

# NUTRIA THREATENS INFRASTRUCTURE

## SPLASH ALERT

Nutria are an invasive rodent from South America that can grow to three feet long and weigh 25 pounds. They breed furiously and have been found burrowing beneath rivers and marshes in six counties in California (see map).

Nutria are distinguished from beavers and muskrats by their long, white whiskers and rounded tails; beavers and muskrats have black whiskers and flattened tails.

If it continues to spread, especially in the Delta, state officials fear it will not only ravage crops and wildlife habitat, but will also damage canals, dikes, and dams, possibly flooding homes, crops, and undermining water supplies at a time when climate change is already testing California's water infrastructure. In addition, they have been known to carry additional health hazards such as tuberculosis and septicemia, and could contaminate water supplies.

### Actions to Take

The JPIA has developed **Infrastructure Best Practices** to prevent canal failure and flooding as part of our **Commitment to Excellence Program**. Canal and levee breaches, overflows, and blockage result in flooding and property damage; resulting in major liability claims and property losses. Rodent activity is the major cause and the following best practices are recommended:

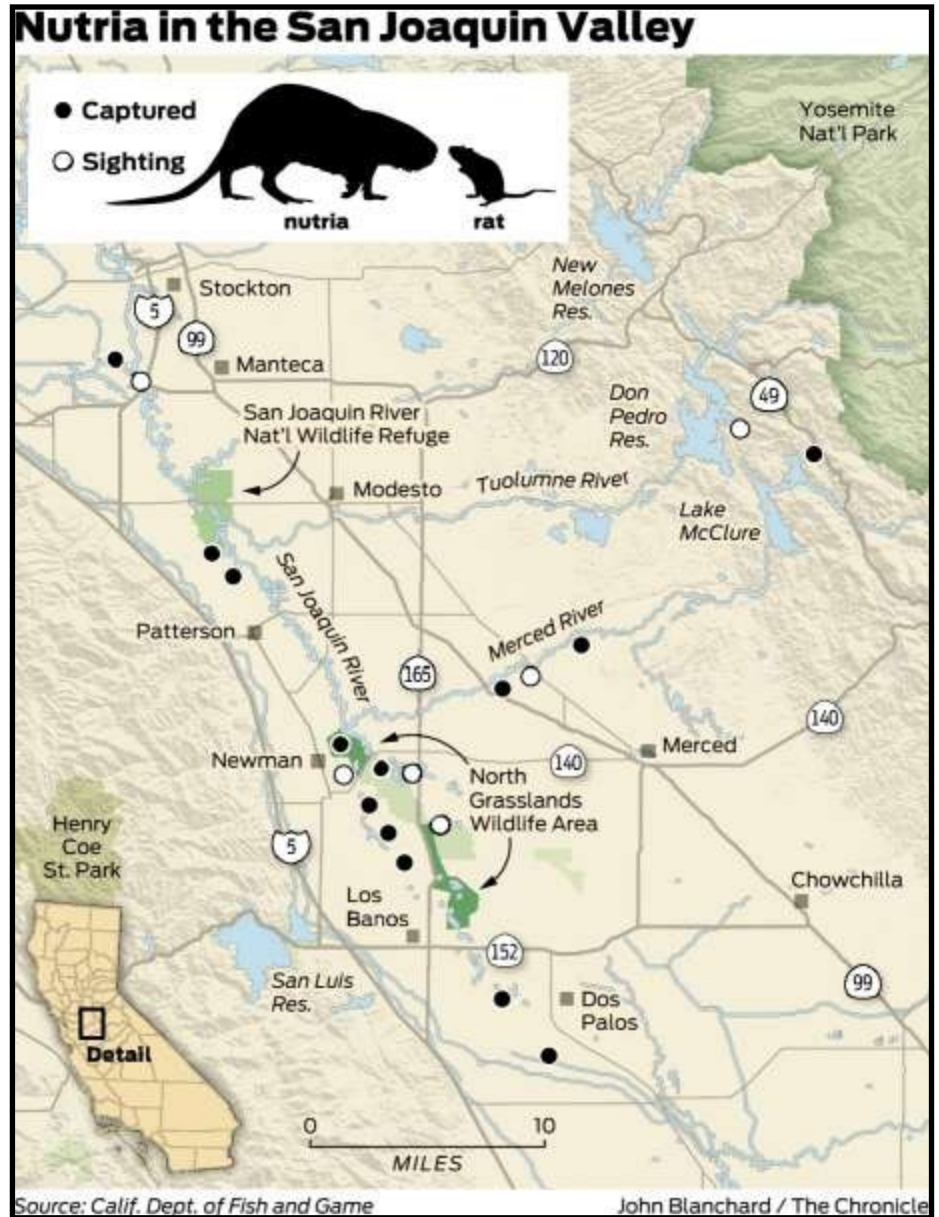


- ◆ **Conduct frequent inspections** for rodent activity and canal/levee damage. A simple checklist can be added to daily activity logs or work orders to encourage field staff to document inspections for rodent activity on an ongoing basis.
- ◆ **Maintain consistent water levels** in canals to prevent rodent activity in the upper portion of the canal bank.
- ◆ **Control weeds** to reduce blockage and allow rodent activity to be easily detected during inspections.
- ◆ **Conduct trapping (with permits)** for beavers or large rodents such as nutria.
- ◆ **Develop an emergency response plan** for canal failure and flooding, including contact information for emergency personnel, equipment, and road closure. The [JPIA's Canal/Levee Failure Response Procedures](#) can assist members in developing a plan to mitigate property damage during these events.

## If Found

Suspected observations or sign of nutria in California should be photographed and immediately reported at <http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Invasives/report>, or by email to [invasives@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:invasives@wildlife.ca.gov), or by phone at (866) 440-9530. If captured, **do not release**, but immediately contact your local CDFW office or County Agricultural Commissioner.

Nutria are non-game animals. On private land, land owners (or their authorized agent) can eliminate them by any effective means. If trapping, no permit is necessary, but they must follow approved procedures for doing so.



### Sources:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Invasives/report>  
*Invasive Species Fact Sheet-Myocastor coypus*  
[invasives@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:invasives@wildlife.ca.gov)



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