

Florida is home to 50 species of native snakes. Additionally, non-native snakes have been introduced and several have become established, including the Burmese python, which has been documented in Florida since 1979.

This fact sheet serves as a guide to identifying non-native and native snakes of South Florida. The non-native species described here are constrictors, which subdue their prey by constriction rather than venom. Some are considered invasive species in South Florida, meaning they cause harm to the environment, economy, or human health, and many arrived through the pet trade. The Burmese python, Northern African python, and boa constrictor are all established invasive species in south Florida and may be expanding their ranges. Other non-native species found in the pet trade, including the reticulated python, ball python, green anaconda, yellow anaconda, and Dumeril's boa may pose a threat to native species if they become established in Florida. We also include several native species commonly confused with non-native constrictors due to size, pattern, or disposition.

Use this guide to help differentiate between non-native and commonly confused native snake species. Immediately report sightings of any non-native snake to 888-IVE-GOT1. Native snakes can be found in every habitat and are an essential part of the ecosystem. Many native snakes directly benefit humans by reducing rodent populations, resulting in healthy crops and less disease; therefore, native snakes do not need to be reported to this hotline. If you see a snake, it is best to stand back and observe it for distinguishing characteristics to determine if it should be reported.

If you are not sure what kind of snake you have found, it is important to take a clear photo, and report it online to [eddmaps.org](https://eddmaps.org). Be sure to crop or zoom in to aid in identification. Reporting helps managers understand existing threats and allows the opportunity for removal of non-native species which can help prevent the establishment of a new invader.

## IMMEDIATELY REPORT SIGHTINGS

*Of all non-native snakes!*

1. Take a photo  
(clearly showing the body and coloration if possible)
2. Note the location
3. Call 888-IVE-GOT1 or report online at [Ivegott1.org](https://Ivegott1.org)

### Acknowledgements:

This publication was made possible by funding from the South Florida Water Management District and was originally created as additional reference material for the non-native large constrictor training program.

Cover photos courtesy of: Justin Dalaba, Mike Lloret, and Jenna Cole

### Authors

Jenna Cole, Justin Dalaba, Melissa A. Miller, and Frank Mazzotti

Email: [fjma@ufl.edu](mailto:fjma@ufl.edu)

**UF | IFAS Extension**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Institute of Food and Agricultural  
Sciences IFAS Publication WEC484

An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Nick T. Place, Dean for UF/IFAS Extension. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices.

## Large Snake Lineup for South Florida:

A guide to differentiating between  
non-native and native snakes

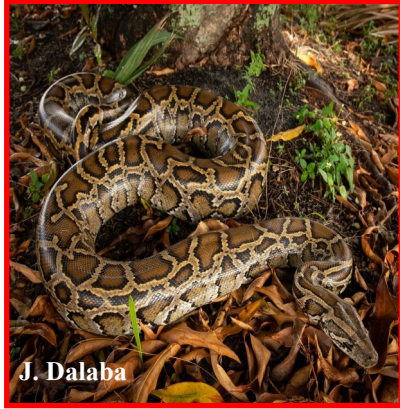


**UF | IFAS Extension**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA  
Reviewed: 11/2024



# Non-native Snakes

## Burmese python (*Python molurus bivittatus*)



10 to 20 ft (3 to 6 m); The most widely established invasive constrictor reproducing in Florida, Burmese pythons are established in South Florida but have been reported throughout the state. These constrictors are best identified by their light brown body with dark blotches that do not touch, resembling a giraffe pattern. Their belly scales are completely white.

J. Dalaba

## Northern African python (*Python sebae*)



10 to 16 ft (3 to 5 m); A localized breeding population is established in Miami-Dade County. These invasive constrictors have a lighter brown-gray body with irregular darker blotches that touch and run together, and their belly scales are mottled. They also curl their tails as a defensive posture.

M. Rochford

## Common boa (*Boa constrictor*)



6 to 9 ft (2 to 3 m); Also known as the red-tailed boa, these snakes are invasive and known to be reproducing in eastern Miami-Dade County, but they can be seen throughout the state because they are commonly kept as pets. They are semi-arboreal with light tan ovals and a red-brown tail.

M. Floret

## Ball python (*Python regius*) 2 to 4 ft (0.5 to 1.2 m);

Not established, but



J. Cole

common in the pet trade, these smaller constrictors have many color variations, however, typically they have light rounded blotches on a dark brown-black body. They tend to form their body into a ball when threatened or in defense.

## Yellow anaconda (*Eunectes notatae*)



J. Cole

6 to 9 ft (2 to 3 m);

These snakes are not known to be reproducing, but a few verified sightings have been reported throughout Florida. They have a yellow-gold body with

large dark spots, and five dark stripes on top of their head.

## Green anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*)



J. Cole

3 to 15 ft (4 to 4.5 m); This snake is not known to be reproducing in Florida, but a few have been reported from as far north as

Alachua County and as far south as Miami-Dade County. They can be distinguished from the yellow anaconda by their green-brown body with large round dark dorsal spots and a light stripe through the eyes.

## Dumeril's boa (*Boa dumerili*)



S. Serrott

5 to 7 ft (1.5 to 2 m);

Not reproducing in Florida, but several have been found in South Florida, likely escaped or released pets. This non-native constrictor has irregular dark brown saddles that do not consistently connect across

the back. It rarely grows to 9 ft.

## Reticulated python (*Malayopython reticulatus*)



J. Cole

14 to 18 ft (4.25 to 5.5 m); Not established in Florida, but there have been a few occasional sightings throughout the state and in South Florida as early as the 1980s. This large python is characterized by orange eyes. Their golden body

is covered with tan blotches that are outlined in black with white and yellow accents.

# Native Snakes

## Cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*)

2 to 4 ft (0.5 to 1.2 m); These venomous snakes often engage in a mouth gaping display to warn off predators. Juveniles have abnormal light and dark brown bands, and adults can appear almost completely black.



Venomous

J. Dalaba

## Eastern diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*)

2 to 6 ft (0.5 to 2 m); Characterized by a diamond-shaped pattern on the dorsum and a thick diagonal band through the eye, this snake is venomous. Adults use an audible tail rattle in defense.

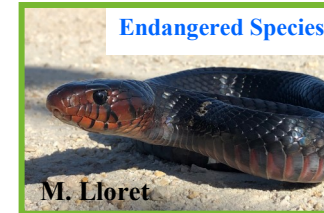


Venomous

J. Dalaba

## Eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon couperi*)

5 to 8 ft (1.5 to 2.4 m); The largest native snake, indigos are non-venomous and often mistaken for other species due to their size. Their body is almost completely black, appearing more purple in bright light, and some have reddish coloration extending from their face to underside.

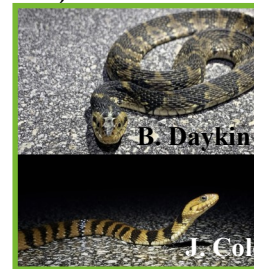


Endangered Species

M. Floret

## Banded water snake (*Nerodia fasciata*)

2 to 3.5 ft (0.5 to 1 m); Common in South Florida, this nonvenomous snake tends to have alternating dark brown-red bands across a lighter body; typically tan, gray, or yellow. However, their coloration and pattern can be highly variable. Unlike most non-native snakes of similar color, they can be distinguished by irregularly spaced dark belly scales and lack of a dark band through the eye.



B. Daykin

J. Cole

## Corn snake (*Pantherophis guttatus*)

1.5 to 6 ft (0.4 to 2 m); This nonvenomous snake has varying color and patterns. Unlike Burmese pythons which are varying shades of brown, corn snakes typically have orange-rust colored bodies with bright orange or red blotches that are bordered in black. Adult ventral scales are usually checkerboard patterned, and juveniles appear similarly, but with duller brown-gray coloration.



J. Dalaba