

HAVE YOU SEEN ARGENTINE BLACK AND WHITE TEGUS?

Tegus have been reported in the wild in eastern Toombs and western Tattnall counties. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources is assessing the situation with these nonnative lizards. By reporting tegu sightings to DNR, you help biologists document occurrences and determine the best response.



Adult tegu (Dustin Smith)



Adult tegu (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)



Juvenile tegus (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)

Argentine black and white tegus are an invasive species and would pose threats to birds, mammals and insects in Georgia. They also eat fruit, vegetables, pet food and eggs, including chicken eggs and the eggs—and young—of gopher tortoises, Georgia's state reptile.

Tegu Identification

- Large, terrestrial lizard, typically found on the ground
- Black in color with white speckled bands across the back and tail
- Can grow up to 4 feet and weigh up to 10 pounds
- Active during the day
- Hatchlings have green heads that fade within months



Adult tegu (adobestock.com)

Tegus Are...

- 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.
- Popular in the pet trade. In the wild, they can reproduce quickly: Reproductive-age females lay about 35 eggs 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 may apply.

YOU CAN HELP! Report tegus in the wild to Georgia DNR

- Take a photo
- Note the location
- Report the sighting
 - Online at www.gainvasives.org/tegu
 - By phone to Daniel Sollenberger, (678) 550-4406
 - By email to daniel.sollenberger@dnr.ga.gov