

INVASIVE SPECIES



About Invasive Species

Invasive species are plants or animals that are not native to Florida but were introduced through human activities and have become a threat to natural communities. These species can cause ecological harm in an environment where they have been introduced outside of their native habitat, and they can reduce biodiversity by outcompeting native species for limited resources.

Due to their lack of natural predators and ability to alter habitats, invasive species can cause the extinction of native species. More than 42 percent of endangered species are at risk primarily due to invasive species.

Asian Green Mussels

Asian green mussels are an invasive species introduced



Asian green mussels.
Photo: Buck Albert, USGS

by ballast water. As Florida is home to major ports and is an important shipping center, the mussels were likely introduced as planktonic larvae and released from ships traveling through the Panama Canal.

This well-known, harmful invasive species has spread throughout Florida's waters by attaching to the trailers and hulls of unsuspecting recreational boaters. Green mussels settle on substrates, taking space away from local oyster populations, which can affect crab and fish populations.

FAST FACTS

To prevent the spread of invasive species:

- » Inspect the hull and trailer of any boat traveling to different water bodies, and remove attached aquatic life on dry land.
- » Drain bilge or ballast water at an appropriate disposal location prior to transporting boats.
- » If you have aquarium lionfish that you no longer want, please contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's non-native hotline at 888-IVE-GOT-1.

Lionfish

Likely introduced as a discarded aquarium pet, Indo-Pacific lionfish are now established along the southeast coast of the United States and parts of the Gulf of Mexico. With no natural predators in the Atlantic, they are a threat to native species. Lionfish also have venomous spines, an ability to reproduce at a young age and all year-round, and voracious appetites. They feed on the juveniles of many important native reef species, such as grouper, snapper and lobster, causing both ecological and economic impacts.



An invasive species found in Florida waters is the Indo-Pacific lionfish.

Report sightings of invasive species to Southeast Florida Action Network (SEAFAN) [online](#) or call 866-770-7335.



SEAFAN is a reporting and response system designed to improve the protection and management of Southeast Florida's coral reefs by enhancing marine debris clean-up efforts, increasing response to vessel groundings and anchor damage, and providing early detection of potentially harmful biological disturbances.