

DON'T LET IT LOOSE!

RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP
FOR THE PROTECTION OF
NATURAL RESOURCES



Jim Occi, BugPics, Bugwood.org

INVASIVESPECIES.IDAHO.GOV

DON'T LET IT LOOSE!

SOME OF OUR
COUNTY'S MOST
NOTORIOUS INVASIVE
SPECIES STARTED OUT
AS FAMILY PETS.

Bernard DUPONT from FRANCE. Common Wall Lizard (*Podarcis muralis*). Originally posted to Flickr by berniedup at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/65695019@N07/10251625025>.

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RED-EARED SLIDER

One of the most popular turtle species in the pet trade worldwide. Their omnivorous diet and ability to adapt to various habitats makes them highly competitive against native Idaho species.



Matt Kraisenbeck - ISDA

BURMESE PYTHON

Established in Florida as a result of pet release and escape. The larger a python grows, the larger the prey they can eat. Alligators, antelope, dogs, deer, goats, birds, etc. have all been found within the stomach contents of wild pythons.



Roy Wood, National Park Service, Bugwood.org

LIONFISH

This venomous coral reef fish from the Indian and western Pacific Oceans was introduced to Florida waters as a result of multiple aquarium releases. With no natural enemies to keep populations in check, this predator is free to decimate native reef fish populations.



Rebekah D. Wallace, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

DON'T LET IT LOOSE!

MANY BELIEVE THE RIGHT
THING TO DO WHEN ONE
CAN NO LONGER CARE
FOR A PET IS TO RELEASE
IT INTO THE WILD TO
FEND FOR ITSELF.

IT'S NOT.

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PIRANHA

Piranhas are a very common and popular freshwater aquarium fish. In the wild, they are aggressive predators that lurk in vegetation to ambush and chase prey. Successful establishment in native waterways will decrease biodiversity and species richness.



Rebekah D. Wallace, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

APPLE SNAIL

Freshwater snails are advertised to aquarium owners as pets that can help keep tanks clean. When introduced into local environments, invasive snails are found to be generalist herbivores with voracious appetites.



Jess Van Dyke, Snail Busters, LLC, Bugwood.org

EXOTIC CRAYFISH (CRAWFISH)

Invasive crayfish have been using science classes to infest new waterways for years. Many teachers and students around the country have "accidentally" intentionally introduced nonnative species when classroom experiments are at an end.



U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Geological Survey, Bugwood.org

BULLFROG

Bullfrogs are another common classroom introduction. They are aggressive competitors that will displace a wide variety of organisms, as well as native amphibian populations. Adults are carnivorous and will eat anything that can fit in its mouth.



Russ Ottens, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

MONK PARAKEET

Monk parakeets are a popular bird in the pet trade business. They are the only species of parakeet to build nests, which is a fact that allows for the adaptation to colder climates. This bird is also considered a nuisance species within its native range.



Stephanie Sanchez, Bugwood.org

SNAPPING TURTLE

Snapping turtles are very hardy and can become a top predator in invaded environments. Adults can weight up to 90 lbs. and they will bite humans if threatened. They are omnivores and will eat just about anything.



Steven Katovich, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org



AQUARIUM PLANTS CAUSE ISSUES TOO!

Plant materials can also be inadvertently released when dumping aquarium contents into water systems.



AQUATIC INVASIVE PLANTS OUT- COMPETE NATIVE VEGETATION AND DESTROY NATURAL HABITATS.

- **Alter food web relationships.**
- **Decrease biodiversity.**
- **Damage infrastructure.**

HYDRILLA

Introduced in the aquarium trade and has become one of the most problematic plants in the United States. It forms dense monocultures that displace native species, alter water chemistry, and interfere with recreation and infrastructure.



Vic Ramey, University of Florida, Bugwood.org

EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL

Forms dense mats of vegetation on the waters surface that effectively shades out native species. Reproduces by fragments that easily break off and drift downstream. Has been linked to several drowning incidents.



Tom Woolf - ISDA

BRAZILIAN ELODEA

Very similar in appearance to hydrilla with many of the same destructive qualities. This plant is highly desired by aquarium hobbyists/water gardeners and can be easily purchased from online retailers.



Tom Woolf - ISDA



WATER GARDENS ARE ALSO A MAJOR VECTOR.

Backyard water gardens can introduce nonnative species into surface waters through interconnecting waterways.



AQUATIC INVASIVE PLANTS CAN REPRODUCE RAPIDLY.

- **Thick mats of vegetation can clog rivers, lakes, canals, ponds, etc.**
- **Can crush native vegetation.**
- **Can impede recreational activities.**

PARROT FEATHER MILFOIL

Is a common water garden plant that has been introduced to surface waters through interconnected waterways and aquarium release. Can impede water flow and cause a range of associated environmental issues.



Graves Lovell, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bugwood.org

WATER HYACINTH

Free-floating water garden plant with a beautiful showy bloom. In suitable environments, it can double its population size every 8 to 12 days. One acre of water hyacinth can weigh more than 200 tons. As this weight is carried down a waterway, man-made structures (bridges and culverts) can be damaged and destroyed.



Wilfredo Robles, Mississippi State University, Bugwood.org

YELLOW-FLOATING HEART

A popular water garden plant that is easily acquired over the internet. Prolific reproduction allows this plant to colonize entire water systems within a single season.



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

DON'T LET IT LOOSE!

IDAHO'S WATERWAYS
ARE FRAGILE
ENVIRONMENTS IN NEED
OF PROTECTION.

YOU CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE!

INVASIVESPECIES.IDAHO.GOV



Brian Rodenspiel

PET OWNERS:

- **Make sure to consider the entire life-cycle of a pet before buying or adopting it.**
- **Be a responsible pet owner by knowing how large it will get, how long it will live, and make sure you are willing to fully commit to its lifetime of needed care.**
- **Do not purchase any pet listed on the Idaho Invasive Species List.**

AQUARIUM HOBBYISTS AND WATER GARDENERS

- Don't release unwanted animals and vegetation into the environment.
- Make sure backyard ponds are contained with no chance of nonnative species escaping into out-flowing water systems.
- Learn how to identify invasive species and eradicate any known populations on your property.
- **KNOW WHAT YOU GROW!**





**Don't dump
aquarium or water
garden contents
into surface waters.**

**Always dispose of
aquatic vegetation
by burning,
composting, or
drying out
completely, and
placing in a
garbage bag.**

PLEASE CONSIDER THESE OPTIONS AS OPPOSED TO DUMPING AQUARIUM CONTENTS AND/OR RELEASING YOUR EXOTIC PETS:

If your pet is **NOT** a listed invasive species...

- See if a local aquarium or pet shop will take your unwanted pet.
- Find a friend, club, school, etc. to adopt your pet.
- Locate an animal rescue facility near you.

If you can no longer care for your pet and it **IS** a listed invasive species...

**PLEASE CONTACT THE IDAHO
STATE DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE FOR RE-HOMING
OPTIONS.**

**Invasive Species Hotline:
1-877-336-8676**

**Website:
invasivespecies.idaho.gov**



DON'T LET IT LOOSE!

BE A RESPONSIBLE PET OWNER

Educational Links:

Invasive Species Compendium (Datasheets) - CABI International

<https://www.cabi.org/isc/search/?q=&types=7,19&sort=DateDesc>

Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health - Bugwood Images

<https://www.bugwood.org/>

Invasive Species of Idaho - Idaho State Department of Agriculture

<http://invasivespecies.idaho.gov/pet-owners/>

Invasive Species Action Network - Don't Let It Loose

<http://www.dontletitloose.com/>

Invasive Species of Idaho - Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/IdahoInvasives/>

Don't Let It Loose - Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/Dont-Let-It-Loose-1484202911882840/>

Biodiversity Course - California Academy of Sciences

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RC3Hsk90t8&list=PLS14biAqBAtEEChVt zp9M9vwrXFF32_ob

Oregon Invasive Species Council - Don't Let It Loose

<https://www.oregoninvasivespeciescouncil.org/dont-let-it-loose/>