

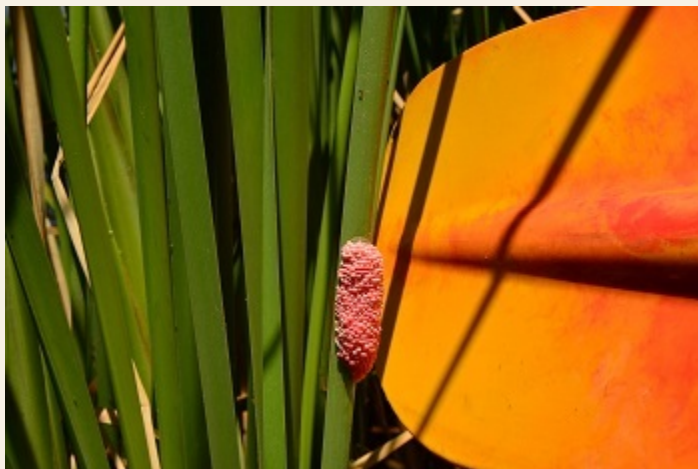


GAME AND FISH NEWS

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Arizona Game and Fish Department

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Flotilla of kayakers, AZGFD biologists to float down Lower Salt River to battle invasive apple snail



MESA, Ariz. — Arizona Game and Fish Department biologists and the local kayaking community are joining forces to battle an invasive snail that, left unchallenged, could negatively impact native snail populations, vegetation and fishing along the Lower Salt River.

Last month a flotilla of more than 20 kayakers donned life jackets, grabbed their paddles and set off down the Lower Salt River northeast of Mesa looking for apple snail egg masses.

A group of citizen scientists from Sea Life Arizona Aquarium will again join AZGFD and Tonto National Forest biologists on Friday, Aug. 11 to help count, smash and drown the bright pink egg sacks into the depths of the Lower Salt River.

“Apple snails were originally introduced to Arizona through the pet trade,” said

Jeff Sorensen, AZGFD Invertebrate Wildlife program manager, who is leading the project. “Unfortunately, when owners get tired of caring for them, some of these snails are released into our waterways, where they outcompete native species for food and territory. That has a ripple effect on aquatic species, vegetation and consequently our fish.”

Adult apple snails can grow as large as golf balls. Females produce large egg sacks, which resemble pink bubble gum stuck to cattail stalks lining waterways, such as the Lower Salt River.

Apple snails can lay a clutch of 25-500 eggs every 12 to 15 days.

“Just one female apple snail can produce up to 15,000 offspring per year. That is why it’s important for us to engage the public, and our local kayaking and tubing communities to help battle this invasive species,” Sorensen said.

Those wishing to join the battle against the invasive snail can simply smack the egg sacks into the water with a paddle or stick and the eggs will drown. However, use care when coming into contact with the snails as they are an intermediate host for the rat lungworm, which is a nematode that can cause meningitis in humans.

NOTE TO THE MEDIA:

The media is invited to join the Aug. 11 apple snail survey, which will include AZGFD and U.S. Forest Service biologists, about 10 volunteers from Sea Life Arizona Aquarium and paddlesport groups.

For those wanting to participate in the lower half of the survey and float down the Lower Salt River, the flotilla will launch from Phon D Sutton river access point on the Bush Highway at **8:30 a.m. Friday, Aug 11** and will end at around 11:30 a.m.-noon at Granite Reef campground.

The upper half of the survey will launch at the Blue Point Beach at Salt River bridge on the Bush Highway at **8:30 a.m. Friday, Aug. 11** and will end at around noon-12:30 p.m. at Phon D Sutton.

DETAILS:

Arrangements can be made ahead of time for those only wanting sound and/or video at the end of the survey at Granite Reef (**around noon, Friday Aug. 11**). Photographers can be shuttled on the water aboard a tandem kayak.

HD b roll is available from the July 11 survey by contacting PIO Nathan Gonzalez at ngonzalez@azgfd.gov or call (623) 236-7230.

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