



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



REPORTING PERIOD:
June 1, 2022 – October 31, 2022

Report Submitted By:

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STATEWIDE MANAGEMENT

Regulatory Changes:

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) is tasked with leading the creation, implementation, and enforcement of various laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to wildlife in our state. The Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) identifies laws within Georgia, including providing regulatory authority to certain entities for establishing rules and regulations within the state. For the protection, sustainment, and management of our natural resources, much of this regulatory authority is provided to the Board of Natural Resources (Board).

The GADNR is tasked with periodically reviewing current laws, rules, and regulations being implemented across the state and update said rules and regulations as necessary via recommendations to the Board. In early 2022, the GADNR conducted a review and update of Board Rule 391-4-8 (Wild Animals). These rules “maintain and supplement the list of wild animals requiring a license, insurance, or both and prohibit certain species.” Based on that review, the GADNR recommended the following updates to the Board. These recommendations were approved by the Board in October 2022 and will go into effect in November 2022.

Board Rule 391-4-8-.03 = **Prohibited** Wild Animals:

- Staff recommended adding verbiage to clarify that “live individuals” are prohibited.
- The following animals were added to the **Prohibited** list:
 - *Mammals*: mongooses (all species);
 - *Birds*: Purple Swamphen; Monk Parakeet / Quaker parrot (exception is that individuals currently owning these species under a wild animal license that is current may continue to possess them according to their license conditions).
 - *Fishes*: Snakeheads (all species); African tigerfish; bighead/silver/black carp; lates perches (all species); wels catfish
 - *Invertebrates*: dreissenid mussels (all species); giant African land snails (all species); marbled crayfish or “marmokrebs”.

Board Rule 391-4-8-.04 = Inherently Dangerous Wild Animals Requiring License/Insured

- *Mammals*: cats (all non-domestic species). Note: Insurance required
- *Reptiles*: Mole vipers / Stiletto snakes (all species).
- *Fishes*: gymnotid eels (all species); stonefishes (all species); weeverfishes (all species). NOTE: the fish listed that are held in aquaria in GA prior to Rule being effective may be possessed, sold, transported, or transferred for a 12-month period following effective date of new rule change.
- *Invertebrates*: fattail scorpions (all species); bark scorpions (all species); burrowing thicktailed scorpions (all species); deathstalker scorpion; yellow-legged creeping scorpion.

Board Rule 391-4-8-.05 = Wild Animals Requiring a License

- *Reptiles*: Indian rock python; Burmese python; Argentine black-and-white tegu; Nile Monitor; African helmeted turtle; Chinese softshell turtle....NOTE: Any of these reptile species listed shall only be licensed for scientific, educational, or public exhibition purposes; however, such species possessed on or before the Rule effective date may be held as a pet without a license or permit provided that the owner tags and registers all individuals with the GADNR Law Enforcement within 12 months of effective date of Rule.
- *Fishes*: Arapaimas (all species); trahiras (all species); goonch catfishes (all species); swamp eels (all species). NOTE: the fish listed that are held in aquaria in GA before the effective date of this Rule may be possessed, sold, transported, or transferred for a 12-month period following effective date of new rule change.
- *Invertebrates*: apple snails (all species); Asian mystery snails (all species); crayfish-Family Astacidae, Cambaroididae, Parastacidae (all species); crayfish-Cambaridae (all species, except that *Cambarellus* spp., red swamp crayfish, and White River crayfish may be sold, purchased, or possessed without a permit; Family Penaeidae (penaeid shrimp) – all species, except that dead shrimp may be possessed without a license when used for human consumption; New Zealand Mud Snail; Assassin/Bumblebee snail; etheriid mussels (all species); hyriid mussels (all species); iridiniid mussels (all species); Mycetopodid mussels (all species); pond mussels (all species); all freshwater and marine invertebrate wild animals not held in aquaria/tanks. NOTE: the invertebrates listed that are held in aquaria in GA before the effective date of this Rule may be possessed, sold, transported, or transferred for a 12-month period following effective date of new rule change.

Additional information and answers to Frequently Asked Questions can be found at:

<https://georgiawildlife.com/rules-pertaining-wild-animals>

FRESHWATER SPECIES - MANAGEMENT

FISH and INVERTEBRATES

Flathead Catfish (*Pylodictis olivaris*) Removal Project:

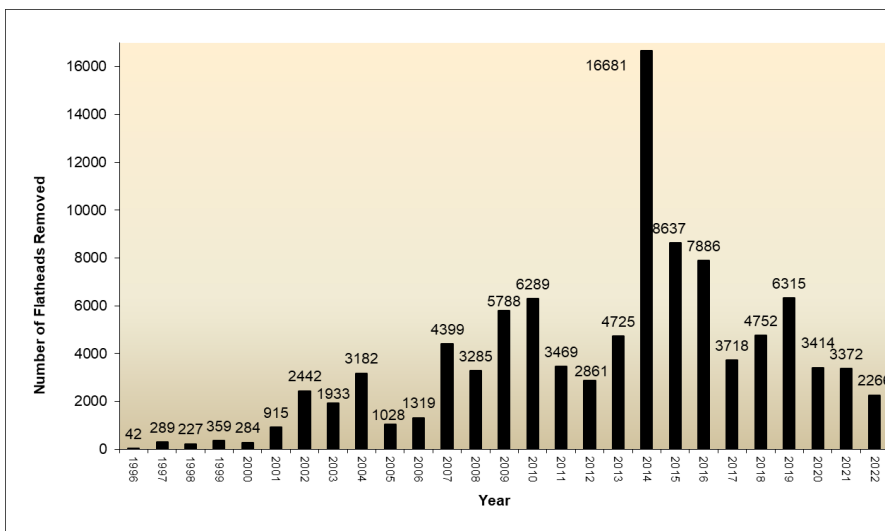
The Satilla River is one of the premier sunfish fisheries in the state of Georgia and redbreast sunfish (*Lepomis auritus*) are a highly sought-after species. In fact, the new **WORLD RECORD REDBREAST SUNFISH** was caught in the Satilla River in 2022.



WORLD RECORD REDBREAST – 2022

Since the introduction of flathead catfish into the Satilla River in the mid-1990's, the impact of this non-native has been significant. In an effort to reduce their impact on redbreast and other native fish, GADNR staff initiated efforts to remove flathead catfish on a part-time basis in 1996 and full-time starting in 2007 to control their population.

Staff initiated the 2022 removal efforts in May. Staff spent 180.18 hours of shocking time, removing 2,266 flatheads. Catches fluctuated throughout the summer, and despite seeing a lower total number of fish as compared to recent years, staff remain committed to conducting removals annually as much as is feasible.



Blue Catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*) Removal:

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. Staff saw a tremendous surge in the number of blue cats seen in 2022, when 1,552 blue catfish were removed from the Satilla River. Sizes of these fish ranged from 54mm to 893mm, averaging 240.3mm.

Other Freshwater ANS Species:

Northern Snakehead Monitoring:

While thorough eradication efforts were done in October 2019 to prevent the spread of Northern Snakehead found in Gwinnett County, GADNR staff took a proactive approach to continue monitoring this site and subsequent nearby downstream waters to ensure these invasives were indeed eradicated. Since 2020, GADNR staff have teamed with USFWS staff to conduct eDNA sampling in waters adjacent to the discovery site. Sampling efforts in 2021 indicated two positive hits for snakehead eDNA, though follow up sampling in 2022 found zero positive hits. Staff will continue to work with USFWS to monitor nearby waters.

Triploid Grass Carp Utilization:

Triploid grass carp continue to be purchased and used by the GADNR, particularly for control of weeds at ponds located on GADNR Fish Hatcheries.

Once hatchery fish are harvested, grass carp are removed from hatchery ponds and utilized at other facilities, including for long term pond maintenance at ponds located on GADNR State Park lakes and federal properties. GADNR has begun assisting the USFWS with stocking Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge (BLNWR) to aid in control of *Cabomba* spp. and other vegetation. Thus far, 1,155 grass carp have been stocked into BLNWR.

ANS Reported During this Period:

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

Asian Mystery Snail (*Cipangopaludina* spp.)

- Capture Location: Lake Acworth (Cobb County) and Lake Oconee (Putnam County)
- Multiple reports provided by private citizens in June and September 2022.
- Positive ID verified by GADNR staff.



Apple Snail (*Pomacea* spp.)

- Capture Location: Lake Worth (Dougherty County)
- Multiple reports provided by private citizen in June and Sept. 2022.
- Positive ID verified by GADNR staff.



Brown Hoplo (*Hoplosternum littorale*)

- Capture Location: Little Spanish Creek (Camden County)
- Report submitted by private citizen.
- Fish kept.
- Positive ID verified by GADNR staff.



White Perch (*Morone americana*)

- Capture Location: Clarks Hill Lake and Lake Hartwell
- Reports provided by GADNR staff.
- Fish continue to be observed during standardized sampling.
- Positive ID verified by GADNR staff.

Zebra Mussels – July 2022

A vessel owner contacted GADNR in July 2022 prior to launching his boat into Lake Lanier to inquire about “suspicious” mussels attached to his motor. He had just purchased the boat from a dealer in Michigan and trailered it to Georgia. GADNR staff responded and found the boat to have several zebra mussels attached to the motor and stern. All mussels appeared to be dead but boat was thoroughly decontaminated as a precaution.

PLANTS

Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*)

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

Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*)

- Water hyacinth continues to be observed in several waterbodies within the state.

MARINE SPECIES - MANAGEMENT

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, though no reports were provided during this reporting period. 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. A single tiger shrimp was captured in these surveys in Sapelo Sound during the reporting period. Results of these surveys also suggest abundance of tiger shrimp in Georgia's sampled waters are low.

Standardized Sampling Results – Ecological Trawl Survey

1976 – 2012: No Tiger Shrimp observed

2013: 3 tiger shrimp

2014 – 2021: Total of 2 tiger shrimp collectively

2022: 1 tiger shrimp



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

General

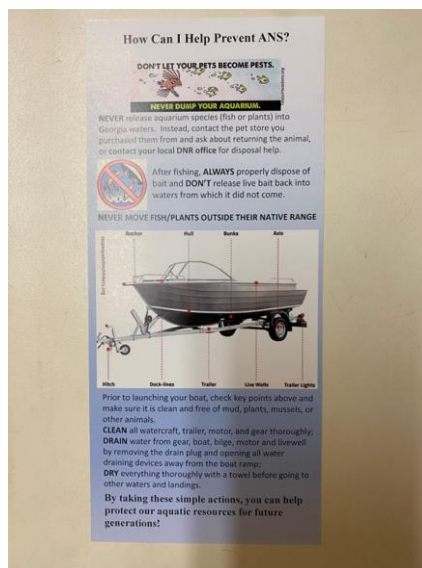
- Staff have continued to make additional updates to the GADNR Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) web page on our website. The reporting tool on our website continues to be used by the public as a way of informing us of new discoveries. The new website can be accessed at: <https://georgiawildlife.com/ans>
- Staff have developed and continue installing 2 new ANS signs at boat ramps/public access sites around Georgia to inform the public about how they can help prevent ANS introductions. GADNR also provided signs to GA Power to put at their ramps.



- Staff have begun setting up ANS display tables at various locations to help educate members of the public about ANS in Georgia and how they can help. These static displays thus far have proven very successful and staff continue to seek new locations to set up displays.



- Fisheries staff with GADNR have provided ANS rack cards that GADNR Law Enforcement will distribute to all participants taking Boater Education classes across the state. This will allow important ANS information to be provided to boaters to educate them on how they can help prevent transporting ANS.



Trainings

Staff continue to partner with the USFWS and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission to offer trainings pertaining to ANS. The first trainings (a Watercraft Inspection/Decon Training (WIT) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) Training were conducted in May 2022 (previously reported). No trainings were conducted during the reporting period.

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. We spoke to over 1,300 students and adults across 17 schools/civic groups during the reporting period. Nine of these included talks utilizing the Travelling Trunk, which continues to be a valuable tool provided by GSARP.



Mobile ANS Education Trailer

Staff continue to utilize the ANS education trailer at various outreach events. This educational tool has been a great addition in our efforts to teach kids about ANS.

