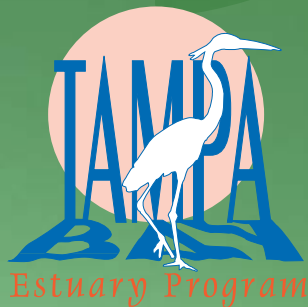


Tampa Bay's
Invasive Species

✿
A Book of Poetry



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ABOUT THE CONTEST

This book contains poems submitted in our inaugural Invasive Species Poetry Contest, held in the summer of 2011.

Poets of all ages were invited to submit a poem highlighting the damage inflicted on Florida's native habitats and inhabitants by the many exotic invaders, from bufo toads and Burmese pythons to Brazilian pepper trees, trespassing in our state.

In clever verse from humorous to serious, Tampa Bay residents answered the call! We received more than 90 entries, representing all types of poetry from haiku to free verse. Winners were selected in three age categories by a panel of judges, but all the entries are presented in this online book.

We extend a sincere thank you to every talented child and adult who entered our contest for helping us to educate Tampa Bay residents about the harm being done to our native plants and animals by a growing list of unwanted invaders.



WINNING SUBMISSIONS

Winner: Adult
A Trio of Evil
by Christine Jamesson, age 57
Clearwater, Florida

A Trio of Evil

Lovely but deadly the Lionfish have spread their range
Released partly thanks to a Hurricane
Once numbers of only three
Their masses are now seen from RI to Belize

Divers and fishermen have to fight back
And hold Lionfish derbies for wads of cash
All have high hopes to contain the creature
And keep it as it was- a rare aquarium feature

Bufo Toad all warty and thick
Secretes a poison that makes pets sick
Grayish-Brown with a slimy belly of yellow
He is a most repulsive fellow

Released in 1936 to control pests on sugar cane
He has now become a Florida pain
Looks harmless enough with no knobs on his head
But a lick of his skin leaves poor Fido dead

Burmese pythons - threatened in their native land
Are now a serious threat to man
Unchecked they could cover 1/3 of the states
And make pets or a child suffer a terrible fate

They can lay up to 100 eggs a year
And make meals of the sweet and rare Key Deer
They are unhampered now, sunning and well fed
We must end their reign and put a price on their head




WINNING SUBMISSIONS

Winner: Juniors 11 and under
The Evil Plant
by Kristen Gallo, age 11
Odessa, Florida

The Evil Plant

Winding, twisting, rapidly growing,
the Air Potato strikes
a full grown Oak tree,
wrapping its sickening green leaves
around the tree's thick trunk,
moving closer and closer
to the canopy,
like a predator about to kill
its juicy prey.
The plant doubles its size,
squeezing out the life
of the helpless tree.
Finally, the Air Potato
reaches the canopy.
It secures for itself
a tough barrier of leaves
on top of the oak.



Hogging all of the sunlight;
The oak becomes weaker
and weaker.
Unable to perform photosynthesis,
it is slowly inching to its death.
The Air Potato finally covers
the helpless tree,
and sucks all the life
out of it.
The Oak tree dies,
by suffocation
and a lack of food.
The Air Potato has done its job.
It keeps growing and growing,
and killing and killing.
What can we do
to stop this evil plant?



WINNING SUBMISSIONS

Winner: Juniors 12-17
Neglecting the Natives
By James Hsiung, age 15
Tampa, Florida

Neglecting the Natives

Many plants and animals reside here in the Tampa Bay,
Some float on by, while others are here to stay.
Invading our natural habitats, many do not know,
These invasive species arrive, and like weeds, they grow.

Humans, not aware of the existence of these dangers,
Because all plants look alike, thus none look like strangers.
Brazilian Pepper Trees are conquering the shore,
along with air potatoes, cogon grass, and oh yes, there's more.

Asian Swamp eel are preying on native frogs,
while the aggressive marine toads are killing off our dogs.
Who is responsible for protecting plants with native features?
It is us, the citizens, to help remove these invasive creatures!

Now is the time to step up to the plate,
to save our original habitats, before it's too late.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Invasive Rap

By Liz Drayer, Clearwater

air potato ain't no side dish with a small brain
when it takes over in your yard you got a bad pain

Cuban tree frogs should go back to live with Castro
mole crickets ice your lawn in no time flat - true that, yo

you don't got no business messin' with no skunkvine
send it to Pepe Le Pew - that Frenchie he don't mind

Australian pines should beat it over to the outback
walking catfish get your boots on and don't come back

tell them black spiny tail iguanas get your scales in gear
make that Brazilian pepper do the samba outta here

don't be dumpin' your pet fish in lakes that's gotta stop
e-verify the reptiles you buy at the pet shop

tear out your plants and trees if they don't got no green card
you don't want nothing but the natives in your FL yard

invasive species wreck the forests and the water
we gotta stop those sneaky mothers at the border



Fire Ants

By Christine Leacock, Tampa

Invasive, aggressive ants
Eat voraciously
Disrupting ecosystems.

Invasion

By Jazmyn Chesser, Tampa

There's algae on our corals
They're starting to look like bogs
And you'd think we're back in Moses'
time
With this nasty plague of frogs

There's bugs destroying plants
And weeds destroying crops
Most of it spreads disease
So it really ought to stop

It seems like an invasion
Compared to that of Audry II
Will the earth survive this?
I guess that all depends on you!



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS



Invasive Grace

By Krystal Filsinger, San Antonio

Lunch strikes,
as it is 1 pm
leaving enough momentum to propel to
the nearby park.
A sigh,
a tired day,
the sun burns angry skin.
A lonely swing awaits a ride as
this chipped paint bench
calls out--
and as I lay beneath
tree branch mazes,
masses of gray squirrels
form a disruptive invasion.
Yet, I treat them to rice cakes
and we share earth's grace,
as they whip around the trees
like Hula Hoops.

Florida and Its Invasive Species

By Mary Kerby, Wesley Chapel

As I sit here rocking on my back
lanai
I'm reviewing my life and
wondering why
I came to paradise to get away from
the snow
But paradise is falling short, don't
you know

Along with me, some others moved
down
And they're leaving their mark on
this old town
There are fruit flies; then there are
the lovebugs
I'm telling you its crowded and its
filled with thugs

The Africanized honey bee is
heading for my home
As the "killer algae" turns the lake
to foam
Air potatoes everywhere and even
skunkvine
My oh my I've got my family on
the line.

I'm telling them my troubles and
my worries for our state
When I reconsider as I learn about
their fate
They have snowdrifts up high and
ice on the roads
We just have mole crickets and
bufo toads
Would I rather move back up and
leave Florida behind
No I think I'll stay here and use
my back and my mind
Stop the invasive species that are
threatening you and me
We can bring back paradise; just
you wait and see

We can tell the Burmese pythons
that they have to go
We can send the Tiger Mosquito
back to Tokyo
We can start cleaning up our
habitat mile by mile
And before you know it our
paradise will make us smile



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Invasives in Florida: What do we do?

By Donna Bollenbach, Wimauma

The invasives aren't coming to Florida,
They are already here.

They are killing our native
plants and animals.

Who's going to stop them?

If not you and I, than who?

The Cuban treefrog has come to Florida,
He's a really big fellow.

He's eating our native treefrogs
and everything else that fits
in his really big mouth.

What do we do?

What do we do?

The invasives aren't coming to Florida,
They are already here.

They are killing our native
plants and animals.

Who's going to stop them?

If not you and I, than who?

Brazilian pepper has come to Florida,
and it's extremely aggressive.

It spreads quickly and grows fast,
shading out our native plants
and overtaking our habitats.

What do we do?

What do we do?

The invasives aren't coming to Florida,
They are already here.

They are killing our native
plants and animals.

Who's going to stop them?

If not you and I, than who?

The Burmese python has come to
Florida,
an exotic pet released in the wild.

He grows up to 20 feet long
and kills by constriction.

His appetite is for all native animals
including birds, reptiles and mammals.

What do we do?

What do we do?

The invasives aren't coming to Florida,
They are already here.

They are killing our native
plants and animals.

Who's going to stop them?

If not you and I, than who?

The African honey bee has come to
Florida,

They are very defensive.

Called "killer bees" because
they attack in large numbers.

In addition to a human threat
they rob native bees of food
and places to nest.

What do we do?

What do we do?

The invasives aren't coming to Florida,
They are already here

They are killing our native
plants and animals.

Who's going to stop them?

If not you and I, than who?

Capture, euthanize and freeze
Cuban treefrogs in your yard.

Brazilian pepper-trees can be treated
with a chemical herbicide.

Don't release exotic pets into the wild,
and report any sightings of pythons.

Stay clear of African honeybees,
and have them removed professionally.

That's what we do.

That's what we do.

The invasives aren't coming to Florida,
They are already here

They are killing our native
plants and animals.

Who's going to stop them?

If not you and I, than who?



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Invasive Squatters

By Lujean Rogers, Oldsmar

Air potatoes, oh my word!
Daughter's house with its big yard
Creek's bank has a lot of depth,
Where Air Potatoes have stealthily crept.
It grew so fast she hardly noted,
Until she looked and the bank was loaded!

A Bufo Toad ne'er drives her mad
Its poisonous spit is very bad.

Friendly frogs she also has
Grandpa named one Frog Eye Fred.

Dachshund Fritz, pounced on the Toad
Then his mouth filled up with foam!

They washed his mouth with the garden hose
He coughed and retched, then blew his nose.

They'd had it, so they grabbed some tools
With lists - from Bufo Toads to Melaleucas

With chain saws, shovels, hats and water
They rided the yard of invasive squatters.

Frog Eye, Fritz, and daughter were glad
With nothing left to drive them mad!

Lionfish

By Jaclyn Mousoulis, St. Petersburg

Lionfish swimming in the sea
So far away from where he's supposed to be
Swimming on an Atlantic Coral Reef, sounds like a treat
As many fish as he can eat, how could this be beat?
But how did this fellow get so far from home?
See these stripes and spines so sharp, so bright?
I'd bet they look great under an aquarium light.
That's what the human thought the day he brought him home
from the store
Alas, the lionfish's appetite is hard to control in a square glass
home
So plop! In a bucket he went and then was released in a new ocean
zone!

Burmese Python

By Lisa Blackwell, Lutz

I am a Burmese Python so far way from home.
How did I get here; your neighbor might know?
But I am so happy to be free eating anything that looks
yummy to me;
So beware of me because I could eat your pet if I please.
So if you know some one who has me as a pet let
them know not to let me go free or I will be back for
something else you will see.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Nature's Nurseries

By Theresa Loder, Zephyrhills

Uplands and river waters
salt water from the Sea
constantly blend
forming nature's nurseries

protected from large predators
swimming the open sea
small fish, crab, shrimp and
crustaceans
develop in our Estuaries

bilge water, boat hulls
water from aquaria
feed invasive species
to these near shore nesting areas

Carnivorous Jellyfish
Chinese Mitten Crab
Veined Rapa Welk
invasive species on the grab

Red Lion Fish
Brazilian Peppers
Water Hyacinth, Hydrillas
Tropical Soda Apples

Popcorn Trees, Cogan Grass
Suckering Australian Pines
Creeping Air Potatoes
Skunk and Kudzu vines

Mexican Petunias
Japanese Climbing Fern
Torpedo Grass and Burmese Pythons
from these we all can learn

Australian Spotted Jellyfish
Caulerpa and Green Mussels
Rosary Peas and Bufo Toads
all pieces of this puzzle

where Mono cultures dominate
sunlight's non-existent
nesting areas compromised
we could lose all in an instant

relative to what has been
education is the key
vigilance our answer
protecting nature's nurseries

where water meets the sand
nature strums a tune
that so much is a part of us
connected by the moon

many travel far and near
just to come and sit
in silence as we ponder
how we are all a part of it



Love Bugs

By Jeanne Raschke, Lakeland

Love bugs on my brand new car
Why do I feel faint?
Tiny love bugs travel far
What's worse, they eat the paint!

Love bugs all around me fly
They love to fly in pairs
Tiny love bugs travel far
What's worse, they're in my hair.

Love bugs on my windshield, too
They try to block the view
Tiny love bugs travel far
What's worse, not one or two.

But scads of love bugs
In my pool
And thousands in the air
An experiment that went awry
But no one seems to care

Love bugs may not last too long
But pests they are for sure
I wish that someone really smart
Would find a Love-Bug cure!



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Pepper Poem

By Cindy Lane, Bradenton Beach

Brazilian pepper, the Florida leper of greenery most foul,
With its Merry Christmas berries carried off by squirrel
and owl
To vistas yet unsullied by its sinister devouring
It prowls, it sneaks, it skulks, it creeps, and leaves its
victims cowering.

A rash it gives to anyone who boldly tries to stop it,
Necessitating sharpened blades and hardy arms to chop
it.
And even then, like vampires green, its branches may
revive,
To swallow up another plot of native plants, alive.

Unlike invaders from the north in Florida's rebel days,
Brazilian peppers from the south are unarmed, save their
ways
Of rooting, growing, blooming, berrying, all without a
hand
From unsuspecting gardeners making flowers bloom in
sand.

If all keep turning blind eyes to the plant for just a year,
The State of Florida will become a pepper mill, it's clear.
So yank the pepper, slash it, flay it, root it out and then,
Make sure to toss it wisely, or it shall come back again.



Preserving Our Glory

By Rose Asbury, Tarpon Springs

Florida is in a race, invasive plants are invading our space.
They destroy, overpower natural habitat that thrives,
Making it difficult environmentally to keep it alive.

So look on line before you buy,
Tell home centers to do their part,
In leading Florida to a good head start,
Choose wisely products they sell, before Florida's
environment fails to do well.

Let's go out there and daisy it up; with buttonwoods,
coneflower, asters and such
Don't forget to cherish our spotted sandpipers too, wood
duck, white peacocks and
State mockingbirds too!

For all native things add to the glory . . . of preserving
Florida's historical story!



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Invasives Are Coming

By Bridget Roney, St. Petersburg

It is a natural thing for birds to take wing
And turtles to nest in Florida's West
And manatees work with the big sharks that lurk
In the Sparkling waters of Tampa Bay.

But Big Bufo is coming, the Pythons are slumming
Potatoes are creeping and other pests seeping
Into our water way, Oh my how dare they!
Come into our space where we play.

Restless in Burmese

By Jeremy Raynor, St. Petersburg

Among the glades,
The grasses shuffle,
Perhaps a foreign breeze.

Along the turbid river bends,
A Woodrat scurries - tree to tree.

A sliding ripple rides to shore,
As far as to the Keys.

A radio, a collar still,
So far away it seems,
And yet those bug-eyed Largo rats,
Are restless in Burmese.

Potato Vine

By Evan Earle, Oldsmar

Green monoculture
dangles and crawls without end.
Never ending growth.

Tegu

By Susan Demarest, Lithia

A couple of months ago, a black and white Argentine Tegu was found on the basketball courts of Cypress Creek Elementary school. My poem depicts the events that followed.

One sunny day at our school,
We found a lizard that looked really cool.
It was large with long claws
Which made us all pause.
We began to prepare for a duel.
The coaches came up with a plan.
Quick! Get a jump rope and trash can!
Our custodian lassoed it just like a pro.
We got it, they said. In the trash can you go!
A quick Google search confirmed what we knew.
The lizard we caught was an Argentinean Tegu.
Now there is one less pest invading our state.
If you see one in the wild, please don't hesitate.
Remove it with care and report what you see.
We must all work together to keep Florida pest free!



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Tampa Bay Invasive Species

By Mike Hepburn, Apollo Beach

For healthy environs in Tampa Bay
with invasive species you just don't play.
So here are some tips on what you should do
if any of these turn up around you.

Brazilian peppers we once thought pretty,
but our native plants they choke without pity.
Pull up these red berries when in your yard.
Then yank all the new sprouts. It's not so hard!

Next on our list is the Asian swamp eel.
Its spread means from us the Glades it might steal.
We have a defense 'gainst these slimy pests.
Just find and collect the eel's bubble nests!

Cogon grass rates with the world's "10 worst weeds."
It razors skin. He who touches it bleeds.
It spreads everywhere—fast as a pheasant!
Don't mow cogon when seed-heads are present.



Asian green mussels swarm bay oyster reefs.
South to Port Charlotte they now spread their grief.
It attaches to pilings, docks, and floats.
Sportsmen must always inspect and scrape boats.

Water spinach first came as a food source.
Now it spreads in water with awesome force.
Thirty-foot vines make it hard to beat down.
It grows four inches sun up to sundown.

A cane toad's toxins can kill a grown cat.
Living statewide—he's enormous at that!
The mild southern toad has some folks misled.
But cane toads are always smooth on the head.

The air potato's a tree killing vine.
It can photo-starve an oak or a pine.
Remove the bulbils which are round and tan.
This slows the spread, which is part of the plan.

The invasion is on. It's up to us.
It's time to take action. Knock off the fuss.
If we work together, we'll keep our state
with land and fresh water truly first rate.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

The Cuban Treefrog

By Valenda Tate, Tampa

Considered an invasive species in
Florida

Cuban Treefrogs are most active at
night

During the day they hide in small
enclosed spaces

And venture out when there is no
longer any light

Florida's native treefrogs resemble
Cuban Treefrogs

Though there is a difference in the size
of their eyes

The native treefrogs have somewhat
smaller peepers

While the Cuban Treefrog appears to
be bug-eyed

Cuban Treefrogs are not very
coordinated

The very reason they cannot hold a
fork

While their main source of nutrition
is crickets

They prefer black beans, white rice
and roast pork

Cuban Treefrogs are not known to
swim much

They do not like the water and have
no use for a tan

Their bug eyes are extremely sensitive
to light

They could benefit from a tiny pair of
Ray Bans

Invasive describes the Cuban Treefrog

In our surroundings they feel a sense
of entitlement

Though the distressing reality
continues to exist

They pose a real threat to our
ecosystem and environment

Cuban Treefrogs are considered
cannibalistic

They eat our precious millipedes,
spiders and small snakes

Let's build them little rafts and send
them back to Cuba

Where they can eat yellow rice,
plantains and breaded steaks

The easiest way to identify a Cuban
Treefrog

And to distinguish it from afar

Is to listen for the frog speaking
Spanish

And puffing on a Cuban cigar

The Brazilian Pepper Difference

By Tom Levin, Tampa

I hate Brazilian Pepper and I'm
proud

And I used to feel alone in a
crowd

Now if you look around
Florida these days

there seems to be a Brazilian
Pepper craze!

Oh I pull pepper, he cuts
pepper, she sprays pepper, we
all hate pepper

Wouldn't you like to kill a
pepper too?

Brazilian Pepper - Stop the
pepper!

*(inspired by Dr. Pepper
commercials)*



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

The Invaders

By Lucy Fuchs, Brandon

They came and still come.
Not like marines during World War Two
Nor like creatures of science fiction
Coming down out of the blue.

No, they may be seeds that birds have dropped.
Or they come on the water as floating spores
Or they are pets that tourists tote home
Or they are hidden deep among ships' stores.

And, oh, often they are so beautiful!

The gorgeous Brazilian pepper with its red
Berries and brilliant leaves of green.
The bufo frog with its long tongue out.
The potato vines that embrace all that is seen.

They move in and take over
Where other trees and plants should grow.
They destroy native frogs and smaller animals
They cannot help it; they do not know.

But we know. And we know what we must do
We need to destroy the tree before it grows.
We must weed out all the noxious plants
And never never bring in such foes.



We love Florida, our native land
We love what belongs here to keep
We get rid of all that is not.
We need to get a broom and sweep:

Out with the Brazilian pepper, cogongrass
The meleleuca tree, and Australian pine.
And all those slithering non-native amphibians
And water creatures that may look fine.

We choose to help and keep our own
To protect and sustain them all.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

The Lake

By Milton Polk, Lutz

Without sorrow
The wild thick Taro
Denies the morrow
To those that came
Before.

Arching Pepper
Like a leper
Shuts the door
To those that came
Before.

Alligator Weed
Outruns with speed,
Cares not the need,
Of those that came
Before.

But they all stand
Upon the land,
But guiltless bands,
To those that came
Before.

Beyond the lake
We now must thank
The hand that shrank
The virgin bank
For those that came
Before.

We say adios to invasive
plants and
Animals – Good-bye, y'all!

The Wrong Song

By Andrew Ford, Crystal Beach

Old friends have not returned in the spring.
Now rude creatures of different stripes and spots
are lurking in the forest we once shared.

The gentle, subtle ones have been eaten.
The familiar calls and croaks that speckle memories
are now lost in a din of foreign squawking.

All the wrong noses are poking in the reeds,
all the wrong branches are scratching at
the warm Florida breeze.

The Eastern Lubber Grasshoppers... Scumbags of Their Uninvited Species

By Norman Smith, Tampa

Now, mother Lubbers lay loads of eggs, she
Leaving the little buggers alone to hatch...
Mercy, that dreadful day their “coming out party,”
Let’s get ready and squash the whole batch.

My favorite plants, attacked, leaves in tatter;
Their green, glossy ambiance now diminished...
Will we accept the guilty, hideous perpetrators ?
A resounding NO ! These low-life’s are now finished.

Birds recognize, staying clear of lubber coloration,
Circumventing, their brown,” tobacco-juice-spit;”
They arrive in droves, gigantic appetite in tow
Their very presence giving gardeners a fit.

Beautiful plants, their leaves, in tatters, drooping;
Special gloss, their healthy stamina, diminished...
Now, lubbers, our acceptance give ?...N-E-V-E-R...!
These “creeps” their plant-eating days, finished..!

We’ll do our research...and on blogs discuss;
Ready to “load-up” for lubbers....no doubt;
Our plan’s now complete, absolutely NO RETREAT,
C-H-A-R-G-E...We’re going for a lubber wipeout !



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Her Majesty, the Mad Queen Water-Hyacinth

By Holli Wares, Tampa

I am

surely an improvement to a barren,
muddy pond or shiftless river;
surely prettier than the scrappy bulrushes
who ruled my new kingdom when I
arrived to unpack.

I came

to this hot place bearing only good will:
the promise of well-fed cattle,
lavender flowers floating in quaint ponds,
an exotic gift for a citrus farmer,
but I became mad with power in my new
home, hungry with the need to
exterminate.

I grow

as all good nations do, my daughters and
I double our size in two weeks time.

I glide, seemingly harmless.

My flowers evoke the lovely iris and
bluebell and other beauties of the garden.

My armies obstruct the rivers, canals, and
lakes, allowing no one to pass through

my kingdom.

I dam the flow and strike fear in the
hearts of natives, causing floods at will.

I kill

all dissenters, engage in silent
combat,

my choking as deadly as hands
around a neck.

My legions of minions uproot
the plants above the surface
and starve the ones

below of sun as they
struggle toward the light.

My massive, verdant troops,
deceptively tranquil death
squads, suck the oxygen

from the water and
suffocate the fish below.

I will

reign supreme in my kingdom,

the intensity of my carnage
unsurpassed,

and I dream of the day I will
hear the water itself scream as
it succumbs to my

serene wrath.

My Dear Miss Mali

By Mary Murray, Temple Terrace

The life of my kindred free
spirit Teacup Yorkie, Mali
Was taken by a cane toad one
week short her first birthday

I was not aware of such a
poisonous toad

Whose venom is toxic for a
pet as tiny as Mali

Her life was over in a matter
of two hours

And my heart is forever
broken

Her memorial garden is the
focal point of my backyard

Had I known, I never would
have left her alone

All I can do is share the
information with others

The awareness of the deadly
cane toad

In memory of my dear Miss
Mali



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Invasion!

By Harrison Bradlow, Tampa

Florida is quite the battleground state,
It's been invaded a time or two,
Such an invasion occurs even now,
Though you'd never guess by whom.

Paleo-Indians invaded circa twelve thousand BCE,
Much later Juan Ponce de Leon got in on the action,
French Huguenots founded Fort Caroline,
And let's not forget Americans led by Andrew Jackson.

So who then, who, invades Florida today?
Is it Pakistan? Or Chile? Or maybe Nepal?
No! The conquerors hail from no nation on Earth,
For the modern invaders are not human at all.

Let's start with the feathered invaders, shall we?
Near two hundred species of bird have set up nest,
Most of these flying, squawking invaders,
Were actually imported as exotic pets.

Aye, birds can fly, so their territory expands quickly,
The number of invaders grows day by day,
It's difficult to control or reign them in,
They aviate without oversight (or groping) by TSA.

Monk parakeets build their nests amid power lines,
Which can short out the grid when it rains and they're dampened,
European starlings and rock doves leave droppings on buildings,
It's unpleasant, but, you know: it happens.



The Eurasian collared-dove is pretty boring,
But for its creepy red eyes, hard to miss,
Purple swamphens, very vocal birds, call
"Quinquinkrrkrrr!"
And Muscovy ducks don't even quack; they hiss!

Reptiles, too, slither and creep through the state,
For example, Burmese pythons: it's incredible what they
eat, though!
They come originally from southeast Asia,
And have rapidly colonized Florida and Puerto Rico.

These nocturnal predators grow over twenty feet long,
And prey upon ibises, deer, even gators,
It's important, should you see one, please phone it in,
Report it immediately, don't wait till later.

Green anacondas, from South America, are possible
invaders,
You'll find a few about, but not too many yet, so it seems,
They can constrict and consume any native life,
Even the Florida panthers are at risk (not the team).

Nile monitor-lizards, from sub-Saharan Africa,
Are truly terrifying invaders which show no pity,
Strong swimmers, they threaten birds, turtles, even pets,
And, what's worse, they like to live near cities.

Continued on next page



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS



Tegu lizards are a lot like Nile monitors, but,
Tegus are quite a bit grosser,
Feeding on crop plants and rotting carrion, they spread
bacteria,
And not one of us wants that! No sir!

Cuban treefrogs are substantially less frightening, but still,
Their secretions are dangerous to humans, cats, and dogs,
So the official recommendation is to euthanize the creatures,
By (I'm not making this up) freezing the frogs.

These critters are just the start of it though,
The really freaky stuff is the smaller fauna,
Invasive insects and arachnids threaten Florida,
With all sorts of economic and ecological trauma.

Take *Diaprepes abbreviatus*, which can cause much farming
misfortune,
This pest is high up among Florida's insectoid evils,
It plagues the roots of many crops, like Florida oranges,
The Caribbean is the source of all these root weevils.

Scale insects are prolific cycad killers,
Originally from Thailand, round the world they've spread,
Add mole crickets, redbay ambrosia beetles, and Africanized
honey bees,
And the number of tiny invaders can boggle one's head.

And flora! Plant invaders might be worst of all,
They need not sleep nor rest, they never tire,
They can displace local species and kill commercial crops,
They even change water patterns and cause fires.

Here's a bizarre one, the air potato,
Imported from Africa during the slave trade,
This pernicious plant completely engulfs native palms,
And out of their corpses, its own home is made.

Air potatoes spread via aerial tubers called bulbils,
Which are difficult to dispose of without reproducing the plant,
Freezing them is effective at rendering them inert,
So make room next to your treefrogs, if you can!

Skunkvine, marine toads, and Brazilian pepper-tree,
Boston fern, khapra beetle, and fish with funny lobes,
Carrotwood, Asian green mussels, and something called Chinese
tallow,
Globalization brings invaders from all corners of the globe.

From Mediterranean fruit flies to cogongrass,
From Australian pine to tropical soda apple,
Even Mexican redrump tarantulas (still not making this up),
With all these lifeforms we grapple.

Oh how are we to deal with so many pests?
With all these invaders the moral seems the same,
No matter where they come from, no matter what they're called,
Oh, speaking of, where do they come up with these names?

Wait now! It's not as bleak as all that,
We all descend from invaders, and we all live together,
Some of these new guys are toxic and killer,
But hey, some may just make things better.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Twisted Chaos

By Janice Scarpinato, Seminole

Hush and listen to the trees
Tell their many tales
They have their joys
And they have their woes
But their voices are being choked

Vines creep along the ground
Moving without a sound
They twist gently around the trunk
Tendrils after tendrils
They cover and smother
The tree leaves grow pale
They crumple and wither away
Even the mightiest tree will fall
For the air potato has patience...

And numbers

The potent fruit it bears—
So.
Very.
Many...
—Grows and grows

Until
they

F

A

L

L

.
. .
. .

To the ground upon which
Another creature slithers
In the marshes and in the grass
A long tube of muscle
From an exotic land
The legless dragon from the east
Has come now...to feast

What was once a pet
Is now a pest
Its mouth gapes wide
To consume native beasts

Foreign to its palette

Rats

Lizards

Birds

...

Alligators.

If even the alligator cannot defend

What then of dogs and people?

If nothing can defend

Nothing will survive over-eating

The numbers dwindle

Others starve

—The Burmese Python—

When things be-come

Where they should not

The balance is thrown

Disaster grasps

All are affected

This is how it is

When you set them free



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

Bufo toads

By Ann Schroth, Dunedin

Help! Help! We're being invaded!

Why, we even had to be sedated.

Bufo toads are everywhere;

Makes you want to pull out your hair.

We know why they like to be here;

It's heaven on earth and so easy to bear.

So go home little toads where you belong.

You stayed long enough, time to hip-hop along.



Unnamed Poem

By Ahmed Chehab, Tampa

We once could roam the land in peace,

Hand in hand, our minds at ease.

We thought that this would never end.

Oh, but we were wrong my friend.

As slowly as the dark of night

Does wash away the warm and bright,

What we could never have foreseen

Has crept upon us like a dream.

Our ecosystem is at stake,

From every tree to every lake.

Our native species must compete

With threats that once were obsolete.

While our economy declines,

Our habitats are plagued with vines.

Most of us don't even see,

But this is downright larceny.

Iguanas, pythons and feral hogs,

Fire ants, cane toads and Cuban tree frogs,

We must step up and be the guards

Of wetlands, forests and our own back yards.

Tipping Point

By Laura Estes, Brandon

Like kudzu,

they strangle

Nature's plan, Man's plans.

The gentle balance of

earth, air, fire, water

tips-tips-tips... until

something is lost.

And everything shifts into

disorder - disruption - discord.

Ecological disasters:

Lionfish, Air Potatoe, Iguana,

Hydrilla

there's more

they bloom where planted as

Man aspires to do.

So we continue to evolve;

solutions are in

Nature's plan, Man's plans.

We must care more than

the predators -

our lives hang in the balance.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, ADULTS

The Python

By T. Michelle Walker, St. Petersburg

The python winds its way through the Everglades slowly squeezing local life away—all because an owner believed him too big to keep caged.

The Invasive Species Attack

By Carol Townsend, Valrico

The invaders are coming – it is out of hand,
Infiltrating our lakes, forests and land.
Flying, swimming, or slithering they slide,
Native species have nowhere to hide.

The Brazilian Pepper and Australian pine tree,
Are stealing native habitats from you and me.
The small Cuban tree frog and Bufo toad croak,
As water hyacinths strangle and choke.

Where bass once spawned, blue tilapia swim,
And those stinging fire ants are hemming us in.
While Mock Parakeet fly in the sky,
Our native species are beginning to die.

Innocent they look but dangerous they are,
Invasive species come from near and from far.
Our native species cry help! Help them we must,
For Florida, our state, has been loaned to us in trust.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 12-17

Bullfrogs

By Jesseleen Gonzalez, Tampa

They face many predators including fish and snakes.
Bullfrogs live in freshwater ponds and lakes.

They hunt at night for small creatures.
Having very slimy and outrageous features.

When up to eight inches they are fully grown.
Bullfrogs all like to live alone.

Bullfrogs hibernate in the mud.
Falling under the category of cold-blood.

Air Potatoes

By Nancy Tran, Largo

A poisonous air potato
A species of yam
Wildly growing in Florida
Being an invasive species
They're not welcome here
Spreading and growing quickly
The leaves are large



Shading out the plants
That grow beneath it
The bulbs can sprout
Then become new vines
That twist and turn
In every direction possible

Brazilian Pepper Bust

By Monica Craig, St. Petersburg

It came as a decorative tree in 1893,
It reminded Floridians of Holly.
Now it's taking over our subtropical state
It's the plant that I really hate!

It makes me sneeze, it makes me itch
It's tough to pull out when it grows in a ditch.
It makes me wheeze and gives me a rash
Too bad we can't just burn it to ash.

We cut and chop and spray and burn
And love the volunteers who take their turn.
We sweat and swat at the biting bugs
Its berries carpet our forests like exotic rugs.

Watch for snakes and try not to let the berries fall,
Then our project wouldn't be worth it at all!
The seeds spread by bird excretion
Which leads to further native plant depletion.

Unless we get them out of this state
Our native plants face a very sad fate.
We can't let that happen,
So everybody grab some loppers and get to choppin'!



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 12-17

Cuban Tree Frog

By Yulissa Arias, Tampa

I'm a frog that will grow to 2.75". I will jump in the water to hydrate my skin.

I'll change my skin color for my lunch and hide from the big ones.

If you want to hear me bark hear me at around 3 a.m.

I'm a frog that will eat them yummy looking frogs.

Did you know when I was younger I had blue bones as if they were sky and had red eyes as cherries?

Now you can see me get you sick as well as those cute dogs and cats you humans love too.

So keep them away from me if you want them to live. And by the way do you know my name?!?!

yea it's Cuban Tree Frog: DON'T FORGET THIS TIME!!!

Cuban Tree Frog

By Cheyenne Yucatonis, Land o' Lakes

Looks so innocent

Just a Cuban Tree Frog

Started as a tadpole

Now lounging on a swamp log

But looks can be deceiving

This guy is a killer

Harming Florida's native frogs

It's really not a thriller.

Save Florida tree frogs!

I am invasive and hungry

By Tori Lott, Largo

I am Invasive and hungry.

I wonder why they want to take me away.

I hear people coming so I run.

I see my prey.

I want to eat so badly.

I am invasive and hungry.

I pretend they won't kill me,

I feel that they will.

I touch the hard ground I run on.

I worry they'll catch me.

I cry when I see my other relatives go,

I am invasive and hungry.

I understand I'm not supposed to be here.

I say I will get something to eat.

I dream I'll eat everything I want.

I try to find my way home,

I hope I will.

I am a coyote!



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 12-17

A Limerick on Invasive Florida Species

By Elisabeth Azpeitia, Tampa

Florida is now being afflicted
With more pests than we'd ever predicted,
They've eaten our food
And been extremely rude,
It's high time these pests are evicted.

In order to stop these intruders
People need to wake from their stupor,
If we keep pets in tanks
We'll get tons of thanks,
From bay fish free of their oppressor.

Another way we can help stop
This invasion of alien crop,
Is to plant only natives
And get creative,
With Tampa plants from local shops.

If we all work together to prevent
Species growing from foreign descent,
We can keep our home free
Of pests and refugees,
And open for local species to inhabit.

Lion Fish

By Crystal Rivera, St. Petersburg

I am so pretty but dangerous
I live in the ocean blue coral reefs
Please don't mess with me or I'll sting you with my spine.
My favorite food is other fish I am carnivorous
I also love shrimp...yummm
So please don't mess with me, I like to be left alone.

Lovebug

By Sasha Menendez, Brandon

We come from Texas.
Of the march fly, of a brief
Existence: four days.

We come in outright
Peace. Biting, stinging isn't
True to our nature.

We come in vast swarms.
Our places of thrills
Are not limited.

We come, interrupt
The succession of human life.
From windshields to hoods.



You may think it funny
How we so stupidly die in a runny
Mess on your cars

But you're in for a great shock
When you must walk
Instead of driving.

Let an hour pass by
And our remains will dry
What an unsightly mess.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 12-17

Muscovy Duck

By Matthew May, Seminole

Muscovy ducks, with their black and white plumage
Just ask your parents, they've been arriving for ages.
They're horrible things!
They're in all 67 counties
Some of them are just like wanted bounties.

Where do they come from?
Southern Texas you say?
They multiply in Florida
Perhaps a new 1,000 every day!
The mother's the problem,
16 in one lay!

The solution is horrible!
Shake the eggs faster,
Or replace them with plaster.
Muscovies are sweet!
They might peck at your feet,
But don't let them mess with your head!
They only want bread.

The Tourist

By Olivia Callahan, Crystal Beach

They're coming to Florida quicker and quicker,
When I see them I do want to snicker,
They are so noisy,
And they are so fun,
To watch and observe them
Say, "Palm Trees! A Ton!"

I love to look and see their fashion,
Those fanny packs are worn like a passion.
And it seems they're carrying everything on their
backs,
Though it's deodorant that they do lack!



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 12-17

The Tentacled Snake

By Megan Lewis, Ruskin

There once was a tentacled snake,
who loved to swim in the great blue lake.
He didn't want his pants
because they were full of ants.
So instead, he baked a cake.

Wild Hogs

By Matthew Bray, Odessa

On and on they send their dog I run
and hide away
With their rifles and arrows loaded
and drawn back
I run and run until they finally catch
me
and with them catching me their
bullet in my thigh and arrow in my
head
Sad it is I'm dead and ham for their
dinner

Poor Pooch

By Angela Sexton, Tampa

Rosalie my pooch is outside,
I call her back inside.
It's not like her to make me wait,
When she comes, I notice something is wrong with her gait.
Her mouth is foamy and waves of saliva crowd around her lips,
Then my stomach starts performing flips.
She is consistently pawing at her mouth and whining,
And I can't seem to find a silver lining.
I bite back a scream and hope it is all a dream,
Until I see a hopping patch of green.
I run to my fridge with the number for my late night emergency,
Here I try to read through my scribbled numbers with a plea.
Running out the door with my Rosalie in tow,
I race to the vet with my driving at the ultimate low.
Presenting my convulsing Rosalie to the vet, he merely shrugs and says
"Bufo toad, duh,"
Only to receive my highly analytical question of "huh?"
He merely replies, "It's an invasive species that was introduced in
hopes of controlling agricultural pests,
Though keeping it in the Amazon basin in South America would have
been for the best.
The symptoms include severe salivation, an off gait and the dog's gums
might turn red,"
Growing frantic, I snap, "Yeah, we can see the symptoms. Now end
them because my heart is filled with dread."
Now I pace in the waiting room anxious to hear what the vet
has to say,
Clutching to the hope that my poor pooch is okay.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 12-17

Ode to Diaprepes Pests

By Claire Hourigan, Brandon

(Editor's Note: Diaprepes Root Weevil is a Pest of Citrus, Ornamentals and Root Crops in Florida)

These little pests of citric fruit,
Harm our commercial crops.
They put our farmers in a mess,
We should beat them with our mops.

They feed on citric foliage,
Sometimes on the fruit.
They cause the trees to not produce,
By chewing on its roots.

It's hard to stop the population,
For their numbers are so many.
They start their life in the dirt below,
They're smaller than a penny.

They came to us through importation,
From the island of Puerto Rico.
They were first introduced in '64,
Since then the problem's "Pico-ed!"

They're damaging our ecosystem—
Native Species are in a tizzy.
If we don't solve this problem soon,
Well, the thought just makes me dizzy.

So let's be rid of these invasive pests,
That cause such grief and trouble.
We need to be responsible,
Or soon the mob will double.



Brazilian Pepper Blues

By Catie Chapman, Tampa

It has a most exotic name
Although its sprouts are not maintained
It winds through trees on highway ends
In swamps, on farms, through river bends
Its berries red, as hot as fire
Its branches choking like a wire
And yet so simply indistinct
A silent villain, no one would think.

The victim to this awful foe
Is simply not the common go

He's not a human, not you nor I
And not a bird gliding in the sky
No, he's not an animal you see,
He's simply just a Floridian tree.

Not just here, It's spreading high
Like a virus passing by
Invasive as the summer sun
Holding every last tree until it's done
Its hunger never fully filled,
This pepper truly should be killed.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 12-17

Pesky Little Things

By Taylor Adams, Plant City

Invasive species are the topic, and consume Florida they do
They come here by accident, but get put here too.
Traveling by boat, by crate, by plane
These pesky species sure make us insane.
With special characteristics that help them overtake,
The populations of native species are going to break!
Not only do our ecosystems get damaged,
But our bank accounts too
These species sure create a lot of problems for me and you!
From the Brazilian Pepper and Citrus Canker
To wild hogs and Burmese pythons
Invasive species are everywhere,
But what can we do?
They're hard to control, but things can be done,
Like informing Floridians and being strict on what comes.
Hunting and using herbicides help too,
But in the end we will just have to see what these unwanted species do!



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 11 AND UNDER

Bufo Toads

By Danaysha Vasquez, Ruskin

day and night
Every animal
Is in danger
By bufo toads

Burmese Python

By Kristin Haney, Land o' Lakes

Brown spots and a dark arrow head on a tan body.
Usually lay up to 100 eggs at a time.
Really poor eyesight. They use their tongue to see where they are going.
More than 20 feet long.
Eat mammals and birds.
Shy away from humans.
Excellent swimmer that can stay under water for 30 minutes.

Predator at night.
You can see them live 15-25 years.
They kill its prey by constriction.
Hurting our ecosystem by killing endangered species.
Only stay on the ground.
Native to South East Asia.

Burmese Python (Haiku)

By Alex Savinon, Brandon

Slithering through grass
Destroying human nature
Thirty feet of fear

Cuban Tree Frog

By Abby Shaw, Plant City

C omes out at night
U nique are they
B ut can be deadly
A lways invading our home
N ot native

T rue they come from Cuba
R ibbett, ribbett you hear
E very inch is slimy
E ntertaining and cute but...

F riendly frogs are eaten by them!
R oofs of houses covered
O h the mess they make.
G one, we wish they were gone!

Cuban Tree Frogs

By Cade Schisler, Plant City

Cuban Tree frogs wet and slimy. They love to hop and be all climby.
In a fish tank or in the wild they could be an adult or a child.
Cuban Tree frogs are noisy and loud. I bet their parents are very proud.
Go Go Go away we don't want you to stay and play.
Cuban Tree frogs wet and slimy. They love to hop and be all climby.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 11 AND UNDER

Cuban tree frog's poem

By Sebastian Ortega, Tampa

I look like a frog right but I'm not just any frog I'm a cuban frog
OMG U DON'T KNOW WHO I AM!!! That's okay we can have
a little talk

I'm a cuban frog from cuba and guess where I am right now!!! the
most finest place I'M IN FLORIDA I know right how did I get
here you ask...well I was introduced in Florida, and the earliest
confirmed records date to the 1920s in the Florida Keys. The first
Cuban Treefrogs in Florida likely arrived as stowaways in shipping
crates originating from the Caribbean. By the mid-1970s, they
had dispersed throughout most of southern Florida. That's how
I got here but now I have to get home where I should be eating
my own bugs and other yummy frogs. And another fact is that I
secrete mucus from my skin that can burn your eyes and cause an
allergy-like reaction (sneezing, stuffy/runny nose)—pets can also
be affected. So can I go home now?

The Cuban Tree Frog

By Reanna Stiebler, Seminole

It came on a boat to Florida ports
They ate all the frogs
But they were all too short
Next they jumped into the fog



Fire Ants

By Cole Morgan, Tampa

Even though fire ants are so wee,
They have a very painful sting!
Even worse than a sting on your legs,
They can eat, attack, or kill animal eggs!
This you may not believe,
In some areas,
They caused extinction to 40% of
native insect species!
These are some of fire ants' other
names,
Tropical fire ants, ginger ants, red ants,
No way!
A type of fire ant is big, bad, and mean,
Let me tell you, it is the queen!
She lives up to 6 or 7 years,
I cannot believe my ears!
Each day she makes up to 1,500 eggs,
That's so crazy I'll bonk my head!
I told you all about these ants,
Ouch!
Let me do the Ouchy dance!



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 11 AND UNDER

Florida's Invasive Snake

By Brianna Trotti, Plant City

I am standing here, looking at the lake,
I hear a hiss, I turn.
It stares at me with blood-red eyes.
It is in the shadows, so I assume it is a
Florida Cottonmouth,
But it slithers out, it is a Burmese Python.
It slithers, toward me, no doubt.
But I am too stunned to hear the hiss that
followed.

It was inches from my ankle,
Now my mind was screaming warnings at
me.
"Run! Wait! No! Then he will strike!"
By the time I un-froze,
It's spotted-scaley body,
That glittered in the sun,
Was disappearing into the dark lake.
I had just confronted an invasive species.
I had studied invasive species at school,
The Burmese Python among them.
The Burmese Python are not poisonous,
But they are strong,
Strong enough to squeeze the living,
To squeeze the life out of their
prey.

Invasive Weeds

By Maddison Rametta, Lutz

An invasive weed
In our trees
Reaching everywhere
Plant eaters
On anything they can find
Turning plants brown
A light and water hog
Taking over
On the outside

Invaders

By Adam Rowan, Tampa

Invaders
Harmful, Non-helpful
Dangerous, Killing, Beware
Not Native

Japanese Climbing Fern

By Riley Schofner, Tampa

The Japanese Climbing Fern
Grows, twists, and turns.
To clear it off the land,
It must be killed by hand.
Remove it because of what you learned.
Killers



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 11 AND UNDER

I've Got You Covered

By Allie Pasquarello, Largo

China and Japan are my home.
I love taking many trips to Florida
though.
In fact I think I'll stay for awhile,
I will start my life improved.
Maybe this will be worthwhile.
I'll grow and flourish,
I'll never stop,
Climbing on freely to many roof tops.
I kill many plants,
But I still need more space.
I'm still keeping a constant pace.
Hey, why don't I climb on top of this
shack?
I don't think anybody will notice,
They will never come back.
People are noticing the damage I've
done.
They are coming with cows and
pesticides.
I'm getting destroyed,
Oh what do I do now?
They can't do this forever,
I'll stop them somehow.
For I am a powerful Kudzu plant on
the prowl.

Nile Monitor

By Kayleigh Fredrickson, Odessa

You brought them to Tampa-from
the Everglades
They creep out of your little cage;
all they want to do is raid,
But don't worry; now you're their
maid!
Don't fight though; their teeth are
like a razor blade!
He flicks his blue tongue knowing
he's going to invade!



Limerick

By Gregory Mitchell, Tampa

There is a vine from Japan,
It was brought over by man,
It was our fault,
Now we put it to halt,
And hope the kudzu turns tan.

Monk Parakeet

By Aidan Vaughan, Plant City

Parakeet, parakeet, go away.
You don't belong here so please don't stay.
Pack up your bag and be on your way.
Please depart from home I faithfully pray.

Build your nest in a welcome land.
South America sounds like the place where I
know your life will be truly grand!

Nile Monitor (Haiku)

By Drake Carter, Brandon

They eat anything
Even reach to seven feet
Fast swimmers they are



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 11 AND UNDER



Air Potatoes

By Caleb Starr

Air potatoes are fair potatoes. They never bite or scream.

They're very good at sportsmanship, but they're really very mean.

They're very good at climbing trees while boosted by a vine

And they've got way, way too much power so they're not so very fine.

They take over all the backyards and the forests and the trees

And sometimes when you take a walk they can be up to your knees!

And because they are rulin',

You'd better be pullin'

Them out of the ground

And then hit them real sound.

They start out real small and then they get taller

And sometimes so tall you wish they'd be smaller.

But they always refuse so we stomp them with our shoes

Because by and by they could get really high.

They take over the world like a sheet of green

And that is why they are so mean.

And if you look at the vegetation of Florida on the map,

You can see for yourself, air potatoes need a nap!

Nile Monitor Lizard

By Ramius Stiebler, Seminole

The splashing of its strong legs in the water as it swims,

The crunching of the eggs between its vicious jaws,

The pounding of this seven foot long monster hitting the grassy ground,

The scratching eerie sound of its claws over a mangrove tree root,

The hissing of its whip-like tongue between its Jaws,

The Nile Monitor Lizard is here!

Hyacinth Haiku

By Sierra Shellabarger, Tampa

Water hyacinths

Choking our waterways

Mean invasive species



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 11 AND UNDER

I am a Burmese Python

By Giana Graham, Ruskin

I am a Burmese Python.
I hear from miles.
I smell danger all around me.
I feel away from home.
I am a Burmese Python
I need to go back home.
I see a different world.
I want a better place to live.
I am a Burmese Python.
They can also hurt lots of things.

Pythons

By Stephanie Albero, Tampa

Sssssssssssssss.....
Pythons here Pythons there Pythons are
everywhere!!
Some are small and some are big but did
you know they are one of the largest
snakes in the world!!
Orange, Yellow, Black and Brown found
on Burmese spots and camo getting
around slithering on their tummy
stopping to get a snack to get away from
predators they make a sound with their
tongue
ssssssssssssssssssssssssss.

Burmese Python

By Sydney Swartman, Plant City

Oh, Burmese python you slithering one.
You do not bring our habitat much fun.
So leave our state and please do not mate.
Florida says you're not welcome.

Mexican Red Rump Tarantula

By Kelany Cruz, Ruskin

If it bites you itch
Red rump tarantula
They are every where

The Shortwinged Mole Cricket

By Taylor Paulk, Largo

It has six legs,
It lays 25 to 60 eggs,
Its wings height,
Makes it incapable of flight,
It digs in the dirt,
And makes the crops hurt

The bufo toad

By Madison Hansen, Seminole

A grayish-brown with its creamy belly
An adult as long as 9 inches
Shake one up and it moves like jelly
Replacing the southern toad
Sits up in motion
Toxic to the animal house members
Hops in short moves
To keep away this menace of toads
Keep all food in the home



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 11 AND UNDER

They Walk Among Us

By Jackson Hacker, Tampa

The walking catfish are invaders of the sea.

They eat all the fish that we would ever need.

They could be very dangerous for they spread disease.

They came from Thailand so they could eat, eat, eat.

Wreckage in the Everglades

By Luke Hemsey, St. Petersburg

Up and down,
They are all around
Slashing without a sound
The wind picks up
- there goes a pup -
Out in the river of grass

They fell from the sky
Though they cannot fly
Pythons from Burmese

- slithering ease -
Lost in the river of grass

Six hundred loose
They make no truce
Denting life
- with teeth like knife -
Destroying the river of grass

They hunt them all down

Too Many Uninvited Animals

By Leighton Krone, Brandon

Too many uninvited animals, there's one here and there,
too many uninvited animals, they're just everywhere.

Too many uninvited animals, from the kudzu to the nutria,
too many uninvited animals, they're everywhere you see-a!

Too many uninvited animals, there's one here and there,
too many uninvited animals, they're just everywhere.

Too many uninvited animals, I wish that there were fewer,
too many uninvited animals, I saw a python in the sewer!

Too many uninvited animals, there's one here and there,
too many uninvited animals, they're just everywhere!

Smiling with a frown
Eating all
- who like to crawl -
Hungry in the river of grass

I'm only nine
Way up in a pine
Writing on some paper
- quiet as vapor -
Hiding in the river of grass



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 11 AND UNDER

Non-Native Species

By Pragnya Kulkarni, Tampa

Non-native species

Nowhere to roam

Coming and invading

Our special home

Destroying plants

Animals too

Hope they find

A different home

Without further

Ado

Spring, summer

Winter or fall

Invasive species

Are here no matter

What at all

Gooses, birds

And all animals

Too are harmed

By these creatures

Who by through

These invasive

Species you'll see

They might be

Flying around the

The ocean, sea

Swimming in oceans

Like lionfish do

These animals might be

Poisonous too

Bullfrogs or frogs

Non-native species

Like these

Might be jumping

Or around your

Backyard trees

Now these species

Are here today

Poisoning and ruining

Our special day

We need your help

Please help us too

To stop these

Plants and animals

Of doom



The Plants and Animals Take Over

By Elizabeth Delp, Gulfport

Python wants to catch his prey today
he doesn't want to get captured by the way.

Pythons use to be pets,
but they're so mean I'm upset.

I want to get rid of the Africanized bee,
because they like to sting me.

Lionfish are mean
Lionfish are mad
perhaps I'll name one Brad.

Creeping air potatoes take over plants
and sadden the ants.

Cane toads are poison
they sit in the sun
but there must be none.



ALL SUBMISSIONS, JUNIORS 11 AND UNDER

Iggy Rex

By Jacob McLaughlin, Tampa

Iggy Rex was a good little pet,
A green iguana that belonged to Brett.
One day Iggy Rex hissed at a man,
And Brett said to Iggy, "I'll hit you with a pan!"
So to the Everglades Iggy Rex ran away,
And he's still there to this very day.

Cane Toads

By Artemis Xenick, Tampa

It's a beautiful day down here in Florida...
AHHH!!! Here comes the cane toad!
There he is hopping down the road.
Build more graveyards, quick!!
Cane toads have poison glands on their
shoulders
that can kill your pets, or make them sick!!
If we don't do something soon, they will be all
over town!
That will certainly make everyone frown.
Here is some information you need to know,
about cane toads, to show.
Cane toads are larger than three inches, you
know,
so look out below!

Cane toads have poison glands that
are somewhat triangular.

This is ABC news, signing off!
Later!



Kudzu

*By Alexandra Walker,
St. Petersburg*

Slithering, sliding,
photosynthesizing.
Creeping behind houses,
Nothing it arouses.
Like a snake, it winds through grasses,
Moving in big, bad, green masses
Climbing up the trees,
Not affected by the strong breeze.
Picking up the pace,
Entwining itself like lace.
It takes even more sunshine
Telling the trees that, "It's all mine!"
And then overnight,
We all get quite a fright,
By seeing all the native plants that have died.
You'd think it would be known, --
as Creeping Nightmare or Killing Tone,
But it's just Kudzu all alone!

Invasive Species

By Victor Sperling, Brandon

Weed
Amazingly Horrible Troubling
Evil
Risking Beauty
Lethal (to fish)
Embracing Water
Tremendously Harmful
Troublesome
Unstoppable
Catastrophic
Imminent

