

A RUNAWAY TRAIN IN THE MAKING:

THE EXOTIC AMPHIBIANS, REPTILES, TURTLES, AND CROCODILIANS
OF FLORIDA

MONOGRAPH 1.

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DEDICATION

To the memory of Henry “Hank” T. Smith, a dear friend and co-investigator on many enjoyable projects, and a person who made a positive difference in my life and in those of many others.

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INTRODUCTION

As of 2004, 40 exotic species of herpetofauna occurred in established populations in Florida (Meshaka et al. 2004a), and two years later, Meshaka (2006) reviewed the inclusion of six more species. Yet another species appeared as established in 2007. In light of a wealth of new published information since Meshaka et al. (2004a) went to press and a continuing accumulation of new exotic species and colonies of existing exotic species, it became apparent that an update of Meshaka et al. (2004a) was warranted. Thus, this new edition is both a snapshot in time and a progress report, providing a summary of Florida's exotic herpetofaunal phenomenon. Its goal remains unchanged: to convey to an audience of budding naturalists, land managers, professional biologists, and those at regulatory institutions what is currently known and unknown about the established ecology and colonization dynamics of

each established species. This will better enable interested individuals to understand the colonization process and will provide them useful information with which to make wise management decisions. In a larger context, the geographic distributions of exotic herpetofauna in North America were determined to be so extensive that The Center for North American Herpetology maintains an active update of those species.

The taxonomic, ecological, and geographic patterns associated with the currently established 47 Floridian species deviates little from those patterns noted by Meshaka et al. (2004a). For example, most of the species are lizards, especially geckos and anoles (Table 1). Most of these species are small, early maturing, fecund, generally insectivorous, nocturnal, and excel in establishing themselves around humans even if they are not limited to human-disturbed situations. The native centers of geographic distribution for most of these species is the New World ($n = 28$), 15 of which are from



FIGURE 1. The 67 counties of Florida, U.S.A.

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engineer, as it were, to return some semblance of order to this runaway train we now call the Florida exotic herpetofauna.

POST SCRIPT

After this manuscript was in press, there were reports that three new species became established in Florida. Data associated with these three publications met the criteria for establishment used in this manuscript, and I consider them established in Florida.

African Five-lined Skink- *Trachylepis quinque-taeniata* (Lichtenstein 1823): St. Lucie County (Krysko et al. 2010).

Oustalet's Chameleon- *Furcifer oustaleti* (Mocquard 1894): Miami-Dade County (Guillett et al. 2010).

Northern African Python- *Python sebae* (Gmelin 1789): Miami-Dade County (Reed and Rodda 2009).

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