

MEDIA RELEASE

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Program by former RiverQuarium CEO focuses on invasive species

On September 16 at 7 p.m., former Flint RiverQuarium Chief Executive Officer Doug Noble, now assistant director of exhibits and public programs at the Florida Museum of Natural History, will lead a discussion on how invasive species are affecting native animals and plants in the Everglades.

The free presentation is based on the RiverQuarium's current temporary exhibit, *Alien Attack: Target Everglades*, produced by the Florida Museum under Noble's direction. Noble also will discuss the Florida Museum's efforts to research and aid in the extraction of Burmese Pythons, one of the Everglades top 10 invasive species.

"Over 1,600 Burmese Pythons have been pulled out of the Everglades since 2002," Noble said. "It is now fully established and reproducing."

Noble, who served as the RiverQuarium's first chief executive officer from 2003 to 2006, attributes the invasion of the snakes to pet owners who release them into the wild when they become too large, too expensive to feed or were no longer wanted. Removing them is challenging because they are often difficult to reach in the Everglades.

"The idea is to encourage people to use native plants that thrive without excess water and to become responsible pet owners," Noble said.

Invasive species damage ecosystems by taking over or displacing native species. The Brazilian peppertree, also known as Florida holly, is invading and dominating the Everglades as well as other plant communities including hammocks, pinelands and mangrove forests.

The Burmese Python feeds on the endangered Key Largo woodrat, Noble said.

Alien Attack: Target Everglades is on display through May. The child-friendly exhibits allow visitors to experience the beauty of the Everglades through photographs and learn about the dangers of invasive species through a top 10 countdown of the most dangerous invasive species. The exhibit includes live animals and plants.

The Flint RiverQuarium is southwest Georgia's premier aquarium, featuring more than 1,000 animals that call the Flint River watershed home. The Flint RiverQuarium is located at 101 Pine Avenue in downtown Albany, Georgia. Regular operating hours are Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sunday 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

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