

Nonnative Fish and Wildlife in Florida



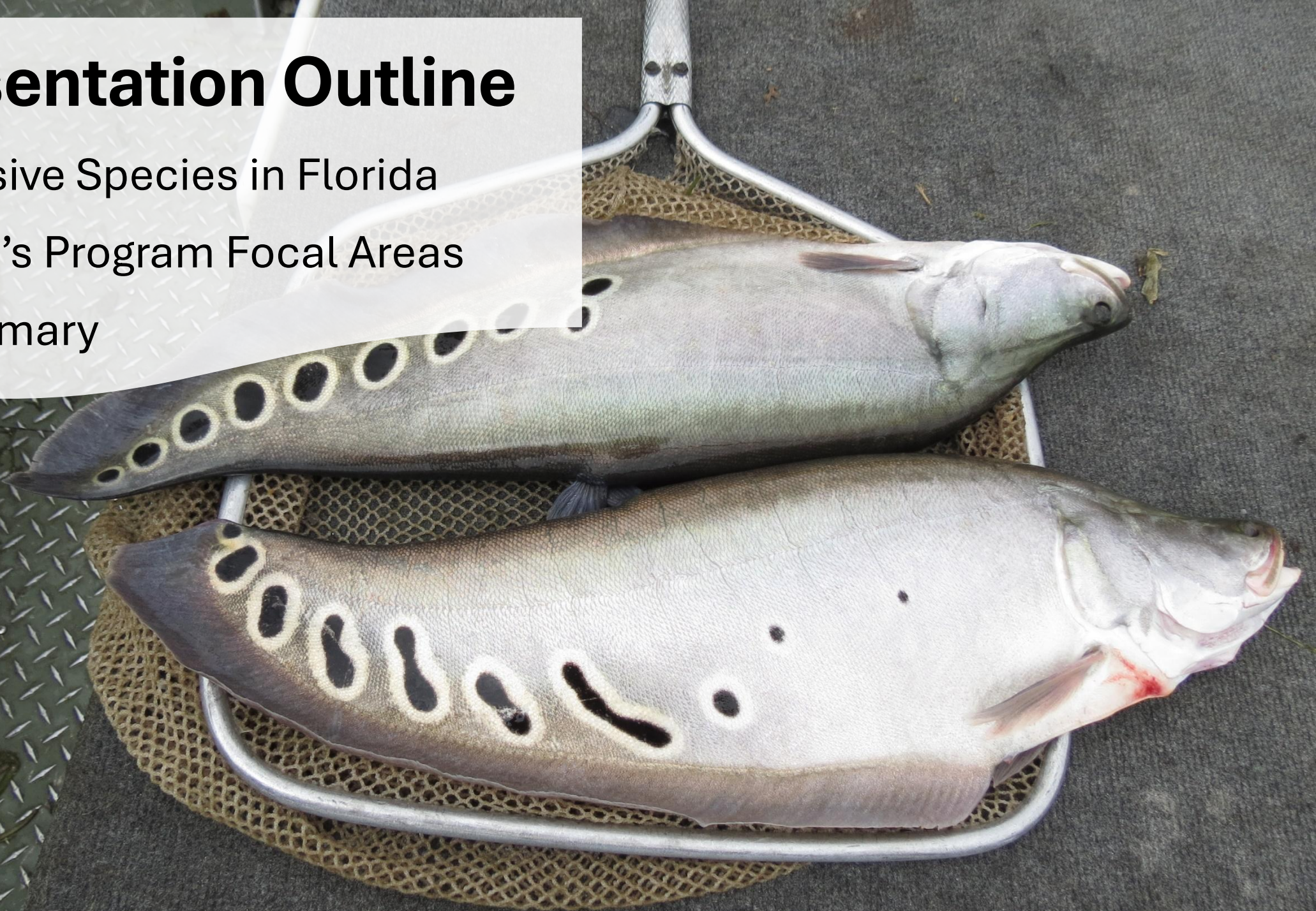
Sarah Funck

**Wildlife Impact Management Section Leader
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**



Presentation Outline

- Invasive Species in Florida
- FWC's Program Focal Areas
- Summary



Invasive Fish and Wildlife in Florida



- Florida is susceptible to invasive species
 - Subtropical climate
 - Multiple ports of entry
 - Live animal trade industry
- Minimizing adverse impacts from invasive species is a high priority for the FWC

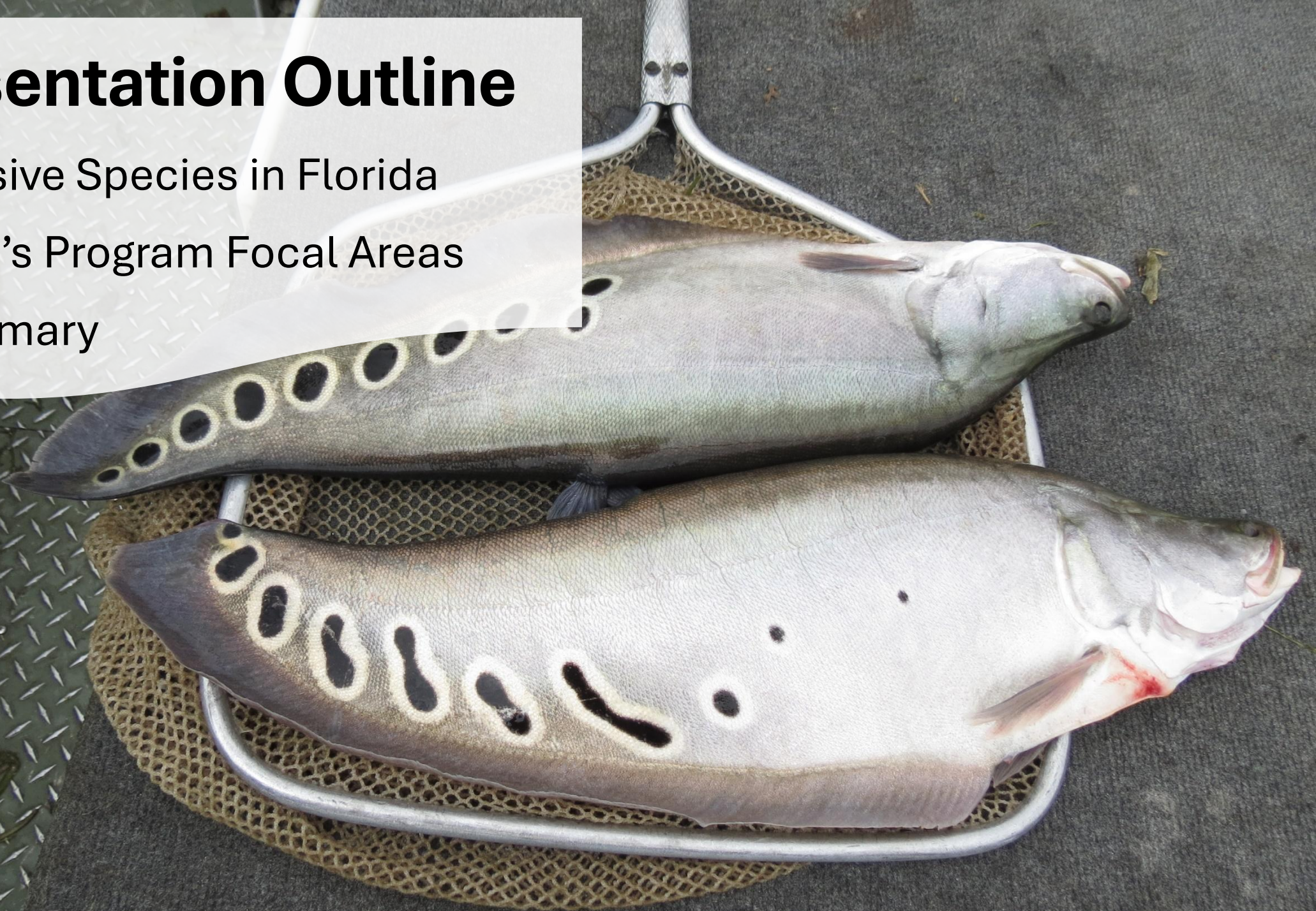
Impacts from Invasive Species

- Ecological impacts
 - Competition with native species
 - Habitat alteration
 - Direct depredation by animals
 - Disease and parasites
- Economic impacts
- Human health and safety



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Nonnative Fish and Wildlife Program



Regulations and Technical Assistance Group

- Chapter 68-5, F.A.C.
 - Conditional Species
 - Prohibited Species
 - Exotic Pet Amnesty Program
- Nonnative Fish and Wildlife TAG
 - Provide feedback to FWC
 - No decision-making authority



Conditional Species



- Pose risk to Florida
- No personal use allowed
- Authorization required from the State for possession:
 - Commercial Sales
 - Exhibition
 - Research
- Strict biosecurity, annual inspections

Prohibited Species



- Pose high risk to Florida
- No personal use allowed
- Authorization required from the State for possession:
 - Exhibition
 - Research
 - Limited exceptions for pets and commercial sales for tegus and green iguanas only
- Strict biosecurity, annual inspections



Exotic Pet Amnesty Program

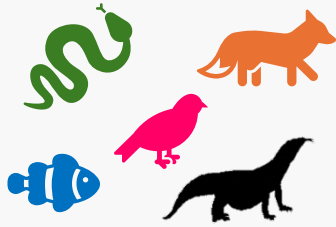
Goal: Reduce the number of nonnative species introduced in Florida

Offer a legal alternative for disposition of nonnative species for Florida pet owners

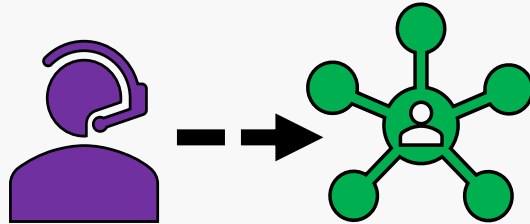
Provide education on responsible nonnative pet ownership



Making Connections: Owner to Adopter



Owner submits the
**Request To
Rehome Form** for a
nonnative pet



Staff search the
adopter network for
a qualified adopter
nearby



Owner continues
nonnative pet care
during the search
(with amnesty, if
applicable)

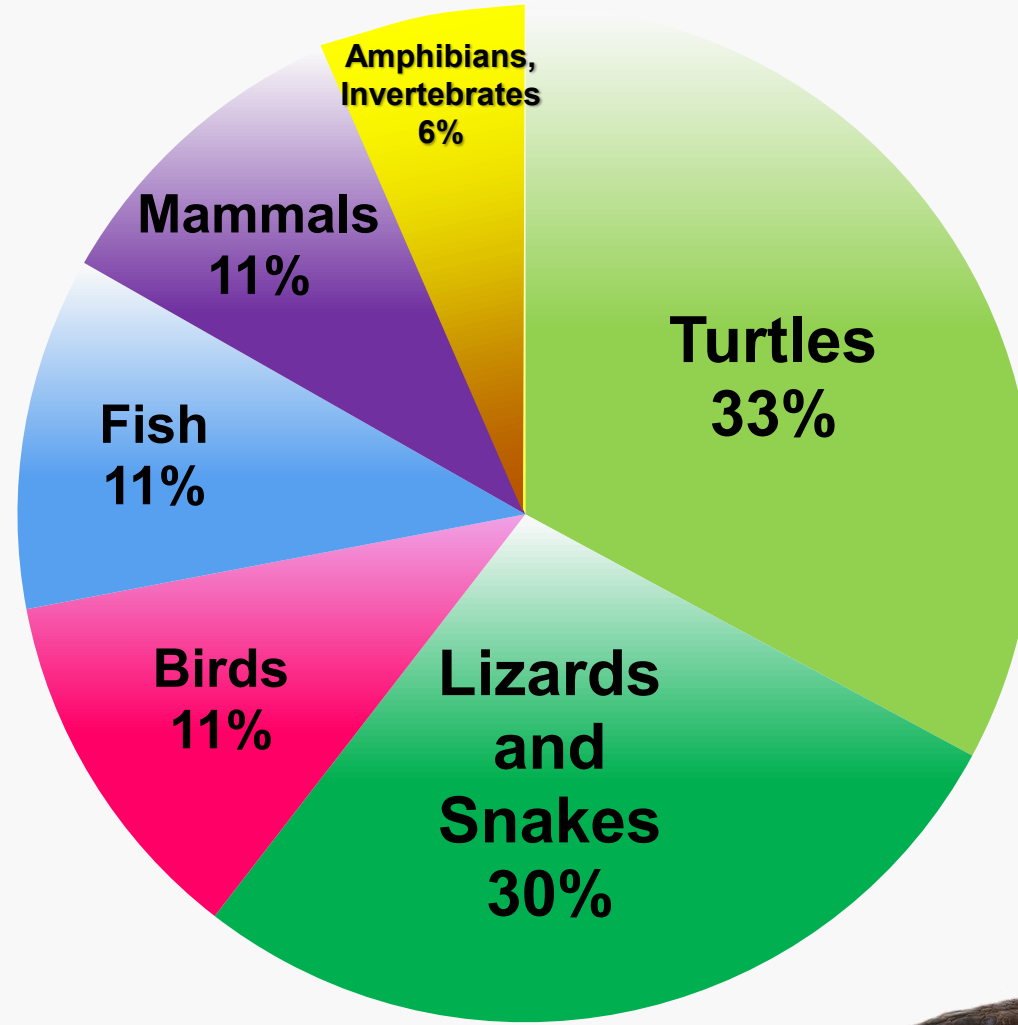


Owner and adopter
make all
arrangements to
transfer the pet to
the new home

Important! Staff do not accept drop-offs or provide care for nonnative pets



Species Relinquished 2006 - 2023



Nonnative Fish and Wildlife TAG



- Inception November 2021
- Provide technical assistance and feedback on topics presented by the FWC staff
 - 12 stakeholder groups representing industry, government, exhibition, research, environmental, and humane interests
 - No decision-making authority



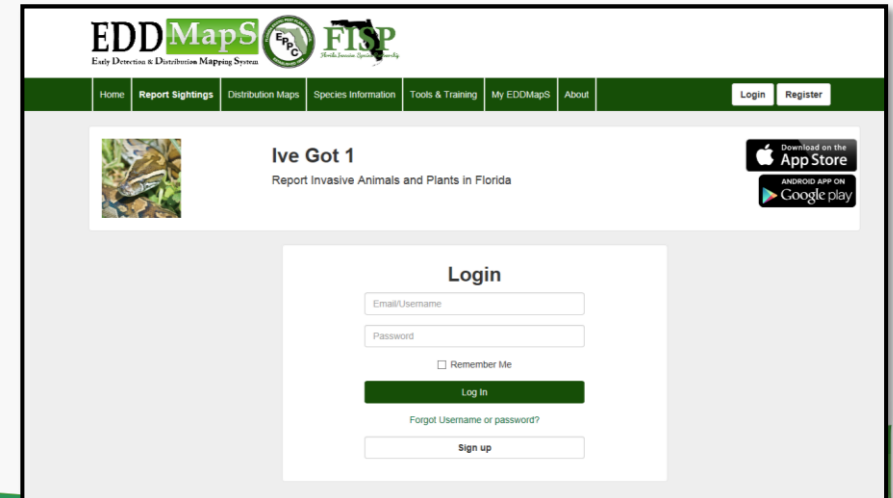
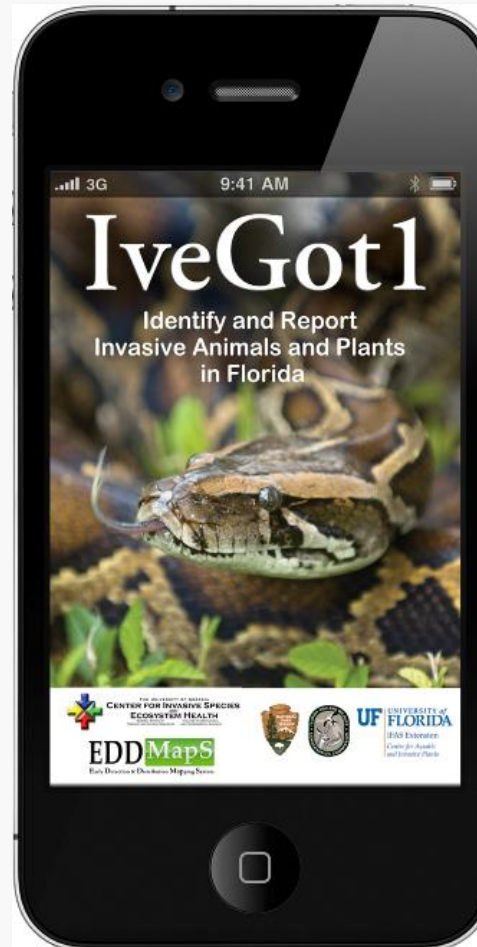
TAG Purpose and Goals

To promote ongoing dialogue and mutual understanding among organizations and agencies, and their respective stakeholders, by discussing issues, exploring common interests, providing suggestions, and collaborating to examine and address the regulatory structure for nonnative fish and wildlife in Florida



Early Detection/Rapid Response (EDRR): Invasive Species Hotline

- Public Reporting Options
- Verification by Experts
- Evaluation of Report
- Response Coordination



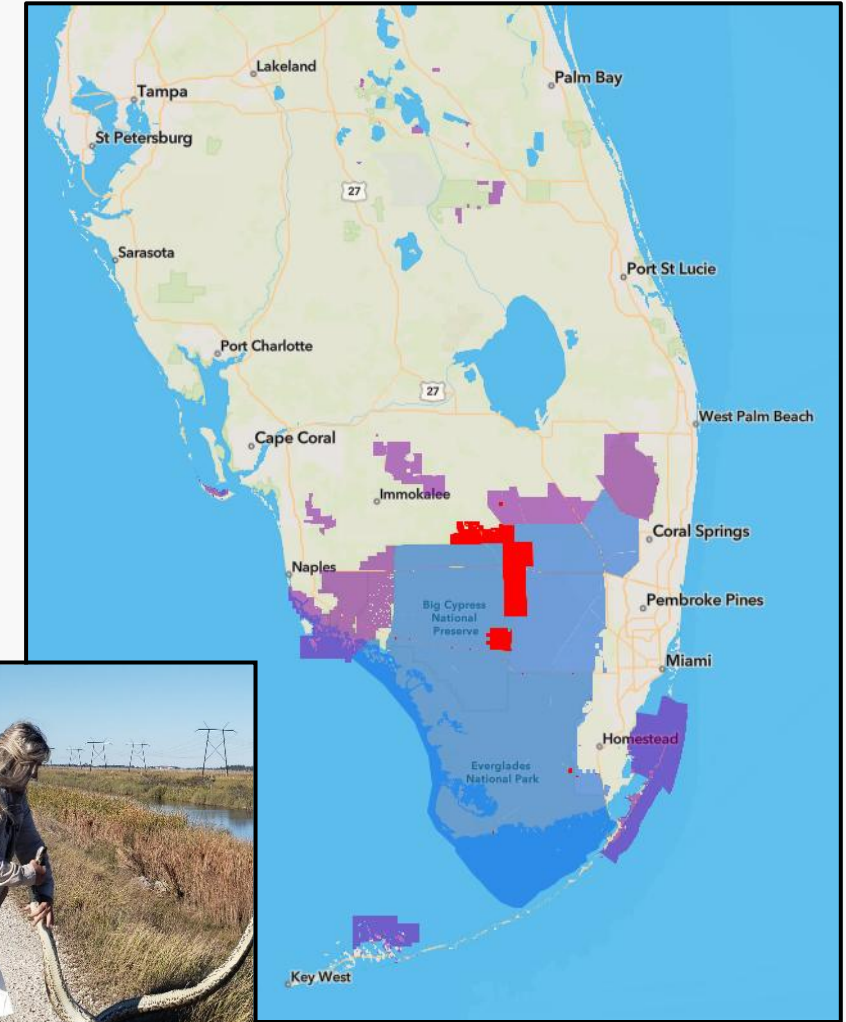
EDRR Success Story

- Asian Water monitor observed multiple times in Miami-Dade County
- No known breeding populations
- Risk screening: **Very high**
- Response coordinated
- Monitor removed within 3 days
- Coordination among agencies crucial to success



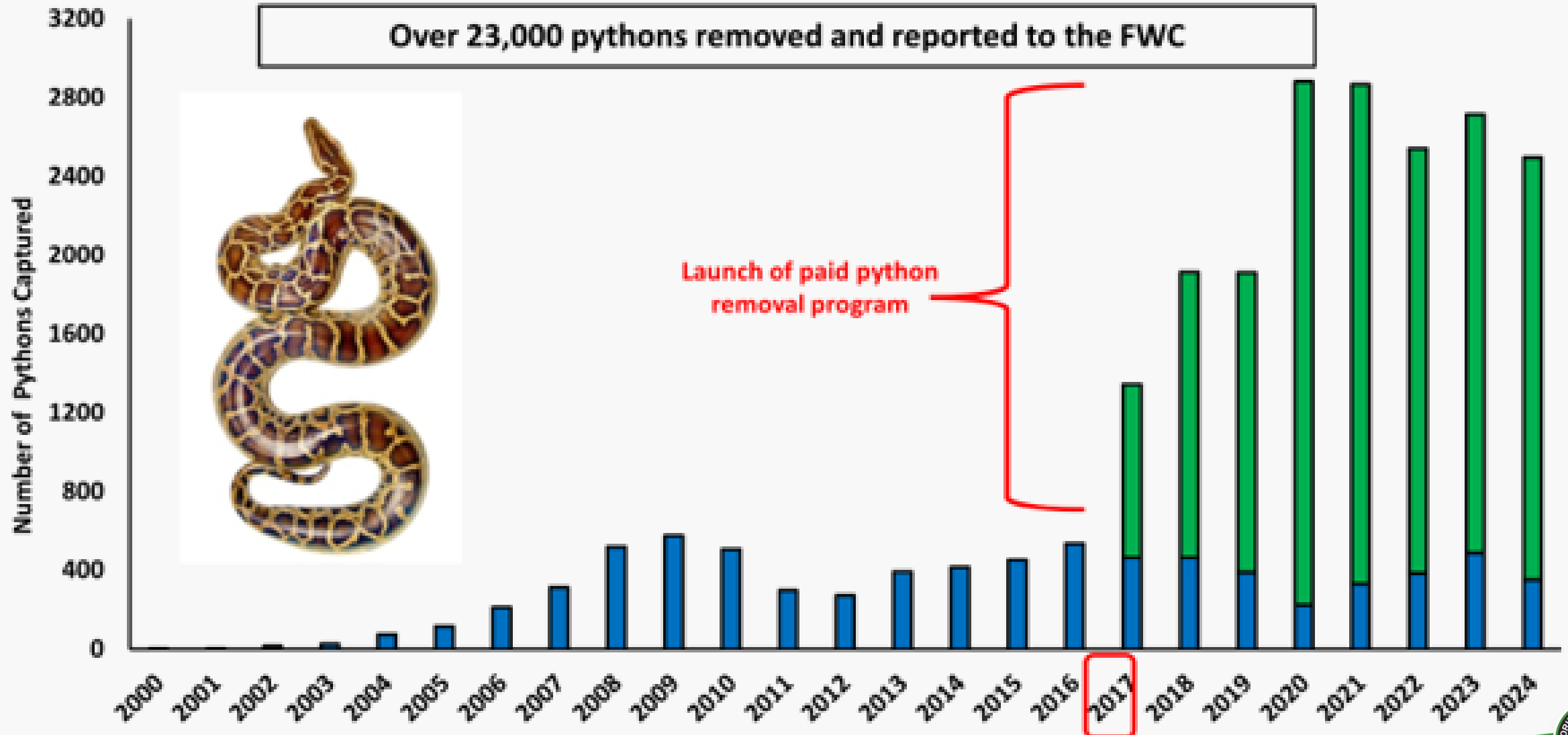
Contracted Removal of Priority Species

- Targeted tegu trapping
- Green iguana removal in Keys
- Currently ~100 paid python removal contractors
 - **FWC** Python Action Team, Removing Invasive Constrictors
 - **SFWMD** Python Elimination Program



Burmese Pythons Removed in Florida

Over 23,000 pythons removed and reported to the FWC



Public Engagement



- Executive Order 23-16
 - Allows the public to humanely kill nonnative reptiles on 32 Commission-managed lands
 - No WMA permit, hunting license or bag limit
- Nonnative Fish Round-Ups
 - Competition to remove nonnative freshwater fish
 - Lifetime fishing license



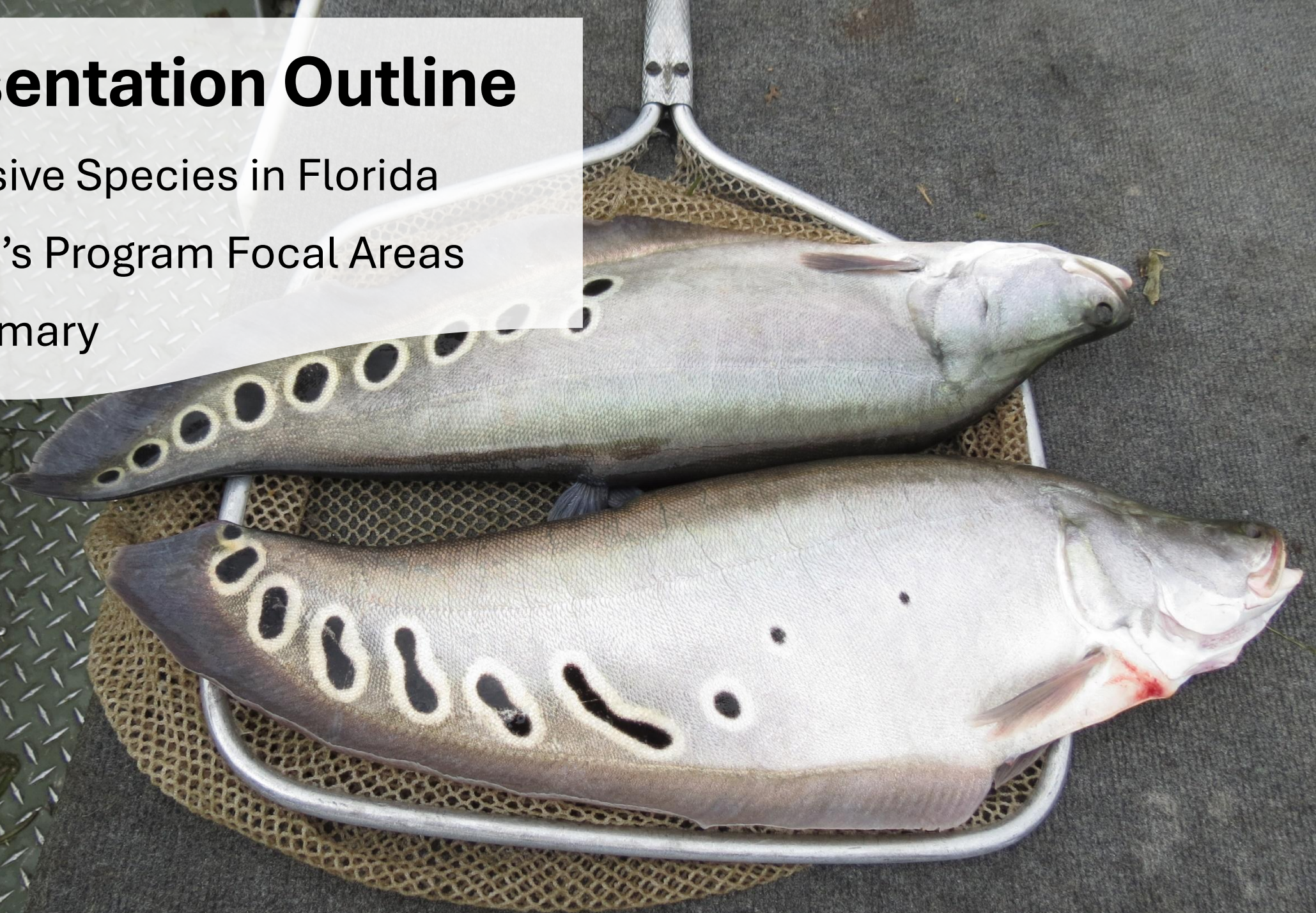
Education and Outreach

- Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day
- Python Youth Hunts
- Python Patrol
- Annual Florida Python Challenge™



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Summary



- Florida is uniquely susceptible to invasive species
- Multi-pronged approach to management
- Emphasis on prevention
- Coordination and collaboration are keys to success

Questions?



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