



<p>WORKING PROJECT TITLE</p>	<p>Assessing the trade of reptile species in the South African pet trade</p>
<p>CORE TEAM MEMBER</p>	<p>Prof Colleen Downs</p>
<p>ACADEMIC LEVEL OF THE PROJECT</p>	<p>MSc</p>
<p>PROJECT BACKGROUND</p>	<p>Many animal species have been freely translocated around the world as part of the exotic pet trade. Globalisation has been one of the main contributing factors leading to human movement and trade of diversified species from continent to continent. To date, more than 1000 reptiles are sold as pets worldwide. These include species such as the Burmese python <i>Python bivittatus</i>, green iguana <i>Iguana iguana</i> and red-eared slider <i>Trachemys scripta</i> that have become invasive as a result of pet release or as escapees. Impacts associated with these species include transmission of zoonotic diseases, negatively affect biodiversity through competition, predation and/or hybridisation.</p> <p>Online trade and physical pet stores are two of the pathways by which many reptile species are traded in different countries. This has resulted in difficulties in tracking or monitoring species sold across diversified platforms. Poor monitoring of the pet trade often leads to establishment of several alien species which may be associated with economic and environmental impacts.</p>



South Africa is one of the countries that has trade in reptilian species. Some of the South African native species are illegally exported as pets to various countries. The sale of native species may lead to local extinction, while the sale of alien species potentially leads to invasions. Relatively little monitoring of the reptilian pet trade has been conducted here. As part of the proposed study physical pet stores and online trade will be monitored to determine the trade volume of both native and alien reptile species in South Africa.

FURTHER READING

1. Lockwood et al. 2019. When pets become pests: the role of the exotic pet trade in producing invasive vertebrate animals. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 17: 323-330.
2. Siriwat V, Nijman V. 2018. Illegal pet trade on social media as an emerging impediment to the conservation of Asian otter species. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Biodiversity* 11: 469-475.
3. Hunter et al. 2018. Cytonuclear discordance in the Florida Everglades invasive Burmese python (*Python bivittatus*) population reveals possible hybridization with the Indian python (*P. molurus*). *Ecology and Evolution* 8: 9034-9047.
4. Anlas et al. 2017. A rapid survey of online trade in live birds and reptiles in the Philippines. *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 29: 58- 63.



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