

# SUCCESS STORIES

UAF Cooperative Extension Service

## 4-H works with Sitka Conservation Society on friendly invasive slug removal challenge

### Issue

The European black slug (*Arion ater*) was introduced into Alaska relatively recently, but has quickly established and spread, especially thriving in wet, cool climates like Sitka. The ecological impacts of black slug populations on native slugs and vegetation in Alaska are currently being researched, along with their genetics. Elsewhere, the omnivore is known to consume other organisms and vegetative matter in gardens and agricultural crops. The public is asked to help in their eradication, but manual removal of slugs, which has the lowest impact on the environment, is very time-consuming.

### Response

Since 2011, Sitka Spruce Tips 4-H club has partnered with the Sitka Conservation Society, a local environmental nonprofit, to engage youth ages 5-18 in place-based, experiential learning unique to the Tongass National Forest. This year, the two organizations collaborated to spearhead an invasive European slug collection and awareness campaign in the community. Even with the added challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was an easy event to organize in a safe, social-distanced manner and a way to build community at a time when it was especially important.

First, youth members met online via Zoom for a Slugs and Bugs workshop with an entomologist from Scotland, where the slugs are native. This was an additional benefit of going virtual — being able to connect with a specialist on the other side of the planet! After learning identification skills for both native and invasive slugs, participating 4-H'ers set out with their families to see who could collect the most invasive slugs in 24-hours.



## WANTED

4-H has been collecting invasive black slugs for disposal.

### Results

The workshop and friendly competition resulted in over 600 invasive slugs collected and disposed of over two days. Slug samples were also collected and sent up to the Integrated Pest Management Program team in Anchorage for genetic analysis and a larger regionwide investigation into the species. Our 4-H youth already have set the goal of collecting 1,000 slugs as a club this year, and will invite other community members to also participate in the collection.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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