Proposed Rules Pertaining to Wild Animals, Subject 391-4-8

Please send comments on the proposed regulations to:

WCScomments@dnr.ga.gov

No later than September 30, 2022

Comments posted to Facebook are not official comments
• **27-1-2 (77):** “Wildlife” means any vertebrate or invertebrate animal life indigenous to this state...

• **27-1-2 (75):** “Wild Animal” means any animal which is not wildlife and is not normally a domestic species in the state.

• **27-5-1.** “The importation, transportation, sale, transfer, and possession of wild animals are privileges not to be granted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that such actions can be accomplished in a manner that does not pose unnecessary risk to Georgia’s wildlife and other natural resources or the citizens of and visitors to this state.”

  • Harmful competition for wildlife
  • The introduction of disease or pests harmful to wildlife
  • Problems of enforcing laws and regulations relative to wildlife
  • Threatening wildlife or other natural resources
  • Endangering the physical safety of human beings
Current Wild Animal List (27-5-5)

- Can view entire Wild Animal Chapter (O.C.G.A. 27-5) on General Assembly website
- 104 groups of species are listed
  - Inherently Dangerous Wild Animals (Requires license and liability insurance)
  - All other Wild Animals (Requires license only)
Department and Board Responsibilities

Department

- LED Issues Wild Animal Licenses and Permits as described in 27-5-4
- License: Wholesale or Retail Wild Animal Business (Not for Pet Owners)
- Permits: Scientific or Educational Purposes
- Facilities are inspected every 2-3 years
- Currently ~ 100 organizations/individuals with licenses/permits

Board of Natural Resources

- 27-5-2. (b) The board is specifically authorized to supplement the list of wild animals set forth in this chapter…

- The board also has the authority to prohibit wild animals
Justification and Approach

- Has not been updated since 1994

- Scientific name changes creating confusion

- Many invasive species groups not covered on Wild Animal List are being introduced and established in Georgia

- Proposed rules supplement the current list of wild animals and lists them all in single subject under authority of the DNR Board

- Developed by species and law enforcement experts from Georgia DNR
  - Observations in Georgia
  - Scientific publications and risk assessments
  - Invasive species issues and regulations in nearby states
  - Recognition as an injurious species under federal law (Lacey Act)
• Increases Wild Animal list from 104 to 133 groups of species

• Mammals
  • Prohibited: Mongoose
  • Inherently Dangerous: Expanded to include all non-domestic cat species

• Birds
  • Prohibited: Monk Parakeet and Purple Swamphen

• Reptiles
  • Inherently Dangerous: Mole Vipers
  • License: Added 6 species
Proposed Rules (Reptiles)

(c) **Reptiles:**

1. Order Squamata:
   (i) Family Pythonidae - Python molurus (Indian rock python);
   (ii) Family Pythonidae - Python bivittatus (Burmese python);
   (iii) Family Teiidae - Salvator merianae (Argentine black-and-white tegu);
   (iv) Family Varanidae - Varanus niloticus (Nile monitor);

2. Order Testudines:
   (i) Family Pelomedusidae - Pelomedusa subrufa (African helmeted turtle);
   (ii) Family Trionychidae (softshell turtles) - Pelodiscus sinensis (Chinese softshell turtle);

3. The species listed in subparagraph (c) shall only be licensed for scientific, educational, or public exhibition purposes consistent with O.C.G.A. Sec. 27-5-4; provided, however, that such species possessed on or before the effective date of this rule may be held as a pet without a license or permit provided that the owner tags and registers all individuals with the Georgia DNR Law Enforcement Division within 12 months following the effective date of this rule;
• Tegu already regulated in Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina and Alabama

• Existing owners can keep their pets by tagging them and registering them with LED within 12 months of the effective date of the rule.

• Animals can be sold, transferred and transported within the 12-month period as long as they are tagged and registered before the end of the 12-month period. Importation or breeding of animals would not be allowed after the effective date of the rule.
Tegu Concerns

- Population in Toombs and Tattnall Counties, spreading
- Omnivores that include eggs of tortoises and ground nesting birds in their diets
Gopher Tortoise

- Official State Reptile
- Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative
- Keystone species that provides habitat for hundreds of other species
Burmese Python

- Uncertainty
  - Changing climate
  - Cold snaps
  - Behavior

Okefenokee Swamp NWR
Invasive Lung Parasites

- Burmese Pythons are a host for this non-native parasite
- Native snakes are susceptible to the parasite
Proposed Rules (continued)

• Amphibians—No Changes

• Fishes

  • Prohibited:
    • 3 carp species
    • African Tiger Fish
    • Wels Catfish
    • All species of Snakeheads
    • Nile Perch and Barramundi

  • Inherently Dangerous: Added Stonefishes, Weever Fishes and Electric Eels

  • License:
    • Arapaima
    • Trahiras
    • Goonch Catfishes
    • Swamp Eels
• Invertebrates

• Prohibited:
  • Dreissenidae (Zebra mussels and relatives)
  • Marbled Crayfish

• Inherently Dangerous:
  • 5 groups of scorpions (fattail, bark, thicktailed, deathstalker, and yellow-legged creeping scorpion)

• License:
  • All families of crayfishes (except 3 species in food/aquarium trade)
  • Apple, Assassin, and Asian Mystery Snails
  • Penaeid Shrimps (exception for human consumption)
  • Four families and 2 genera of freshwater mussels
  • All other freshwater and marine invertebrates not held in aquaria or tanks
Marbled Crayfish (Prohibited)

The Self-Cloning Marmorkreb Crayfish (*Procambarus fallax* cf. *virginalis*, although this is a temporary species name at best) is an incredible anomaly of biology. It is an all-female mutation that continually produces its own fertilized eggs, which develop into exact clones of the mother. In fact, many of our specimens continually reproduce in our tanks at our facility! This crayfish was reportedly discovered in a German pet shop, but little is known about its natural origins. Many people believe it to be some sort of mutation of the true Marbled Crayfish (*Procambarus fallax*) or possibly a mutated hybrid of a *Procambarus* species and another unrelated crayfish.

Though most crayfish are often reclusive by nature, this particular crayfish is very active by comparison and spends plenty of time exploring the floor of the aquarium in search of food. The Self-Cloning Marmorkreb Crayfish is an omnivorous scavenger and will eat most any meaty or plant-based foods. This crayfish should not be kept with ornamental live plants as it will eat them at a surprising rate. It is a skilled climber, so extra care must be taken to ensure that it does not escape its enclosure.
Crayfishes

Native

Invasive Crayfishes

- Direct competition with native species
- Habitat and ecosystem level impacts associated with foraging on plants and burrowing activity
- Disease and Parasite risk
Prevention is Key (regulations and education)

INVASION CURVE

- Introduction
- Detection
- Prevention or Eradication SIMPLE
- Prevention or Eradication FEASIBLE
- Eradication UNLIKELY, intense effort required
- Local control and management ONLY

TIME →

AREA INFESTED

CONTROL COSTS
## Public Input Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Action</th>
<th>Action Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia DNR Board Briefing on Proposed Rules</td>
<td>August 23, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Rules Publicly Noticed on Website</td>
<td>August 26, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtual Public Meeting, 7:00 PM-8:00 PM Presentation and documents will be posted on</td>
<td>September 13, 2022</td>
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<td><a href="https://georgiawildlife.com">https://georgiawildlife.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for submitting comments on proposed rules</td>
<td>September 30, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Send official comments to <a href="mailto:wcscomments@dnr.ga.gov">wcscomments@dnr.ga.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Present public comments and rules to the Board for action</td>
<td>October 25, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort McAllister State Park, Group Shelter, 3894 Fort McAllister Road, Richmond Hill, Georgia</td>
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<tr>
<td>If passed, rule would go into effect within 30 days</td>
<td>November 2022</td>
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Resources on Website

https://georgiawildlife.com/regulations/proposed

Wildlife Conservation

Notice is hereby given that, pursuant to authority contained in Title 27, Game and Fish (O.C.G.A. Secs. 27-5-2 and 27-5-4), the Board of Natural Resources proposes to promulgate rules updating the taxonomy and appending the list of wild animals for which a license or permit is required in O.C.G.A. Sec. 27-5-5. The proposed rules (copy attached hereto), when adopted, amends Chapter 391-4, Wildlife Resources, by creating a new Subject 391-4-8, Wild Animals.

- Public Notice and Proposed Rules
- Proposed Rules with Additions to the Wild Animal List Highlighted
- Wild Animal Laws in the Official Code of Georgia. This includes the existing list of wild animals and other laws relevant to wild animals in Georgia.
- FAQ Wild Animal Rules
- Wild Animal Summary Presentation
- Public Comment Opportunity
- Please send comments and questions on the proposed rules to WCScomments@dnr.ga.gov
Thank You