

A primer on Apple Snails when you only have a minute

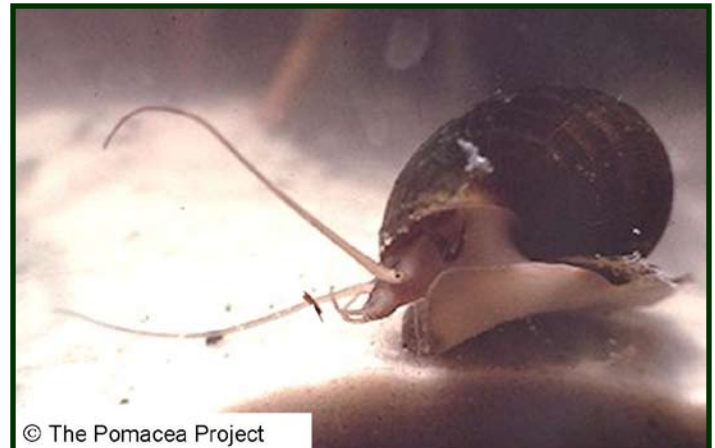
Florida Apple Snail (*Pomacea paludosa*)

- Largest native freshwater snail in the U.S.; typical adult is golf-ball sized (1 3/4" diameter).
- Occurs from south Georgia to the Florida Everglades; sporadic distribution in the Florida Panhandle.
- Found in vegetated aquatic habitats including wetlands, lake littoral zones, and spring-fed rivers.
- Adult-sized snails are primary food of the federally-endangered snail kite and the limpkin; also eaten by alligators and soft-shelled turtles.



Biology and Ecology

- Lifespan of 1-1.5 years; adults die-off in summer after peak reproduction in April-June.
- Separate sexes (no hermaphrodites): Females lay clusters of 20-30 eggs on plant stems above the water.
- Hatch out as miniature adults (~1/8" diam.).
- Hatchlings and juveniles (~ 3/4") eaten by crayfish, turtles, and fish.



- Snails eat periphyton and submerged plants.
- Although aquatic, they must periodically surface to breathe air.
- Survive weeks to months in dry marsh conditions.

Threats and Concerns

- Population declines associated with changes in water management, drought, and excessive flooding.
- Both dry downs and high water can suppress egg production.
- Low snail densities in recent years in some critical snail kite habitats (e.g., Lake Okeechobee) associated with a decline in the snail kite population.
- The non-native apple snail (*Pomacea insularum*) has spread rapidly and may be a threat to the native snails.

