



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



REPORTING PERIOD:
November 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

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 went into effect on December 4, 2022. Individuals having animals impacted by the new rule have been given until December 4, 2023 to properly tag and register those animals and come into compliance with the new rule.

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

<https://georgiawildlife.com/wild-animal-rules>

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 completed 2022 removal efforts and results were included in the last report. Staff will again resume removal efforts in Spring 2023.

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. After removing a record number of blues in 2022, staff will resume removal efforts in Spring 2023.

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. Assuming no detections are found in 2023, staff will suspend sampling in 2023.

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 continues to assist the USFWS with stocking Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge (BLNWR) to aid in control of *Cabomba* spp. and other vegetation, stocking 1,215 carp during this reporting period. Thus far, 2,370 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.

Apple Snail (*Pomacea* spp.)

- Capture Location: Black Creek (Bulloch County)
- Report provided by private citizen in Nov. 2022.
- Positive ID verified by GADNR staff.



Oriental Weather Loach (*Misgurnus anguillicaudatus*)

- Capture Location: Several locations (Ocmulgee and Oconee River drainages)
- Reports provided by UGA Warnell School students.
- Fish continue to be observed during school sampling events.
- Positive ID verified by UGA/GADNR staff.



Zebra Mussels

GADNR staff continue to remain vigilant for voluntary reports of zebra mussels attached to boats. No reports of zebra mussels were made during this reporting period.

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. 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 – Ecological Trawl Survey

1976 – 2012: No Tiger Shrimp observed

2013: 3 tiger shrimp

2014 – 2022: Total of 3 tiger shrimp collectively

2023: None thus far



FINFISH

Red Lionfish (*Pterois volitans*)

Lionfish continue to be found in deep waters along most of the eastern U.S. coast, including off the Georgia coast. GADNR has a reporting tool on our ANS website for anglers to report lionfish. No lionfish were reported during this reporting period.

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 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. GA Power recently installed several signs at their boat ramps as well.




- Staff have continued 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.




- ## Aquatic Nuisance Species:


What are They and How Can We Prevent Them?




Northern Snookhead




Flathead Catfish




Red Swamp Crayfish




Colors Mussels




Mystery Snail



Silver Chubhead



Alabama Spotted Bass




Lionfish

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) are non-native or invasive organisms that have been introduced into a new area. They often threaten the diversity and abundance of native species and can threaten human health. ANS can have severe negative ecological and economic impacts to the ecosystem they invade. They may be introduced into an area by natural events like hurricanes or by human actions like aquarium releases or hitching a ride on boat trailers. Because they often spread rapidly in new locations, they can be very difficult to control or eradicate once established.

<https://georgiasunshine.com/ans/>

How Can I Help Prevent ANS?


DON'T LET YOUR PETS BECOME PESTS.




NEVER DUMP YOUR AQUARIUM.

NEVER release aquarium species (fish or plants) into Georgia waters. Instead, contact the pet store you purchased them from and ask about returning the animal, or contact your local DNR office for disposal help.

NEVER MOVE FISH/PLANTS OUTSIDE THEIR NATIVE RANGE



After fishing, **ALWAYS** properly dispose of bait and **DON'T** release live bait back into waters from which it did not come.



CLEAN all watercraft, trailer, motor, and gear thoroughly; **DRAIN** water from gear, boat, bilge, motor and livewell by removing the drain plug and opening all water draining devices away from the boat ramp; **DRY** everything thoroughly with a towel before going to other waters and landings.

By taking these simple actions, you can help protect our aquatic resources for future generations!

Staff continue to partner with the USFWS and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission to offer trainings pertaining to ANS. No trainings were conducted during the reporting period.

Conducting visits to schools and other educational outlets is a high priority for us, as we feel our best opportunity to prevent ANS introductions is to invest our time in helping inform and guide today's youth. We spoke to over 2,500 students and adults across 12 schools/civic groups during the reporting period. Nine of these included talks utilizing the Travelling Trunk, 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.

