



Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel (GSARP) Update for Georgia



REPORTING PERIOD:
December 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021

Report Submitted By:

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The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have impacts on many of our invasive species efforts during the reporting period. Though our agency has tried to remain as available as we safely could to respond to invasive species issues, the ongoing pandemic during this reporting period has certainly impacted our ability to accomplish all that we had hoped to achieve. Nonetheless, the following provides our accomplishments for the reporting period.

FRESHWATER SPECIES

FISH

Flathead Catfish (*Pylodictis olivaris*):

The Satilla River is one of the premier sunfish fisheries in the state of Georgia and redbreast sunfish (*Lepomis auritus*) are a highly sought-after species. Flathead catfish were likely introduced through unauthorized stocking and first observed in the Satilla River in 1996. During the mid-2000's, standardized sampling and creel surveys revealed declines in abundances of redbreast sunfish and bullhead catfishes (*Ameiurus* spp.) coincided with significant increases in the abundance of flathead catfish. In 1996, the Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) – Fisheries Management Section (FM) began removing flathead catfish from the Satilla River as time permitted and in 2006, instituted the Flathead Catfish Removal Project to control the population.

Though they have not begun during this reporting period, efforts to remove flathead catfish from the Satilla River are scheduled to resume in late Spring 2021. We anticipate continuing these 2021 efforts through early/mid Fall.

Blue Catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*)

In addition to removing flathead catfish in the Satilla River, GADNR staff continue to remove blue catfish from the river. Removal of this second non-native species occurs simultaneously during flathead removals. Consequently, removal efforts have not begun during the reporting period but are scheduled to resume in late Spring 2021. We anticipate continuing such 2021 efforts through early/mid Fall.



Other Freshwater ANS Fish Species

GADNR staff continue to receive reports of ANS species being captured in our state. Below are captures reported during this reporting period.

Island Applesnail (*Pomacea insularum*)

- Capture Location: Pipe Maker Canal – Savannah River - Chatham County
- Discovered by GADNR staff while responding to a fish kill in the area.
- Positive ID verified by GADNR staff.
- Dozens of specimens observed, along with egg casings everywhere – no treatment; species already present in that watershed.



Zebra Mussel Infecting Pet Stores – Nationwide issue, including in GA

In early March, GA officials, along with all other US states, were notified of contaminated moss balls being shipped to PetCo and other pet stores that had been found to contain zebra mussels. Upon hearing this news, GADNR staff visited several pet stores and confirmed the presence of zebra mussels in moss ball containers in PetCo and PetSmart stores. Following a national recall of products by both pet store chains and in partnering with FWS/USGS, GADNR staff began responding to the issue by visiting stores in person to collect contaminated specimens for destruction; issuing a press release to inform the public of the issue; developing and sharing a multitude of educational materials to inform aquarium owners as to how they could clean their aquariums and prevent the release of zebra mussels; and conducting multiple interviews with TV/radio outlets to help spread the word.

Much of the information pertaining to the contaminated moss ball issue was put on the GADNR ANS website for the public to have easy access to such info.

Additionally, GADNR staff developed tracking tools in ArcGIS to track visited or contacted pet stores. Below are links to a few of the press release and outreach materials, along with 2 poster notices, created for this issue.

- <https://georgiawildlife.com/ans#Recent>
- <https://georgiawildlife.com/invasive-species-found-pet-store-product-we-need-your-help>



PLANTS

Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*)

- No reports of Giant Salvinia were received during this report period.

Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*)

- No reports of water hyacinth removals during this report period.

MARINE SPECIES

CRUSTACEANS

Asian Tiger Shrimp (*Penaeus monodon*)

Commercial fishermen continue to periodically report catches of Asian tiger shrimp in Georgia waters, though such incidences remain low. Reports of tiger shrimp continue to be provided through the new reporting tool on the GADNR-WRD website. One report in early March 2021 indicated 10 tiger shrimp were captured during 14 days of shrimp trawls occurring off the Georgia coast. GADNR will continue to monitor tiger shrimp occurrence.

In addition to potential catches of tiger shrimp by commercial fishermen, GADNR staff may potentially intercept tiger shrimp during fishery-independent standardized sampling (a.k.a. Ecological Monitoring Trawl Survey) conducted monthly at 36+ sites coastwide by the GADNR, Coastal Resources Division. These monthly monitoring events utilize a 40' trawl net and are designed to assess Penaeid shrimp and blue crab populations but can capture tiger shrimp as well. No tiger shrimp were captured in these surveys during the reporting period. Results of these surveys also suggest abundance of tiger shrimp in Georgia's sampled waters are low.

Standardized Sampling Results – R/V Anna

1976 – 2012: No Tiger Shrimp observed

2013: 3 tiger shrimp

2014: 1 tiger shrimp

2015 - 2018: 0 tiger shrimp

2019: 1 tiger shrimp

2020: 0 tiger shrimp

Indo-Pacific Swimming Crab (*Charybdis hellerii*)

- Capture Location: ocean waters off St. Simons Island – Glynn County
- Caught by commercial shrimp trawler on 09/11/2020 and given to UGA MAREX
- Positive ID verified by SCDNR Senior Marine Scientist Peter Kingsley-Smith
- Crab was euthanized



Education and Outreach Efforts

General

- Staff have continued to make additional updates to the GADNR Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) web page on our website. The new website can be accessed at: <https://georgiawildlife.com/ans>
- Staff developed and printed a 12-page ANS educational workbook designed for students in grades 3rd – 7th. These workbooks were designed to provide some good foundational knowledge of ANS, examples of it, problems associated with it, and how they as students can help prevent introductions of new ANS in the future. The workbook provides good reading for the students but also requires them to complete several activities in the book to engage them in better displaying what they've learned. Printed copies of the workbook have been distributed to several schools around the state, and additional copies are available at any GADNR Fisheries office.



ANS Educational Workbook

Speaking Presentations

Conducting visits to schools and other educational outlets continues to be one of our utmost priorities, as we feel our best opportunity to impact future changes for ANS introductions is to invest our time in helping inform and guide today's youth. As discussed in the previous report, we have modified our approach due to the COVID-19 pandemic and only conduct our events outside, so as to keep us and kids safer. Using this approach, we spoke to over 1090 students and adults across 5 schools/civic groups during the reporting period:

