

SRNS ECOLOGY

Keystone Species

Keystone species play a crucial role in maintaining the structure and balance of an ecosystem. Their presence affects many other organisms and the overall health of their environment. Without them, ecosystems could dramatically change or even collapse.

- **Alligator** – As a keystone species, alligators help regulate populations of prey species and create habitats for other animals by digging water holes, which provide refuge during dry periods.
- **Snapping Turtle** – These turtles help maintain a balanced aquatic ecosystem by controlling fish populations and scavenging to keep water bodies clean.

Invasive Species

Invasive species are non-native organisms that disrupt ecosystems by outcompeting native species, altering food webs, and sometimes leading to population declines of indigenous species.

- The introduction of invasive amphibians and reptiles can threaten native species like green tree frogs and salamanders, which depend on stable ecosystems.

Mutualism

Mutualism is a relationship where two species benefit from each other.

- **Frogs and Toads** – Frogs and toads help control insect populations, benefiting plants and humans alike by reducing pest numbers.
- **Salamanders** – Many salamanders contribute to soil health by feeding on decomposers like insects and worms, promoting a healthier ecosystem.

Why Does This Matter?

Protecting keystone species, managing invasive species, and supporting mutualistic relationships ensures the health and sustainability of our ecosystems!

