

Know Your Florida Snakes!



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Presentation Overview

- Snake or not?
- Overview of FL snake diversity
- Florida's native snakes (nonvenomous)
 - Colubridae
 - Dipsadidae
 - Natricidae
- Florida's introduced snakes
- Florida's venomous snakes & safety
 - Viperidae
 - Elapidae
- Resources

Snake-like, but not a snake

- Glass Lizards

- 4 species
- Eyelids, ear
- Body groove
- Long, fragile tail



- Florida Worm Lizard

- Pinkish color
- Rings of scale
- No eyes
- Fossorial
- Almost endemic



FL Native Reptile Diversity

- Crocodylians = 2 species
- Turtles = 29 species
- Lizards = 17 species
- Snakes = 50 species



Florida's Native Snakes

- Colubridae—Non-venomous snakes (in FL)
- Dipsadidae—Egg-laying, rear fanged snakes
- Natricidae—Aquatic/semi-aquatic live-bearers
- Viperidae—Pit Vipers (venomous)
- Elapidae—Coral Snake (venomous)



Colubridae

- Non-venomous snakes
 - None in this family in FL produce a venom
 - Great variation in size, color, pattern
 - Previously the most speciose snake family in FL
 - Lay eggs
 - Head relatively narrow (not blocky) and not very distinct from the neck
 - Some will rapidly vibrate their tail—Rats & Racers
 - Found primarily in terrestrial habitats
 - ~20 species in FL

North Am. (aka Black) Racer

Coluber constrictor

Identification: Long and slender, smooth scales; adults solid black/dk gray, greenish/bluish gray in S FL, chin throat creamy white, dk gray belly; juveniles w/ dark blotches and flecks, belly w/ flecks

Habitats: A generalist found in just about any terrestrial habitat, common in suburbia

Other: TL ~ 2-4 ft. (max 6 ft.); lays 4-36 elongate eggs w/ rough surface; eats insects, anurans, lizards, small mammals & birds—does not constrict prey; commonly referred to as “Black Snake”; **FL’s most commonly encountered snake**; juveniles often misidentified as Pygmy RS and killed; will vigorously shake tail when agitated



Eastern Indigo Snake

Drymachon couperi (2 sp. now)

Identification: Large, glossy black/blue, chin/throat reddish-brown/salmon orange/cream, belly gray, smooth scales

Habitats: Sandhills, pine flatwoods, hammocks often near water

Other: TL ~ 5-6 ft. (max 8.5 ft.); longest snake in NA; lays 4-12 large eggs w/ granular surface; feeds on snakes (including venomous species), turtles, rodents, anurans; seeks refuge in tortoise burrows; usually a very docile snake; has declined significantly due to habitat loss, road mortality, collection for pet trade; federally listed as Threatened



Red Cornsnake

Pantherophis guttatus

Identification: Body may be orange, tan, brown or gray; numerous reddish-orange blotches often outlined in black; belly a black & white checkerboard, faintly keeled scales down back, 'V' on head

Habitats: Most terrestrial habitats, common in suburbia (barns, attics)

Other: TL ~ 1.5-3.5 ft. (max 6 ft.); lays 5-30 eggs; feeds on rodents, birds, bats anurans, lizards—constricts prey; excellent climbers (belly scales angled), but burrow under leaf litter & soil too; common in the pet trade—numerous color morphs are bred; AKA Cornsnake or Red Ratsnake



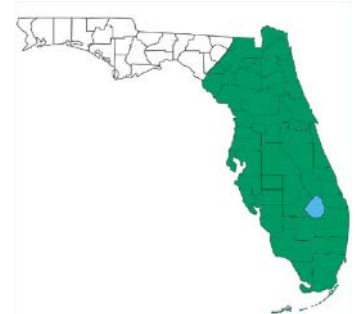
Eastern (aka Yellow) Ratsnake

Pantherophis alleghaniensis

Identification: Adults are dark yellow w/ 4 dark longitudinal stripes; young are blotched & blotches fade to stripes as snake ages; S FL and Keys animals may be orange-brown w/o or faint stripes

Habitats: Most terrestrial habitats, common in suburbia (barns, attics)

Other: TL ~ 3-5 ft. (max 7.5 ft.); lays 4-45 eggs; females may use same nest site from year to year; feeds on rodents, birds (eggs), bats, anurans, lizards—constricts prey; excellent climbers; make good pets; usually do not bite if held gently; a very common snake in suburban neighborhoods <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKjG9BUiJBM>



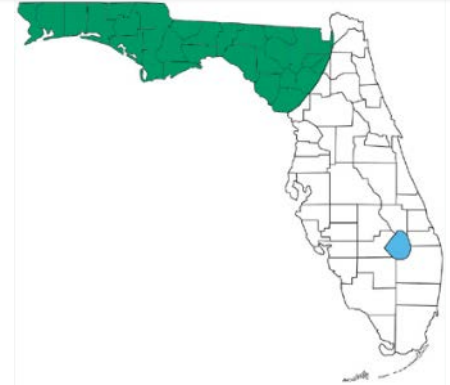
Gray Ratsnake

Pantherophis spiloides

Identification: Body gray or light brown, back marked with irregular shaped gray or brown blotches, weakly keeled scales

Habitats: Pine forests, hardwood hammocks, edges of swamps, agricultural areas, common in suburbia

Other: TL ~ 3-6 ft. (max 7 ft.); lays eggs in dark, damp location; mainly diurnal but active at night in summer; feeds on rodents, birds (eggs), bats anurans, lizards—constricts prey; excellent climbers; formerly a subspecies of Yellow Ratsnake; may musk if handled roughly



Pine Snake

Pituophis melanoleucus

Identification: Tan to grayish body, back & sides w/ irregular brown to gray blotches that become blurred toward head, blotches often fade with age, weekly keeled scales, leaf-shaped rostral scale on tip of nose

Habitats: Sandhill, scrub, scrubby flatwoods, xeric hammock that is open; Rx fire is important for habitat

Other: TL ~ 3-5 ft. (max 7.5 ft.); lay 4-12 eggs usually underground; feed on lizards, small mammals, birds (eggs); fossorial and often in PG burrows; reluctant to cross roads; coil, hiss, and vibrate tail when threatened



Rough Greensnake

Opheodrys aestivus

Identification: Thin bodied, back ubiquitous bright green, belly & chine are yellowish white, keeled scales

Habitats: Found in a variety of forested habitats, prefers shrubs and low trees especially near wetland and habitat edges

Other: TL ~ 2-2.5 ft. (max 3.5 ft.); lay 3-10 eggs under rotting logs, in tree hollows, beneath bark; feeds on caterpillars, spiders, grass hoppers, other insects; diurnal and active foragers; very arboreal; preferred prey of Swallow-tailed Kites



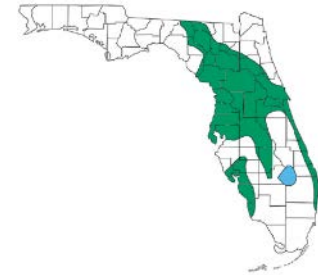
FL Crowned Snake

Tantilla relict

Identification: Thin reddish-tan snake with black head/neck cap/collar

Habitats: Almost **ENDEMIC**—2 GA records: sandhills, scrub, scrubby flatwoods, coastal dunes

Other: TL ~ 6-8 in. (max 9 in.), lays eggs; feeds on insects and their larvae (beetles), worms, snails, spiders; very fossorial and spends most of time burrowing in sand or under logs; there are 3 species of Crown Snakes in FL so be sure to check range maps for ID



Dipsadidae

- Oviparous, rear-fanged snakes
 - Previously in Colubridae
 - Produce a mild venom—not harmful to humans
 - Enlarged, grooved, rear teeth
 - Lay eggs
 - Relatively small snakes
 - Head relatively narrow (not blocky) and not very distinct from the neck
 - Generally terrestrial
 - 5 species in FL

Ring-necked Snake

Diadophis punctatus

Identification: Small & slender; glossy black/gray back, orange/yellow belly w/ row of ½ moon spots, underside of tail red, distinct orange/yellow/whitish collar

Habitats: Mainly moist forested habitats, but also drier pine and hardwood forests, common in suburbia

Other: TL ~ 6-7 in. (max 10 in); lays small eggs; emits smelly musk and 'corkscrews' tail when agitated; feeds on earthworms, slugs, insects, small amphibians & reptiles; hide under cover by day/active at night; produces a mild venom for subduing prey



Pinewoods Snake

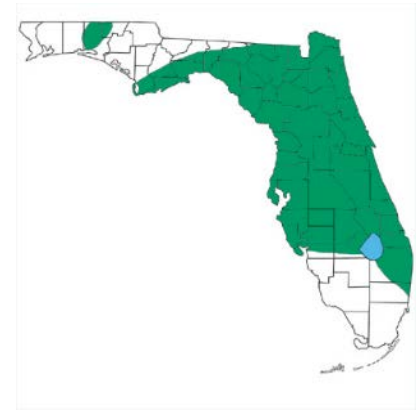
Rhadinea flavilata



Identification: Small, thin, yellowish-brown body, darker head, yellow/white lips, unmarked belly

Habitats: Moist pine forests, suburban areas where pinelands once occurred

Other: AKA: Yellow-lipped Snake; TL 10 -12 in. (max ~16 in.); secretive and spends time under leaf litter and debris, lay 1-4 eggs during the summer; ecology is poorly understood



Natricidae

- Semiaquatic, live-bearers
 - Previously in Colubridae
 - Give birth to live young
 - *Thamnophis* produce a mild venom—not harmful to humans
 - Head relatively narrow (not blocky) and not very distinct from the neck
 - Most found in or near water, 1 estuarine species (no Sea Snakes in the Atlantic or Gulf of Mexico)
 - ~20 species in FL

Banded Watersnake

Nerodia fasciata

Identification: Quite variable pattern and colors, usually black/gray/dk brown with lighter colored cross bands, may be solid brown-black, belly scales with irregular dark markings, strongly keeled scales, often dark lines along lip scales

Habitats: A habitat generalist in aquatic settings—lakes, ponds, swamps, rivers, canals, wet prairies (statewide)

Other: TL ~ 2-3.5 ft. (max 5 ft.); gives birth to 2-80 live young, avg., ~ 25; eats anurans, fish, crayfish, salamanders; often bask on logs and in thick vegetation; readily bite and musk if threatened; **NOT a Cottonmouth**



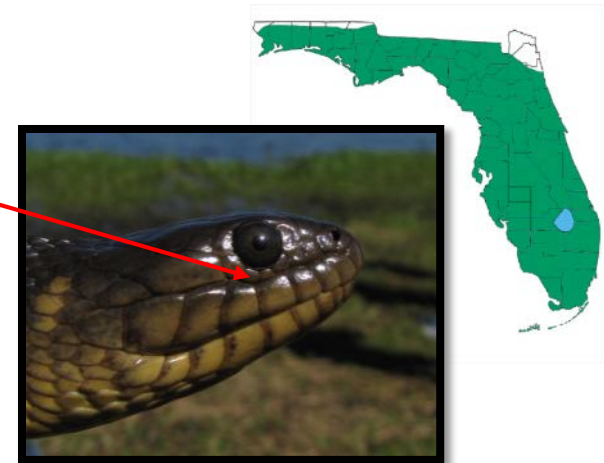
FL Green Watersnake

Nerodia floridana

Identification: Olive green with small dark flecks/bars, greenish beige belly, strongly keeled scales, sub-ocular scales under each eye

Habitats: Lakes, ponds, marshes, canals; not typically in rivers

Other: TL ~ 2-3.5 ft. (max 6 ft.), largest watersnake in FL; can give birth to > 100 live young, 30-40 is typical; eats fish and frogs mainly; flatten body and strike when cornered; may bite hard and musk when initially captured; ecology in Florida is poorly known



Brown Watersnake

Nerodia taxispilota

Identification: Brown body with alternating black blotches, belly is cream colored with dark spots; strongly keeled scales

Habitats: Rivers, spring runs & adjacent swamps mainly; may also be found in lakes, canals, and wetlands with trees and fallen branches for basking

Other: TL ~ 3-5 ft. (max 5.5 ft.); gives birth to 20-30 live young on avg., but up to 60; eats fish mainly (especially catfish), tadpoles, anurans; may sit and wait or actively forage for fish; good climbers DO NOT confuse with venomous Cottonmouth



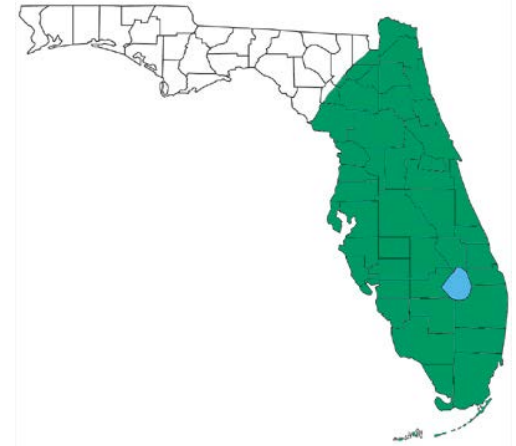
Florida Brownsnake

Storeia victa

Identification: Very small snake, gray to reddish brown body with faint light stripe flanked by dark spots, light “collar” on neck

Habitats: A variety of uplands, often near water, hides under logs and debris, common in suburban neighborhoods

Other: TL ~ 7-10 in. (max 13 in.); feeds on earthworms, slugs, small insects; may be “captured” in pool skimmers; mainly nocturnal; average number of young ~10-15; predators include: shrews, raccoons, opossums, Shrikes, Brown Thrashers, Hawks, Robins, snakes, toads, spiders



Eastern Ribbonsnake

Thamnophis sauritus

Identification: Very slender w/ long tail, scales keeled, 3 light stripes on back & sides, light blotch in front of eye

Habitats: A generalist—a variety of open upland habitats, often near water

Other: TL ~ 1.5-2 ft. (max 4 ft.), give birth to litters averaging 10-15 young; generalist diet: feed on frogs, tadpoles, small fish; mainly nocturnal; 4 subspecies occurring throughout much of eastern US; prefer edges of ponds, marshes, rivers



Common Gartersnake

Thamnophis sirtalis

Identification: Body color olive, gray, dark green, blue-green, black; w/ numerous dashes, and/or blotches given a checkerboard look; often w/ 3 light longitudinal stripes; keeled scales

Habitats: A generalist—a variety of open upland habitats, often near water

Other: TL ~ 1.5-2 ft. (max 4 ft.), give birth to liters up to 100 young—depends on female size; generalist diet: feed on frogs, fish, earthworms, slugs, salamanders, small mammals; produce a mild venom not harmful to humans; readily flatten head/body when scared



Introduced Species

5 species breeding in FL

– Javan File Snake

- Rock pit in Miami-Dade County

– Common Boa

- Charles Deering Estate in Miami-Dade County

– Northern African Python

- Small area on western outskirts of Miami, remains relatively localized, 2 confirmed in past year



Burmese Python

Python bivittatus

Identification: Large—to 18 ft./180 lbs in FL; tan/brown body w/ giraffe-like pattern down back and sides

FL Range: Extreme southern FL but spreading N; isolated records in peninsula

Habitats: Everglades, mangrove swamps, densely vegetated canal banks, tropical hardwood hammocks

Other: Eat many native species including deer, alligators, wood storks, wood rats; linked w/ declines of mesomammals;

FWC—cannot possess w/o permit;

REPORT SIGHTINGS @ eddmaps.org



Brahminy Blind Snake

Indotyphlops braminus

Identification: Small (< 6 in.); round; brown/black w/ blunt tail and snout; looks like a reptilian earthworm; no ext. eyes

Year introduced: 1979

Invasion pathway: Cargo stowaway

FL Range: Much of peninsula; a few isolated panhandle sites

Habitats: Most often in suburban areas and disturbed site; pine rocklands, trop.

Hardwood hammocks

Other: Parthenogenetic—all are females; widely introduced globally; strictly fossorial and found under rocks, logs, debris; eats eggs and pupae of ants/termites



Venomous Snakes in FL

- Viperidae
 - Hinged, hollow fangs
 - Produce toxic venom
 - Heavy bodied
 - Give birth to live young
 - Rattlesnakes, cottonmouths, copperhead
- Elapidae
 - Fixed fangs
 - Related to Cobras, Taipans, etc.
 - Lay eggs
 - Coral Snake

Only 6 (7) Venomous Sp. in FL

Copperhead



Cottonmouth



Coral Snake



E. Diamond-backed Rattlesnake



Pygmy Rattlesnake



Timber Rattlesnake

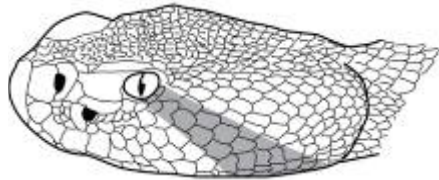


Characteristics of Venomous Pit Vipers

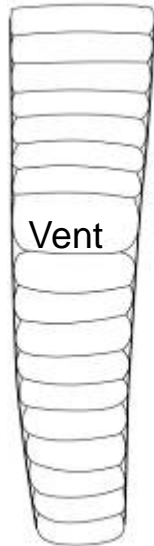
- Thick, blocky head with obvious neck
- Heavy-bodied for their length
- Relatively short, thick tail
- Heat-sensitive pit on side of face
- Complete scales on underside of tail
- Keeled scales (in some non-venomous too)
- Often a dark band from eye to corner of jaw
- Elliptical pupil



Nonvenomous watersnake



Venomous

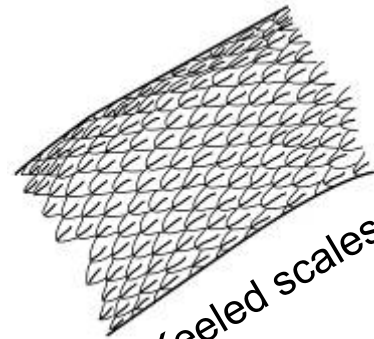


Vent

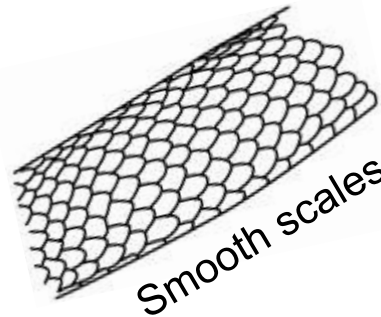


Vent

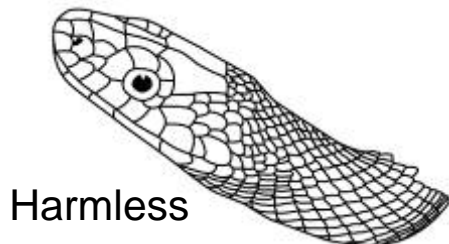
Tail scales
complete divided



Keeled scales



Smooth scales



Harmless

Cottonmouth / Water Moccasin—Pit Viper

Adult Cottonmouth



Juvenile Cottonmouth



Distribution in Florida:
Entire State



FL Cottonmouth (*A. conanti*) = statewide;
N. Cottonmouth (*A. piscivorous*) = west of
Apalachicola River

Non-venomous Watersnakes (NOT Moccasins)

Florida Green Watersnake



Brown Watersnake



These snakes are often persecuted as Moccasins. They are harmless.

Banded Watersnakes



Watersnake or Cottonmouth?



Copperhead—Pit Viper



Distribution in Florida:
Panhandle

Eastern Diamond-backed Rattlesnake—Pit Viper



Distribution in Florida:
Entire State



Timber Rattlesnake—Pit Viper



Distribution in Florida:
North Florida

Pygmy Rattlesnake—Pit Viper



Distribution in Florida:
Entire State



Coral Snake—Elapid



Distribution in Florida:
Entire State



Coral Snake and Non-venomous Look-alikes

Coral Snake



Scarlet Kingsnake



Scarlet Snake



**“Yellow
Red
STOP!”**

Snakebite Action Plan

-Obtain prompt medical care—call 911 immediately!

-Call the Poison Control Centers National Hotline 1-800-222-1222

DO!

-Get the victim away from the snake

-Keep bitten extremity lower than victim's heart

-Wash the bite area with soap and water (do not delay seeking medical help)

-Keep victim warm; as comfortable as possible; offer reassurance

-Remove bracelets, rings, watches or restrictive clothing on bitten extremities

DO NOT!

-Wait to seek medical attention until symptoms develop

-Apply a tourniquet to a bitten extremity

-Make incisions and attempt to suck out venom

-Apply ice to the bite

-Attempt to capture the snake to ensure identification

-Handle a “dead” venomous snake



Snake Resources

<http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Snake ID Guide
Dealing with Snake
Links to “Fact Sheets”

IFAS Bookstore:
Florida Snake ID Deck
Venomous Snake Poster

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North Florida's Snakes

Of Florida's 46 native species of snakes, 45 occur in the North Florida region shown in pale green on this map, including all six of the venomous species. The broader range of two of these venomous species just barely extends into North Florida. Only one non-native species, the tiny **Brahminy Blindsnake**, is found in North Florida. Be sure to check the range map for each species, because some species listed here may only be found in *part* of North Florida.

Snake species are grouped by their most obvious markings—diamonds, blotches, rings or crossbands, lengthwise stripes, or mostly solid color without obvious markings (solid-colored snakes may have speckles, darker heads, etc., and are grouped by color). Some species will be listed in multiple groups due to pattern variations within the species or between juveniles and adults. Venomous species are listed first in each group, followed by look-alikes, and non-native species are listed last. To find out more about the snakes found in North Florida, click on the snake species names in the list below. Click on an icon below to jump to snakes with that pattern, or simply scroll down to browse all species. Printed, water-resistant copies of this guide are also available so you can carry it with you anywhere—get the “Identification Guide to the Snakes of Florida.”

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Dr. J's Research
Sniff'n/Stop Frog Deterrent
Hop/Stop Euthanasia Spray
Tracking Cuban Treefrogs
Coqui Biological Control
Grad Student Research
See Complete List

Diamonds Blotches Bands Stripes Solid

[Go Back to Florida's Snakes - All Regions](#)

Diamond-marked Snakes

Eastern Diamond-backed Rattlesnake
(*Crotalus adamanteus*)
VENOMOUS