

island apple snail (*Pomacea insularum*)

The island apple snail is a large aquatic snail native to South America. Shells of island apple snail are spherical with 5 to 6 whorls and can reach a width of more than 5 cm (2") and a height of nearly 8 cm (3"). The shells are yellowish to brown in color and the aperture is large and oval to round. Egg masses range in number from 200-600, have a



characteristic pink color, and are usually loosely attached to each other and to another object above the water line. The snail reaches sexual maturity at around 2½ cm (1"). Reproduction occurs year round and reaches its height during the

spring and summer. The snail feeds on aquatic vegetation, which many native species depend on for foraging and shelter. Breeding populations of the island apple snail occur in Florida, Texas, Georgia, and most recently they have been found in two coastal counties in South Carolina. The snail is commonly sold in the aquarium and pet trade industry and is becoming popular in the water gardening industry. In some instances, apple snails are being sold in biological supply house catalogues and are provided to teachers for educational purposes. Some individuals are known to have introduced apple snails as a means of vegetation control in private ponds. They can be accidentally released from water gardens due to their ability to escape and travel over land. Once released, apple snails can be transported by birds, on boats, on aquatic vegetation, and by natural water movement. As with most invasive species, the island apple snail has the ability to alter the native ecosystems it invades. It reproduces quickly and has very few predators, so it is able to spread quickly. Often it competes with native species for habitat and available resources. Island apple snails feed on all types of aquatic vegetation and could greatly impact the aquatic plant community.