HAVE YOU SEEN
ARGENTINE BLACK AND WHITE TEGUS?

Tegus have been reported in the wild in Toombs and Tattnall counties. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources and its partners are working to remove these South American lizards. Report tegu sightings and help save our native wildlife.

Argentine black and white tegus grow big and hungry. They will eat the eggs of ground-nesting birds—including quail and turkeys—and other reptiles, such as alligators and gopher tortoises, Georgia’s state reptile. They will also consume chicken eggs, fruit, vegetables, pet food, carrion and small animals, from grasshoppers to young gopher tortoises.

Learn more: georgiawildlife.com/tegus

Adult tegu (Dustin Smith)

Adult Argentine black and white tegu (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)

Young Argentine black and white tegu (Dustin Smith)
Identify Argentine Black and White Tegus

- Large, fast-moving terrestrial lizard, typically found on the ground
- Black to dark gray with white speckled bands across the back and tail
- Can grow up to 4 feet long and weigh up to 10 pounds
- Active during the day
- Hatchlings have green heads that fade by about 1 month of age

Tegus at a Glance

- Native to South America. The Argentine black and white tegu (Salvator merianae) is native to Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina.
- Terrestrial lizards rarely found more than a few feet off the ground, but they are also strong swimmers and can stay submerged for an extended time. Argentine black and white tegus occupy savannas and disturbed habitats, such as forest clearings, fence rows and roadsides. They winter in burrows or under cover.
- Popular in the pet trade. In the wild, as adults they have few predators and can reproduce quickly. Reproductive-age females lay about 35 eggs a year.
- Not considered aggressive but will defend themselves if threatened or harassed. These reptiles can react fast, and have sharp teeth and claws and strong jaws.
- Legal in Georgia to own as pets, but it is illegal to release any animal into the wild.
- Not protected by Georgia wildlife laws or regulations, although local ordinances and animal cruelty laws apply. Tegus can be legally trapped or killed.

YOU CAN HELP!
Report tegus in the wild (dead or alive) to DNR

- Take a photo
- Note the location
- Report the sighting
  - Online at gainvasives.org/tegus
  - By phone to 478-994-1438
  - By email to gainvasives@dnr.ga.gov

Sources include: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, University of Florida