

New exotic invasive snake is captured in Everglades National Park. It's likely a released pet

March 1 2021, by Adriana Brasileiro



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Visitors hiking the Mahogany Hammock Trail in Everglades National Park earlier this month spotted an unfamiliar snake. It turned out to be a brand-new invasive species.

The hikers alerted park staff of the sighting. Park staff and biologists

from the United States Geological Survey's Fort Collins Science Center captured the snake, which was identified as a non-native Central American milk snake. It appears to be a solo snake, good news for a park and Everglades ecosystem overrun by exotic invasive reptiles.

"This individual is thought to be a released pet because of its docile behavior and unusual coloration," USGS said in a statement, adding this species has never been documented in the Everglades before. The only other documented sighting in the wild in the United States was in California.

The milk snake, in its [native habitat](#), has similar bands of red, yellow and black as native coral snakes, which are highly venomous, but in a different pattern. USGS photos of the one caught in the Glades show duller colors. The Central American milk [snake](#) isn't venomous and can grow to about 70 inches long.

The discovery came just weeks before Florida wildlife managers on Thursday approved new rules that ban the breeding and sale of tegu, green iguana and a list of other exotic snakes and lizards because reptiles that have escaped or been released have become a massive problem for the state—especially [native wildlife](#).

Early detection can help scientists and government agencies prevent the establishment of populations, such as the case of Burmese pythons. The public can help scientists and wildlife managers track invasive species by taking photos and reporting any sightings of unusual animals to [local authorities](#) or to the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System or by reporting sightings using the IveGot1 app.

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