

# Invasive Species Alert

## Nutria

(*Myocastor coypus*)

\*Not detected in Michigan\*

### Identification:

- Dark brown fur, approximately 2 feet long
- Large yellow or orange colored incisors
- Thick, rat-like tail covered with bristly hairs
- Long white whiskers on either side of nose

**Habitat:** These semi-aquatic rodents inhabit farm ponds, drainage canals, bayous, freshwater and brackish marshes, swamps, and rivers.



U. S. Geological Survey

**Diet:** Nutria's preferred diet includes bulrush, cordgrass, roots, and rhizomes and tubers of cattails.



Trevor Sheffels, Portland State University

**Native Range:** South America

**Local Concern:** Nutria, sometimes called coypu, are hosts for several pathogens and parasites that can infect people, pets, and livestock. Eating, digging, and rooting habits cause erosion and convert healthy marsh into open water habitat. Depredation to crops is another concern regarding nutria, especially considering its relatively high reproductive rate.

**U.S. Distribution:** Freshwater marshes in coastal areas of the Gulf Coast States

**Potential Means of Introduction:** Intentional or accidental release

### Native look-alikes and how you can distinguish them from

#### Nutria:

- ✓ **American Beaver:** Length of between 39 and 47 inches, no white whiskers, wide flat tail with little hair on it
- ✓ **Muskrat:** Length of 16-25 inches, no white whiskers, long, rat-like tail that's slightly flattened on the sides

To report this species, visit [www.michigan.gov/invasivespecies](http://www.michigan.gov/invasivespecies) for contact information. Report online at [www.misin.msu.edu](http://www.misin.msu.edu) or download the MISIN smartphone app and report it from your phone