effectively.

	% Agree or Strongly Agree	
	Participants	Non-Participants
<i>Burmese pythons are harmful to the Everglades ecosystem as I know it.</i>	86%	88%
<i>Regulations on pet ownership can help prevent the introduction of nonnative species into south Florida's environment.</i>	81%	87%
<i>Public hunting is an effective way to reduce the number of Burmese pythons in south Florida.</i>	78%	66%

# They believe hunters can help.

- What should be done to manage pythons?

68% -- expand hunting opportunities and incentives

- Benefits of Python Challenge?

31% -- public participation in removal efforts

	% Agree or Strongly Agree	
	Participants	Non-Participants
<i>Governmental agencies, universities, and environmental organizations are effectively addressing the Burmese python invasion.</i>	36%	73%

# They draw their own conclusions.

	% Agree or Strongly Agree	
	Participants	Non-Participants
<i>There are large numbers of Burmese pythons in the wild in south Florida.</i>	50%	91%

# Thank you!

## Python Challenge Survey Research Collaborators

Larry Perez, Rebecca Garvoille, Liz Barraco, Alice Clarke,  
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Prize donations:

*Hoo-Rag and K-Light Solar Lanterns*

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