

Program Name: ECISMA coordinated response
Project Name: Argentine black-and-white tegu (*Tupinambis merianae*) interdiction
Project ID: 2702
Lead Agency: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)/ National Park Service/USGS

Strategy and Biennial Report Objective Addressed: 2-B.3
Invasive Species Strategic Action Framework Goal: 3

Measurable Output(s): Number of tegus removed from perimeter; documented absence or infrequent occurrence on priority lands; number of tegus observed and removed from “core” areas

Project Synopsis:

The Argentine black-and white tegu is a large omnivorous lizard native to South America. While these lizards have been documented eating a wide variety of plants, insects, and small vertebrates, they are known egg predators, and may pose a significant threat to crocodylians, turtles, and birds, as well as many other native species. There are two populations of tegus in Florida: one in Polk and Hillsborough County, and one in South Florida. Tegus in South Florida were observed in South Florida from 2007-2010, and the first nest was discovered in 2010 (Pernas et al., 2011). Since then, sustained trapping effort has been conducted. In 2011 and 2012, a concerted trapping effort was initiated with the objective of eradicating tegus. Live-trapping appears to be quite successful, and in recent years, 300-500+ tegus have been removed from the wild per year from both agency and private trapping efforts. However, despite these captures, the population size and distribution appears to be continuing to grow. As of 2014, tegus occur throughout several hundred square kilometers in South Florida, with a population core near Florida City. After several years of trapping, the consensus is that eradication is unlikely, and the strategy has shifted to containment.

In 2014, Everglades Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area partners continued a multi-agency containment effort. The objectives of the containment effort include intercepting tegus dispersing from the core population area toward the natural areas, reducing the population density in the population core, and monitoring for any tegus within Everglades National Park and other sensitive lands, followed by concerted effort to remove any tegus documented in these areas. FWC, University of Florida, and Zoo Miami coordinated to conduct surveys and monitor live traps and camera traps in the more natural habitats of the core tegu area and along the eastern and southern boundary of the tegu’s core range to intercept tegus moving toward American crocodile nesting areas at Turkey Point and towards the Florida Keys. Simultaneously, National Park Service and USGS installed a network of camera traps and live traps along canals between Florida City and Everglades National Park, in an effort to intercept tegus moving from Florida City toward the Everglades. Outreach to the public and targeted live trapping will be employed to address tegus in suburban and agricultural areas near the northern extent of the tegu range. We expect the effort to continue indefinitely to prevent establishment of a tegu population in Everglades National Park, Turkey Point, the Florida Keys, and other sensitive natural areas in South Florida.

Current Status:

Live trapping and camera trapping have been conducted consistently throughout 2014 since tegus emerged from brumation, and several hundred tegus have been captured. The majority of tegus caught have been from the core areas. However, nearly 100 tegus have now been removed from traps between the core and Everglades National Park. At least one tegu has been documented within Everglades National Park, but efforts to capture it were unsuccessful, and tegus have not been observed consistently. There are indications that tegus may be spreading northward through suburban and agricultural areas, and ongoing efforts to contain tegus in this area may be insufficient to achieve containment.

Project Schedule:

Start Date: 2012
Finish Date: Ongoing; indefinite

Detailed Project Budget Information

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Balance to Complete	Total
Federal (NPS/USGS)	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000		
FWC	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000		
Zoo Miami**	2700						
U of F	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000		
Local							
Total	192,700	192,700	192,700	192,700	192,700		963,500

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Pictures:



Photo credit: Jim Duquesnel, USGS

Map of area:

