

# South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Invasive Exotic Species Strategic Action Framework

## *EDRR Case Study: Exotic Species Hotline*

It is imperative to respond quickly and deal with emerging invasive exotic species (IES) while they remain localized. This process is called Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR). Eradication through EDRR is the second most cost-effective method to deal with invasive exotic species, after prevention. Early detection requires effective communication between experts, responders, and the public and should seamlessly connect to the assessment and rapid response phases of EDRR.

### **IES Reporting Tools**

In addition to agency monitoring programs and formal detection efforts, easily understood and accessible IES reporting mechanisms for use by the public are vital to EDRR success. Florida's **Exotic Species Hotline** was developed in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy, Everglades National Park, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The hotline was initially established for Burmese python reporting in the Florida Keys. The success of this hotline was then extended to the mainland in 2009 and transferred to the FWC in 2011 to obtain reports of any nonnative wildlife statewide. Also that year, the hotline merged with the FWC's Exotic Pet Amnesty Program hotline.

To supplement the Exotic Species Hotline, a free smart phone app, **IveGotOne**, was developed so people can report observations and upload photos of the sighted animals online. The "IveGot1" app was developed by the University of Georgia's Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health through a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service. The FWC and the University of Florida Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants were also part of the app development. Data from all sources are shared across FWC and EddMaps, the web-based Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System for invasive exotic species.

### **Impact of Public Reporting**

The Exotic Species Hotline, IveGot1.org, and the IveGot1 smartphone app reporting tools are instrumental in EDRR and have helped determine new areas where pop-

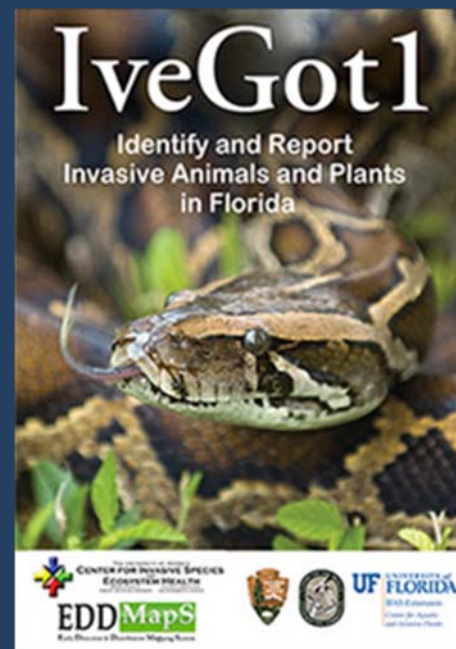
ulations may be establishing. For example, reports from these sources led to the discovery of an emergent Argentine black and white tegu population in Charlotte County in 2018 where over 100 tegus have now been removed to date.

### **Conclusion**

The exotic species hotline, currently managed by the FWC, has received 12,153 reports since its statewide inception in 2011. An additional 5,611 reports have been received via Ivegot1.org and the smart phone application. This equates to a combined total of 17,764 reports in Florida, building an extensive geospatial database where snakes are located and have been introduced on the landscape, increasing knowledge of the spread of invasive exotic species in Florida, and enabling rapid response to eradicate emerging invaders.

### TO REPORT INVASIVE EXOTIC SPECIES

Call 888-IveGotOne, (888) 483-4681,  
Visit IveGotOne.org, or  
Download the app:



Details on next page.

## Report Sightings of Invasive Exotic Species to the FWC

[From MyFWC.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/report/](http://MyFWC.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/report/)

Reporting observations helps us manage nonnative species. The best reports of nonnative species are credible reports. These are reports that the species in question can be verified and all necessary data has been included.

Credible reports contain 3 elements:

- 1) A photograph showing the animal in question that is not blurry and has a high enough resolution so that it can be enlarged to ensure species identification
- 2) The location where the animal was seen. GPS coordinates are best, but the location can also be a street address or detailed description of the area.
- 3) The date when the animal was seen.

You can report any other information that you think is valuable.

### Smartphone App

You can quickly and easily report sightings of nonnative species by using the free IveGot1 app, which was developed by The University of Georgia's Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health. The app is available for iPhone and Android phones by searching for "IveGot1" at the appropriate app store. Reporting nonnatives using the IveGot1 app or the IveGot1 website is preferred for **lower priority species**, such as small nonnative lizards and iguanas.

### Online

You can use the web form at [IveGot1.org](http://IveGot1.org) to report nonnatives. The form will prompt you for the information and has a map where you can select the location if you do not have the GPS coordinates. You will need to create a free account the first time you report a sighting online. Reporting nonnatives using the IveGot1 app or the IveGot1 website is preferred for **lower priority species**, such as small nonnative lizards and iguanas.

### Exotic Species Hotline

You can call the FWC's Exotic Species Hotline at 888-Ive-Got1 (483-4681) to report nonnative species. The FWC asks the public to call the Hotline to report **high priority species**, which include all nonnative snakes, monitor lizards, tegus, and chameleons. The Hotline is answered part-time 7 days per week by a live operator and has a voicemail system that will prompt you for information about your sighting and your contact information if the operator is unable to answer the call.