

GREEN IGUANA

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

- Species Status Nonnative Invasive

Regulatory Status



Green iguanas are not native to Florida and are considered an invasive species due to their impacts to native wildlife. Like all nonnative reptile species, green iguanas are not protected in Florida except by anti-cruelty law and can be humanely killed on private property with landowner permission. This species can be captured and humanely killed year-round and without a permit or hunting license on [25 public lands](#) in south Florida.

NEW!! Effective April 29, 2021

Green iguanas were added to Florida's [Prohibited](#) species list. Learn how this impacts [pet owners](#) and other [entities](#).



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Description



Green iguanas are large, typically green lizards, though they can sometimes be brown or almost black in color. Some adults can take on an orange or pink coloration during certain times of the year. Hatchling and young green iguanas usually have bright green coloration.

Green iguanas have a row of spikes down the center of the neck, back, and upper portion of the tail, and have dark black rings on the tail. Mature male iguanas develop heavy jowls and a throat fan (or dewlap) that are much larger than those of female iguanas. Larger throat fans can make male iguanas appear bigger, repel rivals, or warn predators. Female iguanas may choose to breed with male iguanas that have larger dewlaps. The throat fan can also help iguanas regulate body temperature.

Male green iguanas can grow to over five feet in length and weigh up to 17 pounds. Females can also reach five feet in length but usually do not exceed seven pounds. Females typically reach reproductive maturity at two to four years of age. Green iguanas typically mate in October through November in their native range, and nesting occurs on riverbanks, beaches and other sandy areas. Females dig egg chambers that may contain nearly 80 feet of interconnected tunnels and multiple entrances and lay clutches of anywhere from 14-76 eggs. Green iguanas can live up to 10 years in the wild and 19 years in captivity.

Green iguanas can live on the ground, in shrubs, or in trees in a variety of habitats including suburban developments, urban areas, small towns, and agricultural areas. They are excellent swimmers, tolerating both salt and freshwater and can submerge themselves for up to four hours at a time.



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Diet

Green iguanas feed on a wide variety of vegetation, including shoots, leaves, blossoms and fruits of plants such as nickerbean, firebush, jasmine, orchids, roses, Washington fan palms, hibiscuses, garden greens, squashes and melons. Their tendency to eat ornamental plants can make them a nuisance to homeowners. Adult green iguanas can also feed on bird eggs and dead animals. Juvenile green iguanas feed on vegetation, insects and tree snails.

Native Range

The native range of green iguanas extends from Central America to the tropical parts of South America and some eastern Caribbean islands.

Florida Distribution

Green iguanas were first reported in Florida in the 1960s in Hialeah, Coral Gables and Key Biscayne along Miami-Dade County's southeastern coast. Green iguana populations now stretch along the Atlantic Coast in Broward, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe and Palm Beach Counties and along the Gulf Coast in Collier and Lee Counties. There have also been reports as far north as Alachua, Highlands, Hillsborough, Indian River and St. Lucie Counties. However, individuals observed in more northern counties are likely escaped or released captive animals and are unlikely to establish populations, as iguanas are not cold hardy. In cleared habitats such as canal banks and vacant lots, green iguanas reside in burrows, culverts, drainage pipes and rock or debris piles. South Florida's extensive man-made canals serve as ideal dispersal corridors to further allow iguanas to colonize new areas.

Impacts

Green iguanas cause damage to residential and commercial landscape vegetation and are often considered a nuisance by property owners. Iguanas are attracted to trees with foliage or flowers, most fruits (except citrus) and almost any vegetable. Some green iguanas cause damage to infrastructure by digging burrows that erode and collapse sidewalks, foundations, seawalls, berms and canal banks. Green iguanas may also leave droppings on docks, moored boats, seawalls, porches, decks, pool platforms and inside swimming pools. Although primarily herbivores, researchers found the remains of tree snails in the stomachs of green iguanas in Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park, suggesting that iguanas could present a threat to native and endangered species of tree snails. In Bahia Honda State Park, green iguanas have consumed nickerbean, which is a host plant of the endangered Miami Blue butterfly. As is the case with other reptiles, green iguanas can also transmit the infectious bacterium *Salmonella* to humans through contact with water or surfaces contaminated by their feces.



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Important Links

- [Iguana Technical Assistance for Homeowners](#)
- [Recent Nonnative Reptile Rule Changes](#)
- [Green Iguana Risk Summary](#)
- [Dealing with Iguanas in the South Florida Landscape](#)
- [Florida's Introduced Reptiles: Green Iguana](#)
- [Exotic Pet Amnesty Program](#)
- [Iguana Posters](#)



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Frequently Asked Questions

Can I remove iguanas from my property? Green iguanas are not protected in Florida except by anti-cruelty laws and can be humanely killed on private property year-round with landowner permission. The FWC encourages removal of green iguanas from private properties by landowners. Members of the public may also remove and kill iguanas from 25 Commission-managed public lands without a license or permit under [Executive Order 20-17](#). Captured iguanas cannot be relocated and released at other locations in Florida. If you are not capable of safely removing iguanas from your property, please seek assistance from a [professional nuisance wildlife trapper](#). [A permit is required to possess live captured green iguanas for eradication and control purposes.](#)

How can I deter green iguanas from frequenting my property? If you have an iguana frequenting your area, you can take steps to deter the animal such as modifying the habitat around your home or humanely harassing the animal. Examples of effective habitat modification and harassment include:

- Removing plants that act as attractants
- Filling in holes to discourage burrowing
- Hanging wind chimes or other items that make intermittent noises
- Hanging CDs that have reflective surfaces
- Spraying the animals with water as a deterrent

What if I own a pet iguana that I can no longer care for? Escaped or released pets remain a primary source of introduced species in Florida, although it is illegal to introduce nonnative species into the state. A [permit is now required](#) to maintain pet green iguanas possessed prior to the [effective rule date](#) as personal pets. Through the FWC's [Exotic Pet Amnesty Program](#), pet owners who are either unable to care for their exotic pets, such as green iguanas, or who no longer wish to keep them can surrender them with no questions asked and without penalties regardless of whether those pets are kept legally or illegally. Surrendered pets are adopted to new owners who have been pre-qualified and who have any required permits. The program helps reduce the number of nonnative species being released into the wild by pet owners and fosters responsible pet ownership, giving pet owners an ethical and ecologically sound alternative to releasing an exotic animal.



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Report Sightings of Nonnative Species



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.



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How to Report:

- **Exotic Species Hotline**

You can call the FWC's Exotic Species Hotline at [888-Ive-Got1](tel:888-483-4681) (888-483-4681) to report nonnative animals. We ask the public to call the Hotline to report high priority species, which include all nonnative snakes, monitor lizards, and tegus. 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.

- **Online**

You can use the web form at 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.

- **Smart Phone 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.

