

Tallahassee
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NEWS RELEASE

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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FWC HOLDS EXOTIC PET AMNESTY DAY

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Exotic pet owners will have an opportunity to turn in animals that have outgrown their cages or worn out their welcome this Saturday at Exotic Pet Amnesty Day sponsored by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and Orange County Animal Services. Experts from several agencies and organizations will be on hand at Barnett Park in Orlando to help place exotic fish, frogs, salamanders, turtles, lizards, snakes and birds with new homes.

Orange County Animal Services, which has conducted several amnesty days for domestic animals, will be on hand to accept dogs and cats and offer free rabies shots. Officials will not be able to accept other mammals at this event.

“The main purpose is to give pet owners an alternative to releasing their exotic pets into the wild,” said Scott Hardin, Exotic Species Section Leader with FWC. “Many of the 133 species of non-native fish and wildlife established in the wild in Florida resulted from releases by pet owners.”

It is illegal to release any non-native species in Florida, but many pet owners are not aware of this or that most captive species will not survive in the wild. Just as

important, it is not ecologically responsible to introduce a species without scientific study to confirm it will not harm native wildlife.

Some non-native species have restrictions on possession, while personal possession of animals that pose severe ecological, economic or human health risks are banned altogether. These species along with unrestricted pets will be accepted at Exotic Pet Amnesty Day.

“We will not be penalizing any pet owners who choose the responsible option of not releasing their pets into the wild. This is about curbing our ongoing problem of exotic fish and wildlife,” Hardin said.