



HABITATTITUDE

A NETWORK FOR PREVENTION: EXPANDING
RESOURCES FOR REHOMING EXOTIC PETS

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Why should we NOT release our pets or plants?



The Dish on Fish

- Harmful to the animal
- Harmful to the environment
- In Wisconsin, it's illegal

RED SWAMP CRAYFISH

Great Lakes Basin through OTT pathways

Red swamp crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*) were discovered in a stormwater drainage pond in Germantown, Wis., in 2009. They are larger and more aggressive than crayfish native to the Great Lakes. They can decrease levels of aquatic vegetation and damage earthen dams and levees by burrowing. These crayfish are used as classroom study specimens and as food items, and they are often introduced through intentional release. Since discovery, containment and eradication efforts have cost the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and local partners more than \$750,000.

Organism in Trade Pathways, UW Sea Grant, 2015



GOLDFISH

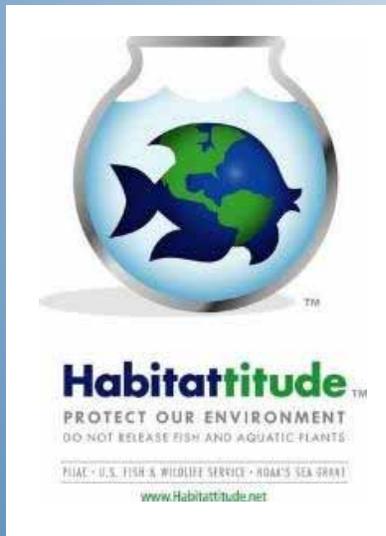
Goldfish (*Carassius auratus*) have been found to infest several lakes, ponds and rivers likely as a result of aquarium release. They harm water quality by increasing turbidity through their feeding behavior. Increased turbidity increases water temperature and decreases dissolved oxygen, which can cause fish kills. Few fish eradication efforts have been successful, but goldfish were eliminated from a stormwater pond in Duluth, Minn., to protect a connected designated trout stream that flows to Lake Superior. It required several months of work and cost \$100,000.

Organism in Trade Pathways, UW Sea Grant, 2015



Kevin L. Kapuscinski, Ph.D.

NATIONAL HABITATTITUDE CAMPAIGN



- National education campaign created through a partnership of industry, academia and government
- Goal – to raise public awareness about the importance of not releasing pets and plants
 - Focused on aquatics



CREATING A REGIONAL NETWORK

2016 Activities:

1. Evaluated need of rehoming resources for exotic pets through a survey
2. Developed partnerships with area rescue and rehoming organizations
3. Hosted 1st surrender event in October

2017 Goals and Activities:

1. Expand rehoming network
2. Develop and distribute information about rehoming resources
3. Host 2nd surrender event (March 11th)

More than just about preventing invasive species...

Pet Rehoming Survey

- PURPOSE:
 - Better understand what resources are available
 - Gain insight into what stores, nonprofits, and nature centers know about rehoming resources
- METHOD:
 - Surveys were dropped off in-person to a supervisor at each location
 - Supervisor then distributed surveys to their employees
 - Pre-stamped envelopes were provided for people to return surveys
- DISTRIBUTION:
 - 116 surveys were distributed
 - Pet stores, shelters, rescues, nature centers, etc.
 - 36 people responded; a 31% response rate

Habitattitude Project "Pet Rehoming" Survey



Sometimes **unwanted pets are released into the wild** and can potentially cause problems. People might want to look for an alternative to releasing their unwanted pet. This is often called "**pet rehoming**," but also "**pet rescue**" or "**surrender**." This survey is intended to gather information on this type of pet rehoming.



1 Have you ever been asked about rehoming a pet? Yes No → skip to question 4
(If Yes, then please answer at least one of these questions, whichever is easiest for you)

a) How many times in the last year?

b) In a typical month, how many times are you usually asked about rehoming a pet?

2 Do you ever refer people (who ask about rehoming a pet) to an organization or other place? Yes No
If Yes, where do you refer people? (check ALL that apply)

Go to an organization...which one?

Go to a certain pet store...which one?

Call a veterinarian

Trade with a friend

3 Do you do any of these when someone asks you about rehoming a pet?
(check ALL that apply)

Give them information about a place they can bring their pet to rehome it

Call a place for them (or with them) where they can bring their pet to rehome it

Take in the pet they want to rehome

Tell them you are not sure about where they can rehome their pet

Give them information about invasive species

Other (please describe)

Creating alternatives to pet release

SURVEY RESULTS

Every respondent reported being asked often about pet rehoming

- Once a week = most common answer
- Most pet owners in need of rehoming are referred
 - Handful of respondents reported not referring people to rehoming resources
 - 16 respondents reported taking in the pet

When asked about invasive species:

- Knowledge limited to simple definition

Pets most often rehomed: fish, rodents, reptiles, birds, Cats, and dogs

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Most common times of year: end of spring or end of summer (college students moving)

Common reasons for rehoming:

- Moving
- Animal too large or aggressive
- Allergies
- Owner doesn't know how to care for the animal (common with exotics)



2016 PET REHOMING EVENT

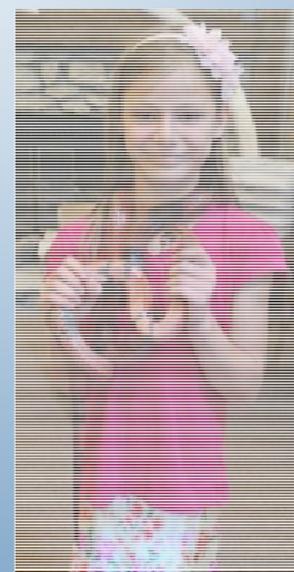
Hosted a rehoming event last October

Event participants:

- Green Bay Aquarium Society (GBAS)
- Steve the Snake Man
- Fox Valley Humane Society

17 fish were rehomed at the GBAS auction
2 cats were taken in by Fox Valley Humane

50+ contacts made at the event





HABITATTITUDE PET REHOMING NETWORK

GREEN BAY AND THE FOX CITIES

Goals for 2017:

- March 11th surrender event
- Education and outreach
- Add more rehoming partners to network
- Develop materials to advertise the network
 - Postcard sized flyer with resource contact info
 - Website

Goal: always have a viable alternative to release



Steve Keller's
Traveling
Snake
Show





2017 PET SURRENDER EVENT

Hosted by: Green Bay Aquarium Society & Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance

Event participants:

- Green Bay Aquarium Society
- Steve the Snake Man
- Roseberry Bird Rescue
- Madison Area Herp Society
- Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance

23 pets surrendered

Fish and other aquarium pets were rehomed at the GBAS auction

2 turtles were taken in by the Madison Herp Club

60+ contacts made as at the event

**HABITATTITUDE
PET
SURRENDER
EVENT**

Saturday, March 11, 2017

1000
a.m.
to
3:00
p.m.

1000 ISLANDS NATURE CENTER
1000 BEAULIEU CT.
KAUKAUNA, WI 54130

BEFORE NO
PARTNERS WILL BE
ACCEPTING FISH, TADS,
AND AQUATIC PLANTS!
NO QUESTIONS
ASKED

QUESTIONS? CONTACT GREEN BAY AQUARIUM
SOCIETY AT RESCUES@GBASOMI.ORG

Logos for Green Bay Aquarium Society, Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance, and other partners are visible at the bottom of the poster.



2017 PET SURRENDER EVENT



'Surrender, don't release' exotic pet event





2017 PET SURRENDER EVENT





2017 SUMMARY

- ADDED REHOMING PARTNER ORGANIZATION
 - TOTAL = FOUR REHOMING PARTNERS
- OUTREACH AT TWO PET CONVENTIONS
- HELD SUCCESSFUL SURRENDER EVENT
- EXPANDED MEDIA COVERAGE
- VOLUNTEERS
 - 28 VOLUNTEERS
 - ~120 VOLUNTEER HOURS

REMAINING TASKS:

- CONDUCT SURVEY FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS
- CREATE AND DISTRIBUTE NETWORK FLYER
- FALL SURRENDER EVENT?



THANK YOU!!



Questions? Suggestions?

Contact:

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