

SNAKE IDENTIFICATION



at the
**Orange County / University of Florida
IFAS Extension Education Center**
6021 S. Conway Road
Orlando, FL 32812
407-254-9200

Snake Identification is one of the many resources available to citizens at the new Orange County / University of Florida IFAS Extension Education Center.

Our resident Animal Science Agent, Dennis Mudge, will identify snakes at no charge to the public, including juvenile snakes which are difficult to identify.

For further information online visit
<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/herpetology/>



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Central Florida's Most Common Non-Venomous Snakes

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Black Racer
Coluber constrictor priapus

Black Racers are very fast black snakes with a bluish cast to their scales. Other names for this handsome,

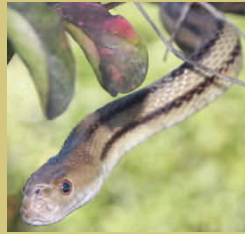
non-venomous snake are Blue Racer, Blue Runner and Black Runner. The Southern Black Racer occurs in habitats all over Louisiana and through most of the Southeast. Most Racers do not enjoy being handled. Black racers eat mostly mice and rats, so are extremely beneficial snakes to have around. Racers are constrictors that kill their prey by wrapping around it until it is dead and then swallowing it whole. Racers lay clutches of 6 to 18 granular white eggs from June through September in such places as soft moist soil beside decaying logs, in decaying wood pulp or in depressions in clumps of grass. The hatchlings don't look like the adults and have light-colored bodies with dark blotches along the back and sides.



Florida Ringneck Snake
Diadophis punctatus punctatus

Ringneck snakes are named for the yellow ring around their neck.

These small (6-10 inch), slender, smooth-scaled snakes are usually black with an orange belly that becomes orange-red near the tip of the tail. A row of black spots runs down the middle of the belly. Ringneck snakes are common throughout Florida in hardwood hammocks, pine woodlands and along the edges of wetlands; they live under rocks, logs and leaf litter. They feed largely on earthworms and slugs, but they also take small skinks, lizards and tiny frogs, which they immobilize with toxic saliva. Their bite is not harmful to people.



Rat Snake
Elaphe obsoleta

Rat snakes can grow to be over 6' long. They are long, slim snakes with a head only slightly wider than their body. Rat snakes tame easily, and many people keep them as pets. They are common around buildings and barns, and on forest edges.

These snakes are excellent climbers and can climb the rough bark of a pine tree with ease. They can also swim. The **Red Rat Snake**, *Elaphe guttata* is also known as the **Corn snake**. It is dark reddish orange with large darker red blotches down the back and sides. The belly is marked with a black and white checkerboard pattern.



King Snake
Lampropeltis getula floridana

Average adult size is 36-48 inches. The scales between the crossbands lighten with age, starting as black, they may develop to be the same light color as the crossbands. The belly has a checkerboard pattern. The Florida King Snake is mainly terrestrial and active during the day, yet in the summer months individuals may be found moving at night.



Scarlet King Snake
Lampropeltis getula floridana

Average adult size is 14-20 inches. Adults are tri-colored displaying red, black, and yellow rings that encircle the entire body. Both the red and yellow rings are surrounded by black rings, thus the red and yellow rings never touch. The Scarlet King Snake is frequently mistaken for the venomous Coral Snake. A rhyme can help you distinguish the Scarlet Snake from the Coral Snake:

“If red touches yellow, it can kill a fellow. (Coral Snake)
If red touches black, it is a friend of Jack.” (Scarlet King Snake)



Banded Water Snake
Nerodia fasciata pictiventris

Average adult size is 22-42 inches. Stout bodied snake with

broad black, brown, or red crossbands of most of its body. The lighter narrower bands are tan, grey or reddish, and may contain a dark spot on the side. Crossbands may be obscured as snake ages. Florida banded water snakes are harmless, though they have a mouth full of teeth and will bite viciously to defend themselves. Because they are found around bodies of water, water snakes often are killed in the mistaken belief that they are the venomous. Active mainly at night, but may be found during the day sunning on river banks or on vegetation hanging over the water.



Garter Snake
Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis

Average adult size is 20-28 inches. Adults are greenish with a light tan or gray mid-dorsal stripe. There is an additional

light tannish stripe on each side of the body occupying the 2nd and 3rd dorsal scale rows above the belly. There are alternating rows of dark spots on each side between the mid-dorsal and lateral stripes. Light reddish-tan fleckings may also be present. The belly is uniform whitish-green. The scales of the upper lip are outlined with black markings. The scales are keeled, and there are 19 dorsal scale rows at midbody. The pupil is round. Juveniles are similar to that of adults. The eastern garter snake is terrestrial and active during the day. It is frequently found along the banks of canals and ditches, and around houses in residential areas. After heavy rains, it is sometimes found at night crossing roads in search of food.