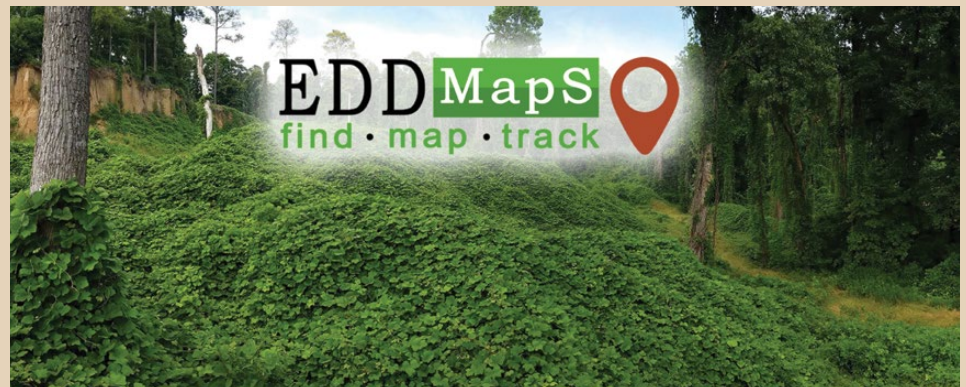# Use EDDMapS to Report Invasives

By REBEKAH D. WALLACE, CHARLES BARGERON and JIL SWEARINGEN

Invasive Species Recognized as a National Threat. Twenty five years ago, President Clinton's Executive Order on Invasive Species (E.O. 13112, 1999) officially defined invasive species and recognized them as a major threat to ecosystems, the economy, and to human health. The Executive Order also charged federal agencies with preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species and taking actions to control them. With support from non-governmental organizations like The Nature Conservancy, Exotic Pest Plant Councils, and the University of Georgia's Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health (Bugwood), federal agencies eagerly responded.

Invasives Database. The first step was to evaluate a growing list of non-native pests throughout the U.S. and to create a database to amalgamate the information. Bugwood already had a large and widely used image database of pest insects, plants, and plant disease organisms (ForestryImages.org), developed with support from the US Forest Service and others. From this image database, Bugwood created the invasive.org website which became the springboard for EDDMapS.

Mapping Invasives. With collaboration and input from many agencies and organizations, Bugwood began developing an associated mapping component connected to its data. In 2006, the group launched the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System, or "EDDMapS" to help government agencies, NGOs, researchers, and the public document invasives affecting ecosystems. At first, the tool was available only as a desktop computer operation, but Bugwood soon created a field app that was easy to use with a suitable cell phone and a little instruction. Working with the National Park Service, EDDMapS-based apps like *'IveGot1'* (primarily for Burmese pythons in Florida) and the *Mid-Atlantic Early Detection Network (MAEDN)* were launched. These and other EDDMapS-based apps led to a surge of reporting across the U.S. and the revolutionary ability to quickly get a picture of where many invasive species occur.

One EDDMapS App. With technology advancements and the desire to streamline reporting, all of the local and regional apps have been retired in favor of a single EDDMapS app for nationwide use. EDDMapS is freely available to anyone with a cell phone or computer. You can use the app in the field to quickly report invasive plants, insects, wildlife and pathogens, and add pictures to support your identification. The app provides images and information to help with identification. Each report is reviewed and verified by qualified experts before being made available–this is a distinctive feature of EDDMapS. An account is needed to report species (you might want to do this while you're home) but is not required for looking at the field guides or maps.

Sharing Data. Anyone can download and incorporate data from EDDMapS into their systems by using the Advanced Query Tools or through the Bugwood API. Researchers, managers, and policymakers can access species occurrence maps and underlying data for analysis and the development of management and prevention plans. The EDDMapS Tools page and EDDMapS Dashboards allow users to query data, view graphs and statistics, and see recent observations. For grants, awareness campaigns, and other efforts, EDDMapS Projects can be used to link records related to a unique project.

EDDMapS Impacts. EDDMapS' distribution maps help educate the public, policy-makers, land managers, and others to better understand the scope of the invasive species problem, develop management and prevention plans, report new invasives, and track the spread of invasives in the U.S. and Canada. As of February 2024, EDDMapS contains 8 million reviewed and publicly available records covering over 6,000 invasive species submitted by more than 34,000 reporters across the US and Canada.

To download the app. Go to: apps.bugwood.org/apps/eddmaps/ or to your phone's app store and type in EDDMapS.

The Bottom line: If you are mainly interested in reporting invasive species, use EDDMapS. If you are trying to identify a native plant, animal, or other organism, use iNaturalist. Your observations matter!