

Be On The Lookout For Aliens

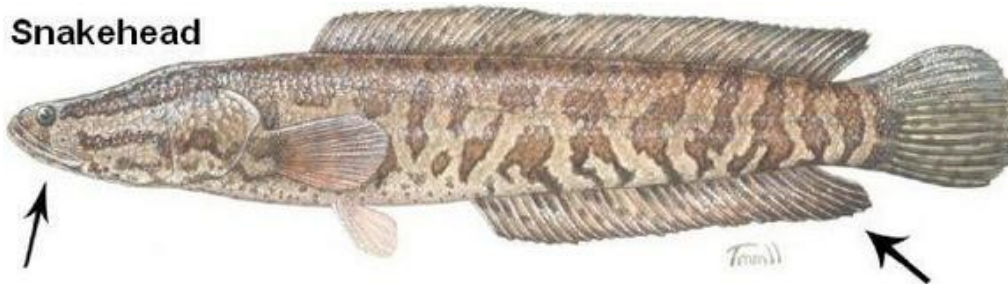
By Capt. Mike Brennan, Stormwater Manager, Engineering & Stormwater Department, City of Palm Coast

One of City of Palm Coast Engineering & Stormwater Department's concerns is the health and biodiversity of our freshwater man-made canals. There are many species of fish known to be in our canals; both native and non-native. We really do not have an accurate inventory of the fish population in City canals. Of particular concern are non-native species that may be found in our freshwater canals. Some non-native species are beneficial; some are not. A beneficial species that we have introduced to our canals to control aquatic weed growth is the triploid (sterile) grass carp, and we replenish our carp population approximately every couple of years. This species is there to keep our canals clean; please leave them to do their job. We have had an unconfirmed report of a serious predatory non-native species from China called a "Snakehead" that may have been caught in one of our canals.

Though Snakeheads are found in South Florida with increasing frequency, the species is not a native to Florida waters and may cause serious consequences if introduced and allowed to establish in our canal ecosystem. Snakeheads are voracious top-level predators that can grow as large as 3 to 4 feet long. They breathe air, and can survive on land as long as they are wet for up to four days. In addition, Snakeheads are known to migrate up to ¼ mile on wet land to other bodies of water by wriggling with their body and fins. As adults they will eat fish, frogs, birds, ducks and small mammals. Their general appearance is very similar to a bowfin.

If you encounter a fish that you suspect to be a snakehead, or any other fish that you suspect is non-native, **PLEASE DO NOT RELEASE IT**. Please kill the fish by freezing. Snakeheads should be killed by cutting / bleeding then freezing. After thorough freezing they may be disposed of in the next day(s) regular household trash. For further identification, you may contact myself at 986-4721 or Denise Bevan, the City's Environmental Planner, at 986-2458 or you may bring your frozen fish to the City offices at 160 Cypress Point Parkway, Suite 106-B.

Additionally, any kind of invasive or non-native species, fish, bird, plant, mammal, etc. may be reported to the Florida Invasive Species Partnership at <http://www.eddmaps.org/florida/>. For the more curious, additional information on Snakeheads can be found at http://fl.biology.usgs.gov/Snakehead_circ_1251/index.html.



	Snakehead	Bowfin
Anal Fin	Very long, 18 rays, more than half the length of the dorsal fin	Short, 12 rays, less than half the length of the dorsal fin
Head	Pointed and flattened dorsally	Large and rounded
Jaw	Lower jaw protrudes past upper jaw with pointed teeth	Lower jaw is shorter than upper



Snakehead illustration by Susan Trammel, usgs.gov; Bowfin illustration by Duane Raver