

**COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA****APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,  
ENVIRONMENT, AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT****Senator Brodeur, Chair**  
**Senator Berman, Vice Chair****MEETING DATE:** Wednesday, October 8, 2025**TIME:** 11:00 a.m.—12:30 p.m.**PLACE:** Pat Thomas Committee Room, 412 Knott Building**MEMBERS:** Senator Brodeur, Chair; Senator Berman, Vice Chair; Senators Arrington, Burton, DiCeglie, Grall, McClain, Pizzo, Rodriguez, Sharief, and Truenow

TAB	OFFICE and APPOINTMENT (HOME CITY)	FOR TERM ENDING	COMMITTEE ACTION
<b>Senate Confirmation Hearing:</b> A public hearing will be held for consideration of the below-named executive appointment to the office indicated.			
<b>Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District</b>			
1	Hurley, Thomas W. (North Palm Beach)	03/01/2029	
	Spottswood, Robert A., Jr. (Key West)	03/01/2026	
<b>Governing Board of the St. Johns River Water Management District</b>			
2	Burnett, Douglas (St. Augustine)	03/01/2029	
	Ghyabi-White, Maryam (Ormond Beach)	03/01/2029	
<b>Big Cypress Basin Board of the South Florida Water Management District</b>			
3	Lenhard, Michele (Naples)	03/01/2026	
<b>Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District</b>			
4	Turner, James "Jim" (Sarasota)	03/01/2027	
	Watkins, Nancy Hemmingway (Tampa)	03/01/2029	

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
	Presentation by The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on Invasive Species Management		
	Other Related Meeting Documents		

# Prevention, Control and Management of Invasive Fish and Wildlife



**Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment and General Government**

October 8, 2025

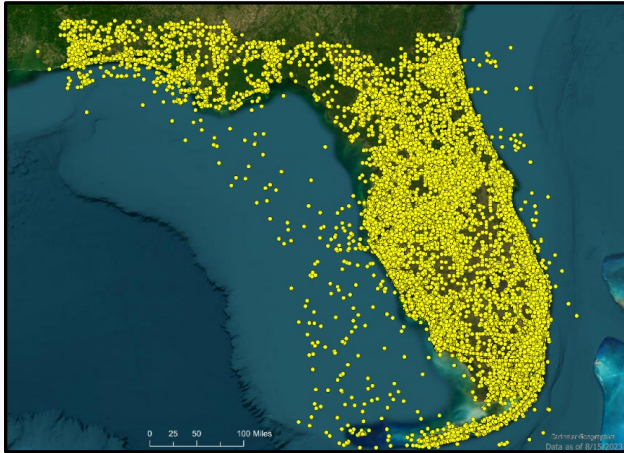
George Warthen, Chief Conservation Officer

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**

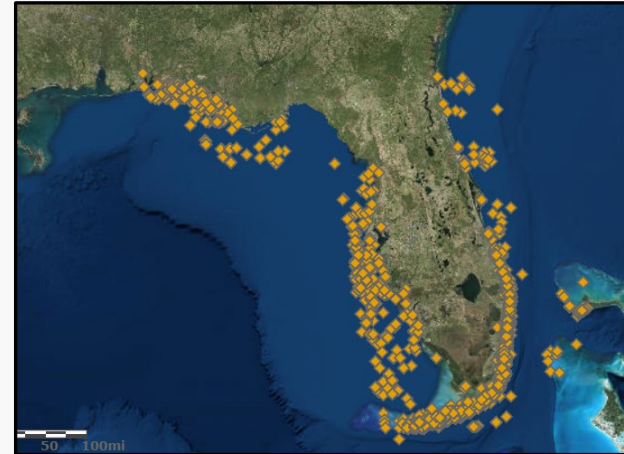


# Extent and Impacts of Invasive Fish and Wildlife

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

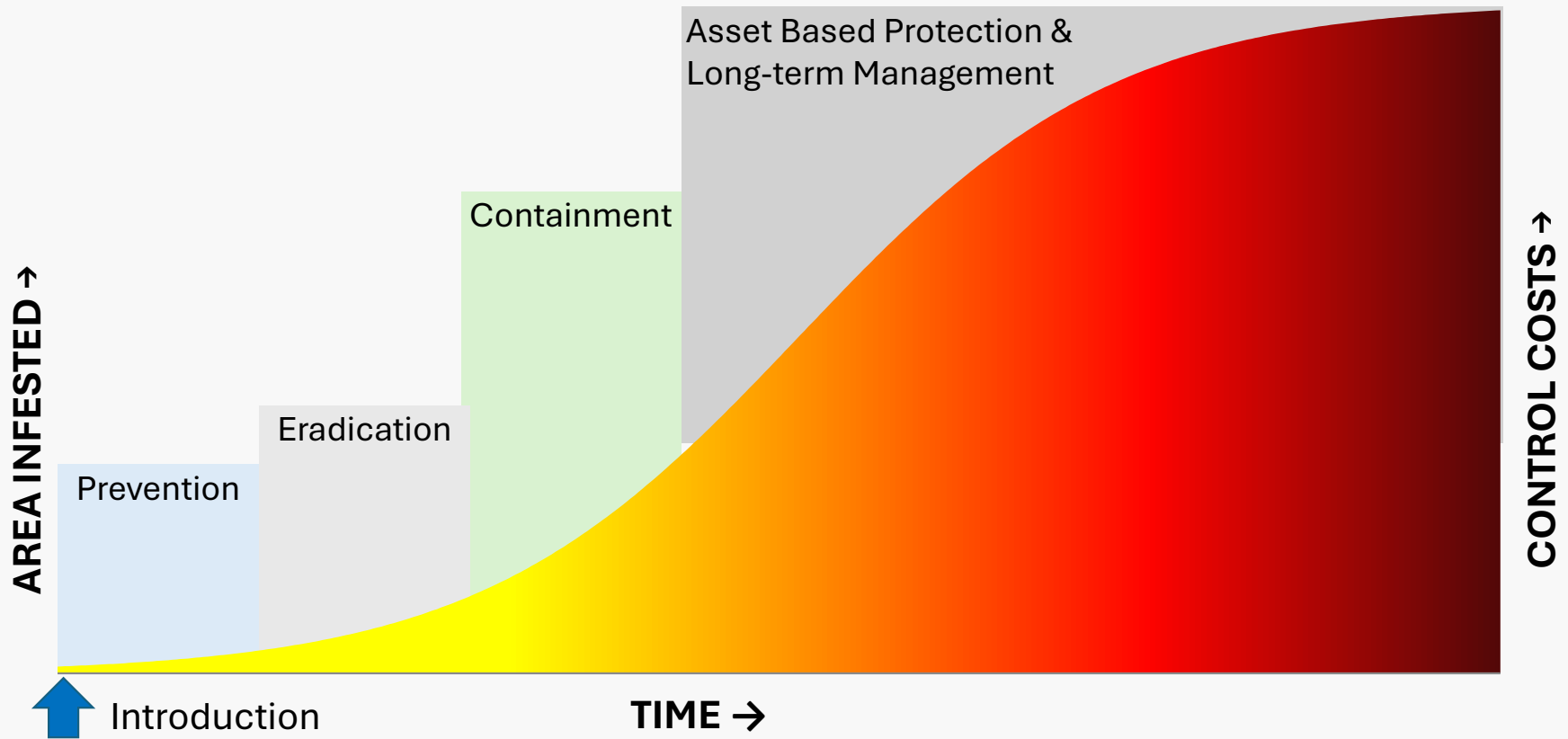


Nonnative Fish and Wildlife in Florida  
1905 – Present  
FWC Database



Lionfish Reports  
1985 - Present  
USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Database

# The Invasion Curve





# FWC's Role

- Prevention
  - Risk assessment/screening
  - Regulation
  - Enforcement
  - Education and outreach
- Control and management
  - Early Detection/Rapid Response (EDRR)
  - Removal of established populations
- Research support and innovation
- Partner and stakeholder coordination

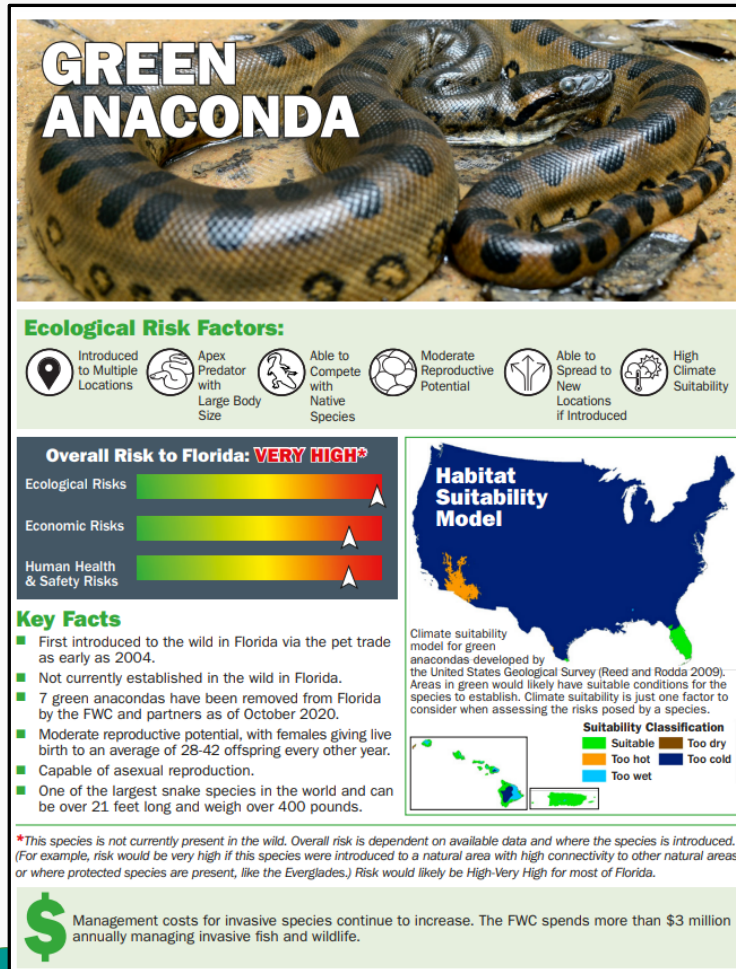


# FWC Invasive Fish and Wildlife Budget

Year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<b>Nonnative Fish and Wildlife Program</b>	\$3,226,627	\$5,293,100	\$5,648,249	\$5,719,673	\$6,058,403
<b>Lionfish Control</b>	\$224,281	\$224,281	\$224,281	\$224,281	\$224,281
<b>Total By Year</b>	<b>\$3,450,908</b>	<b>\$5,517,381</b>	<b>\$5,872,530</b>	<b>\$5,853,434</b>	<b>\$6,282,684</b>



# Prevention: Risk Assessment/Screening



- Not all nonnative species are invasive
- Assessment of risk
- Level of concern may change based on location
- 239 risk screens completed since program began
  - 29 in progress

# Prevention: Regulatory Approach

Activity	Conditional	Prohibited
Allowed as Pets	No	No
Import and possess for breeding for purposes of sale	Yes	No
Import and possess for exhibition	Yes	Yes, with limitations
Import and possess for research	Yes	Yes, with limitations
<b>Total Number:</b>	<b>21 species or species groups</b>	<b>48 species or species groups</b>





# Prevention: Enforcement

- Port Investigations
  - NOAA, USFWS, FWC
- Undercover Operations

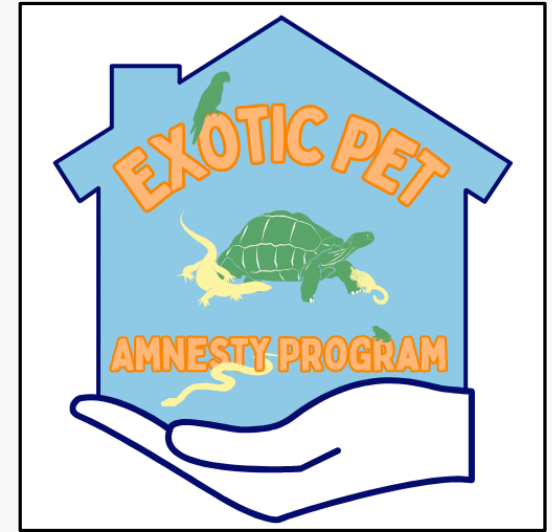
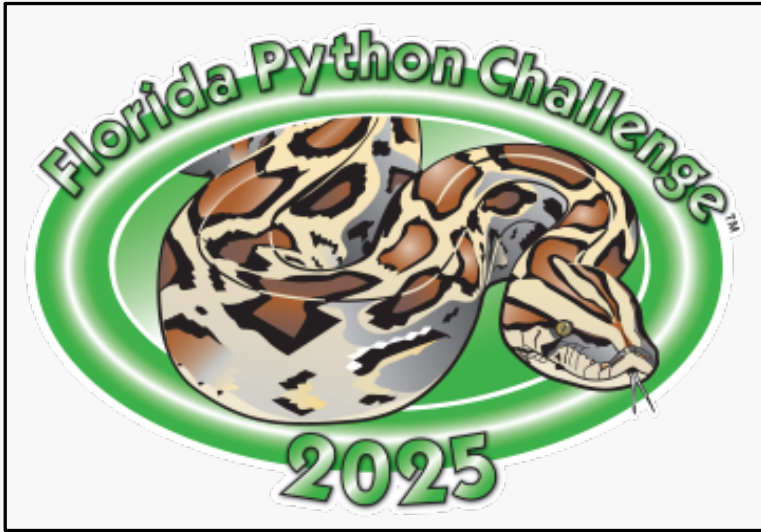


# Prevention: Operation Viper

- Long-term undercover operation
  - Nearly 200 venomous and prohibited snakes documented during illegal transactions
  - 24 different species endemic to seven regions around globe
- Over 600+ felony and misdemeanor charges documented
  - 8 suspects charged
  - Suspects engaged in non-wildlife crimes



# Prevention: Education and Outreach



- Outreach events
- Awareness campaigns
- Technical assistance
- Exotic Pet Amnesty Program
- Training

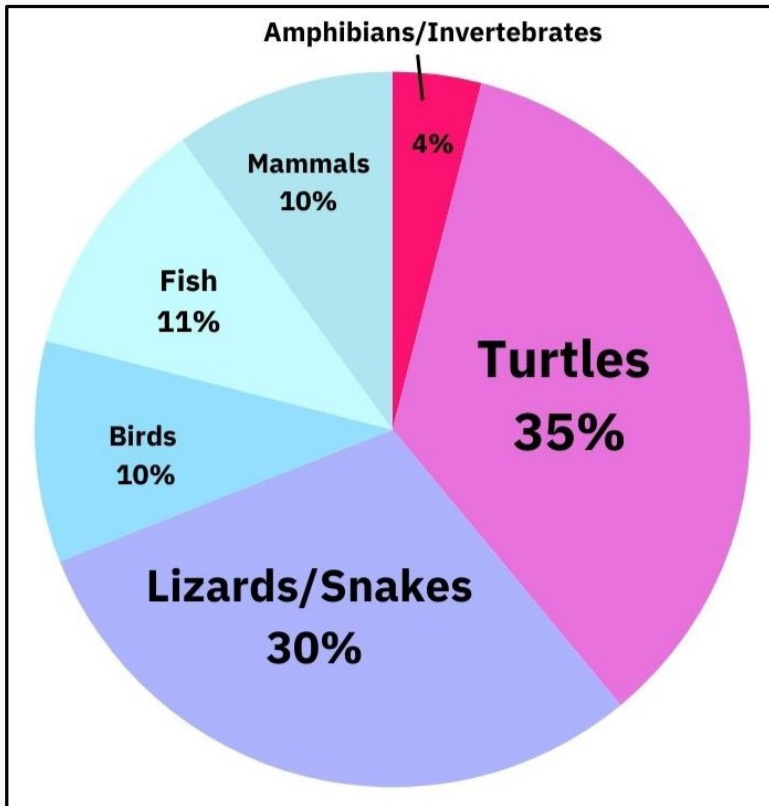


# Prevention: Education and Outreach for Lionfish

- Annual Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day Festival
- Commercial consumption marketing and promotion
- Lionfish Educational Exhibit Program



# Prevention: Exotic Pet Amnesty Program

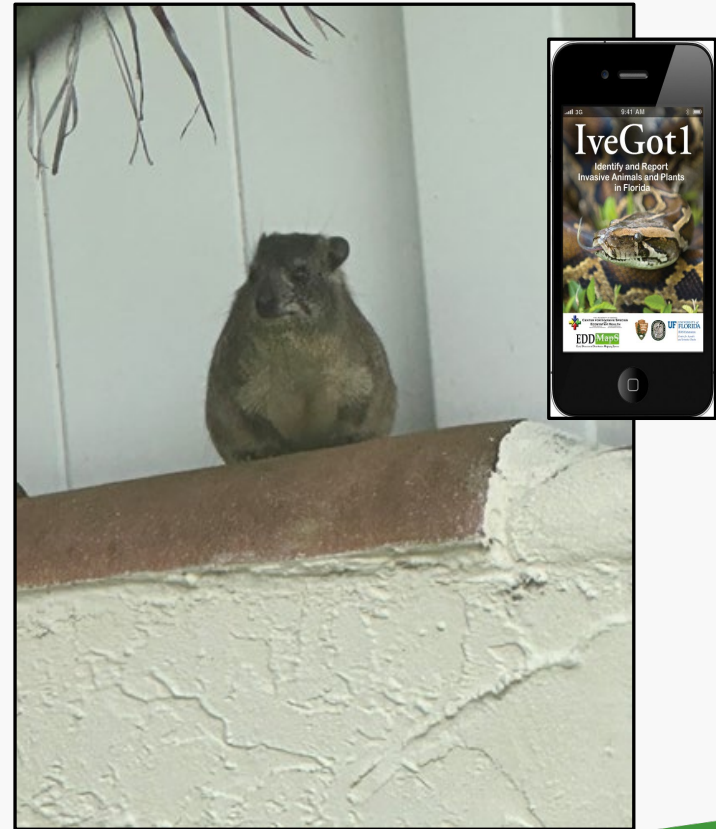


- Matches current owners with new owners
- Media campaign to enlist adopters
- 8,122 rehoming requests to date
  - Most are for lizards, snakes, and turtles
- 1,834 for Conditional & Prohibited species
  - Nonnative slider turtle placement events in April and September 2025



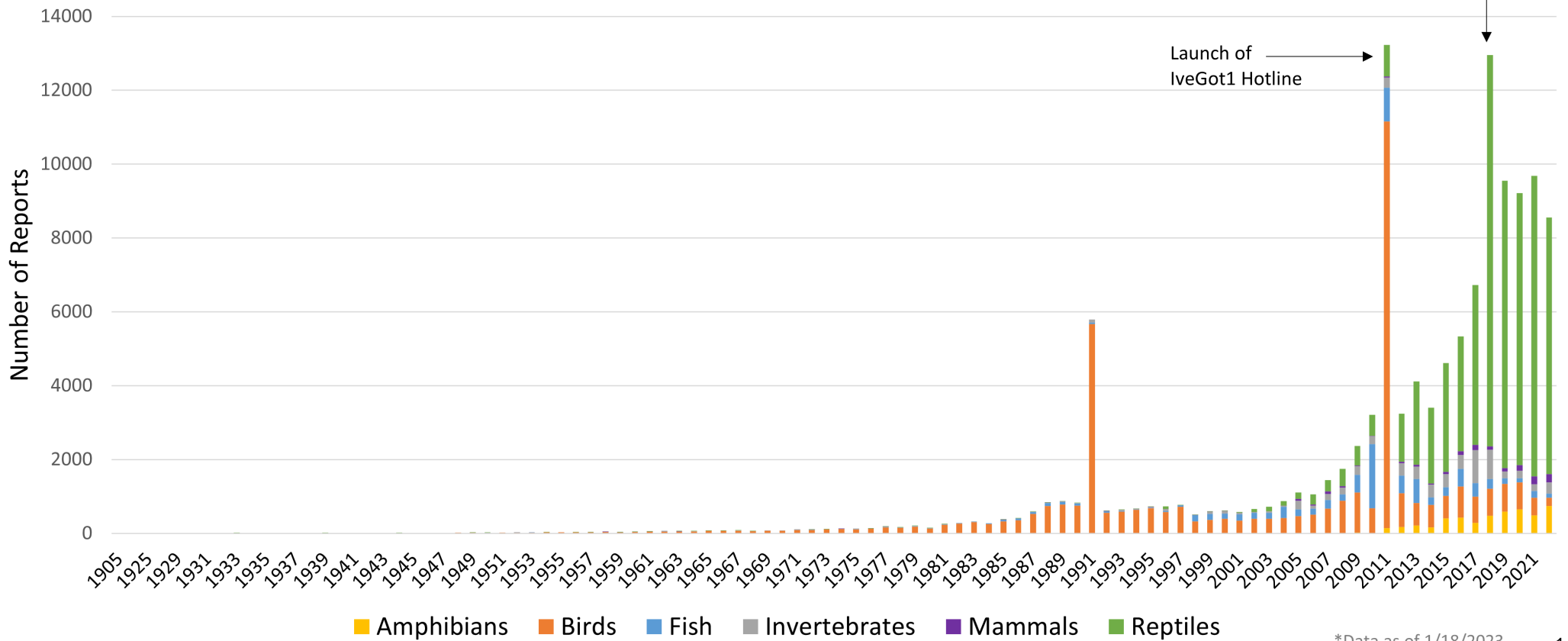
# Control and Management: Early Detection/Rapid Response

- More than 25,000 calls since 2011
- Summary of FY 24/25:
  - 69 early detection/rapid responses coordinated for priority species
  - 50 nonnative animals removed from environment



# Nonnative Fish and Wildlife in Florida

**Nonnative Reports by Year**  
**Credible and Verified Reports, 1905-2022**



\*Data as of 1/18/2023

# Control and Management:

## Resource Protection - Python Removal

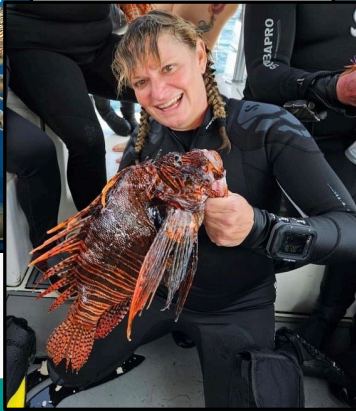
- Python Removal Contractors – increased captures more than 200%
- Pilot Project with QM/Inversa Leathers – May 2025
  - Management of FWC Python Removal Contractors
  - 143% increase in pythons removed compared to same time last year
- Over 25,000 total removed since 2000



# Control and Management: Lionfish Removal Efforts

Over **2 million** lionfish removed since 2014

- Lionfish Challenge growth
- Derby sponsorship for localized removals
- Direct removal by FWC
- Removal of regulatory barriers





# Research Support and Innovations

- Understanding impacts
- Improving detection and removal
- Risk screenings
- Deep-water removal of lionfish
- Technology advancements





# Partner and Stakeholder Coordination

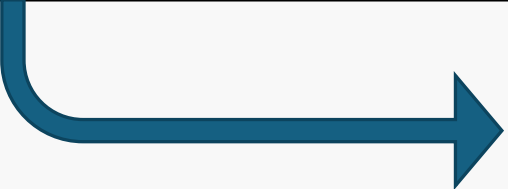
- Florida Python Control Plan
- Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas
- Coordination with federal partners and other fish and wildlife agencies
- Nonnative Fish and Wildlife Technical Assistance Group



# Future Direction: Making a Difference

- Coordinate with partners and the public
- Prevent new high-risk species establishment
- Continue and increase control efforts
- Increase focus on innovation
- Continue education and outreach



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- More invasives removed
  - Range expansion reversed
  - Fewer impacts to native species
  - Prevent future problems





## Thank You

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