

INVASIVE SPECIES WEEK

DID YOU KNOW?

South Florida is the

INVASIVE SPECIES CAPITAL

of the U.S.



Warm Weather



Canals & Boating

Perfect conditions for species from
around the world to survive here.

WHAT IS AN INVASIVE SPECIES

An **invasive species** is a plant or animal that:



Does **NOT** belong here



Spreads quickly



Harms native wildlife & ecosystems



Florida has **MORE THAN ANY OTHER STATE.**

WHY SOUTH FLORIDA?

South Florida is extremely vulnerable because:



Tropical climate
(species survive year-round)



Major ports & shipping

Aquarium & exotic pet releases



Heavy boating activity

The **EVERGLADES** =
ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE HABITAT

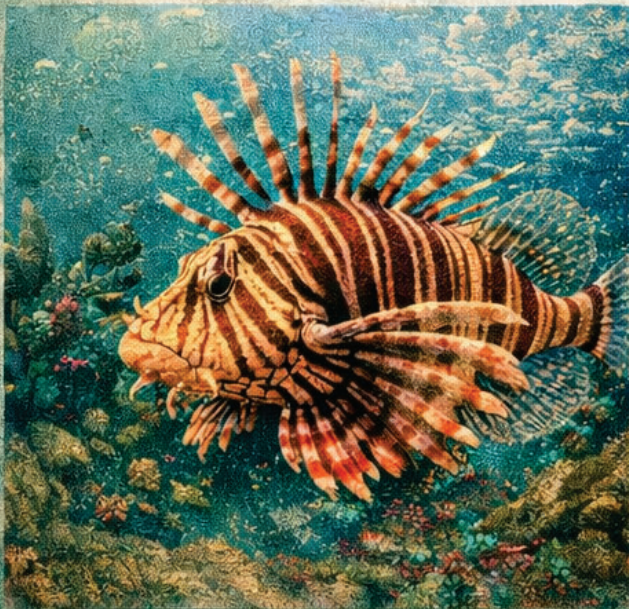
FAMOUS LOCAL EXAMPLES



Burmese pythons
eating native mammals



Argentine tegus
destroying nests



Lionfish wiping
out reef fish



Brazilian pepper
trees choking forests

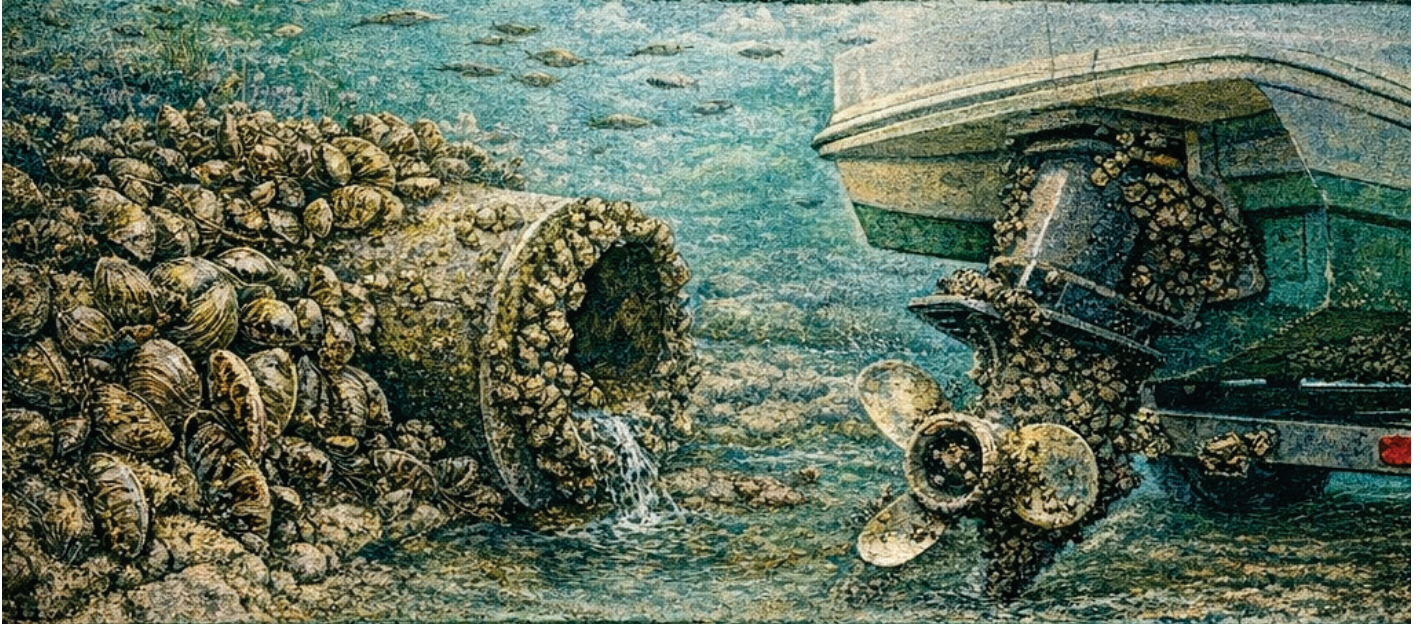
ZEBRA & QUAGGA MUSSELS

Tiny shells. Massive damage.

Once established:

- ✗ Impossible to fully remove
- ✗ Clog pipes & water systems
- ✗ Destroy fisheries
- ✗ Change entire ecosystems

They reproduce so fast they can cover surfaces like rocks, docks, and engines.



How YOU stop them:



CLEAN – remove plants & mud



DRAIN – empty all water



DRY – before entering another waterbody



One drop of water can carry larvae.

WHY IT MATTERS

***Invasive species* can:**



Outcompete native wildlife



Collapse food chains



Damage coral reefs

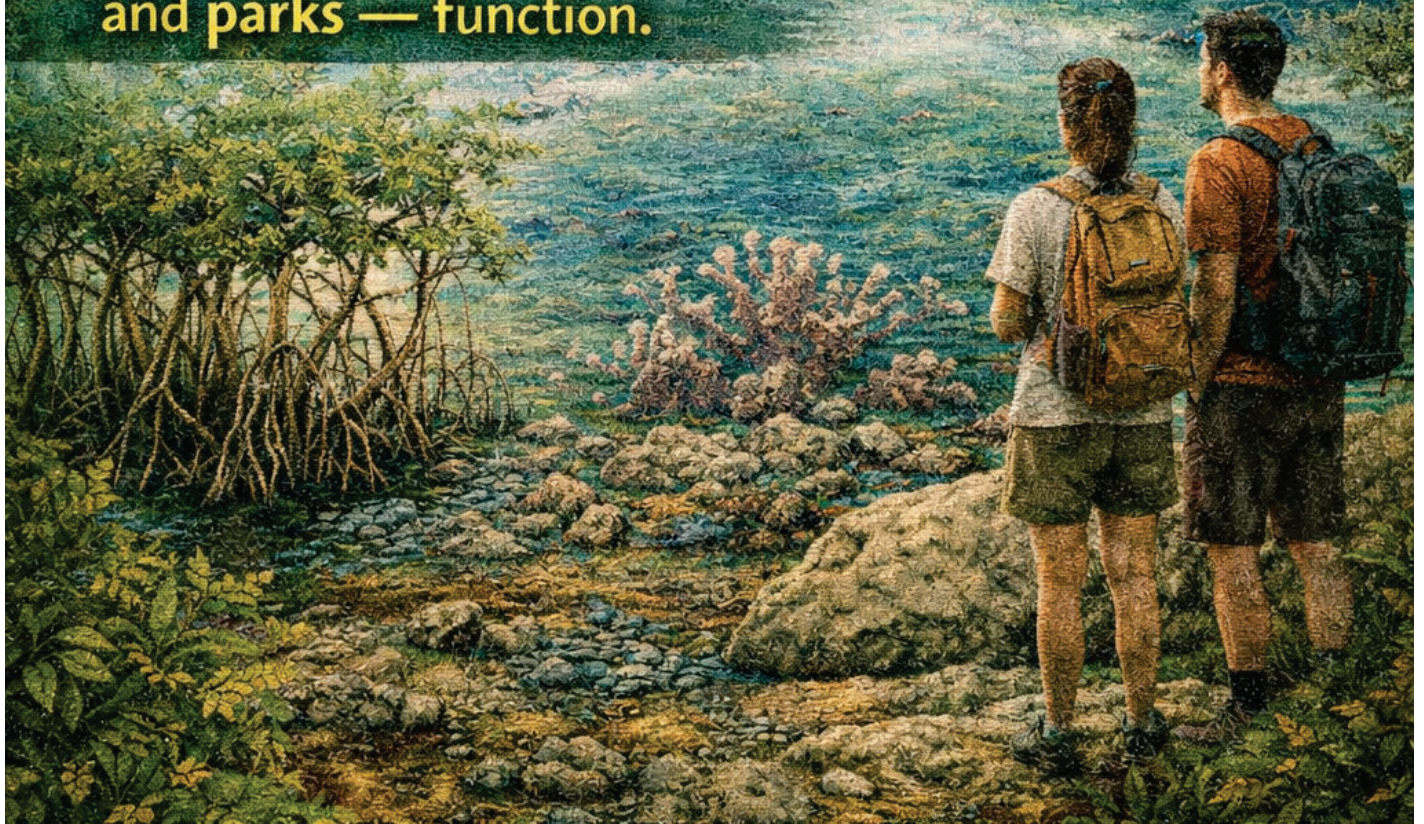


Increase flooding risk



Cost billions in control efforts

**They change how nature —
and parks — function.**



YOU CAN PREVENT IT

Most spread happens by accident.



CLEAN

Remove plants/mud from gear



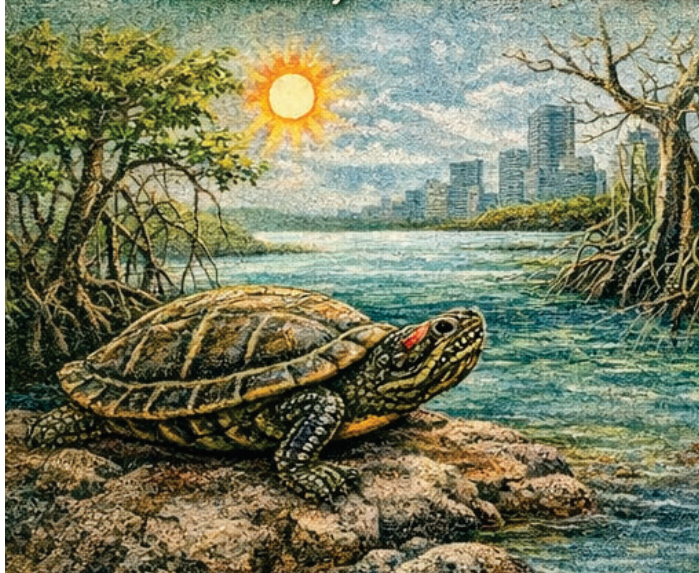
DRAIN

Empty all water from boats & coolers



DRY

Wait before entering another waterbody

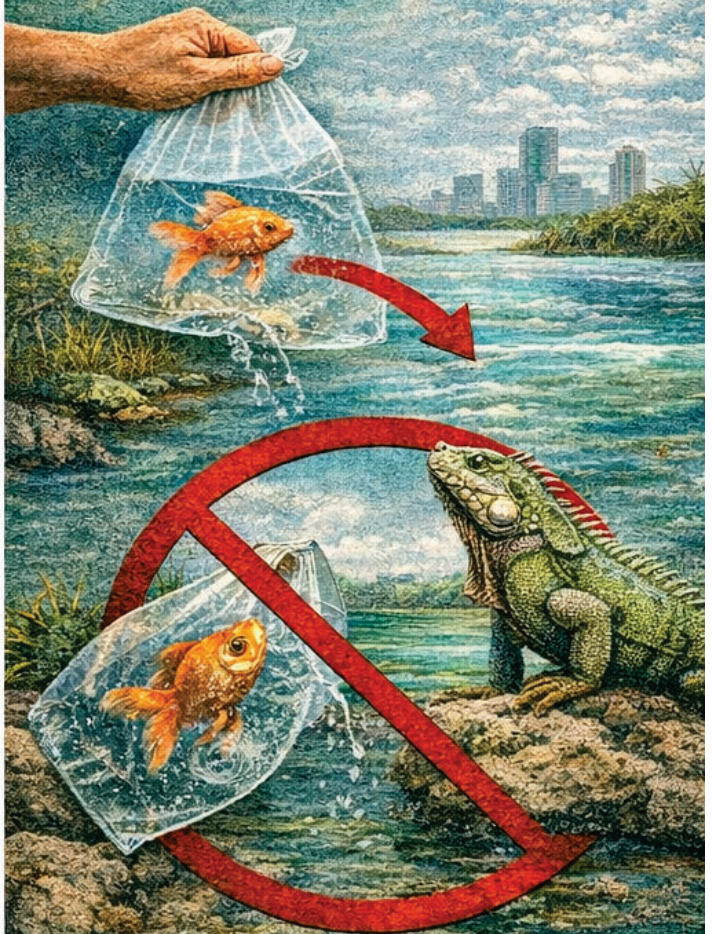


NEVER RELEASE PETS

Don't release aquarium fish, turtles, or reptiles.

Many Florida invasions started from:

"Someone thought they were helping the animal."



They survive — and the ecosystem suffers.