

# Giant snails a danger in Florida

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Florida officials reportedly are fearful giant South American channeled apple snails might threaten native species and endanger water quality.

"It has a voracious appetite, so it can just decimate the native aquatic plant habitat," Ken Gioeli, a natural resources agent for the University of Florida told the Palm Beach (Fla.) Post.

Florida extension agents say the mollusks can reach fist size, 10 times the size of native apple snails. A few giant snails were discovered last week in a Vero Beach, Fla., area canal and Gioeli says it's probably only a matter of time before they appear in other ponds, canals or waterways.

Once a delicacy in Hawaii, Taiwan and the Philippines, the newspaper said the snails were introduced to South Florida through aquarium trades and aquaculture as early as 1978.

Gioeli said the invasive species endangers the native apple snail by depleting food sources, such as pickerelweed and duck potato. That, he said, can threaten water quality by wiping out the native plants that filter nutrients.

Gioeli told the Post the giant snails, which can lay as many as 1,000 eggs weekly, can be humanely killed by being put into a freezer.

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