

Giant African snail (GAS)

Achatina fulica



KEY FEATURES



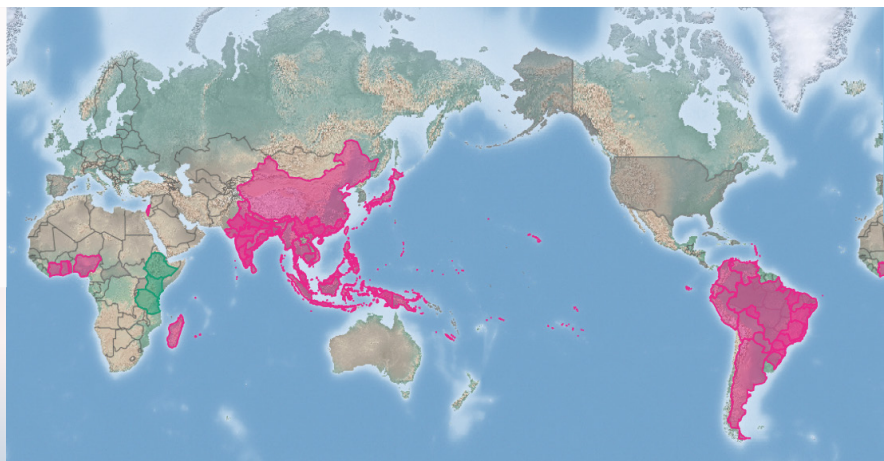
- Distinctive in appearance, GAS adults are easy to identify due to their large size and relatively long, narrow, cone-shaped shell
- Adults reach a length of up to 20 cm, the shell is more commonly 5–10 cm
- Colour varies but most commonly light brown, with alternating brown and cream bands on young snails and the upper whorls (swirls) of larger specimens. Coloration lighter towards the tip of the shell, which is almost white
- The mantle (fleshy part inside the shell) is dark brown with rubbery skin
- Two pairs of tentacles on the head: a short lower pair and a large upper pair with round ‘eyes’ at the tip
- Eggs and very young snails are much harder to identify
- Eggs are round to oval in shape and tiny (4.5–5.5 mm in diameter) and are yellow to cream in colour
- Eats all sorts of plants and trees but prefers *Brassica* (such as cabbages). Food preference depends on what is available.



PATHWAYS

- Introduced
- Native
- Origin not recorded

- Shipping containers
- Food
- Pet trade



Giant African snail (GAS)

Achatina fulica



IMPACTS



Environment

Causes damage by eating native plants, thereby modifying habitat. Probably out-competes native snails.



Health

Carries the parasite rat lungworm, known to cause meningitis in people.



Society and Culture

Not reported but likely flow-on impacts from damage to plants and environment.



Economy

Devastates all types of crops except rice, sugar cane, corn. Even bark of relatively large trees such as citrus, papaya, rubber and cacao is damaged. Most ornamentals, vegetables cover crops suffer extensively. Might transmit *Phytophthora palmivora* palm disease.



DISTRIBUTION

Native range

East coast of Africa (from Natal and Mozambique in the south to Kenya and southern part of Ethiopia and Somalia in the north, 250–830 km from the coast)

Introduced range

Within Africa, introduced in Madagascar and islands of the coastal area of East Africa.

Probably West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Nigeria, Ghana). Widespread as an invasive species out of Africa in all continents with tropical and subtropical climates

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Also called Giant African Land Snail (GALS)



SOURCES Images © Alexander R. Jenner CC BY-SA 3.0 (top)
© Florida Department of Agriculture (bottom)

Text and map: *Achatina fulica* (giant African land snail) – CABI <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/2640>



SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme

