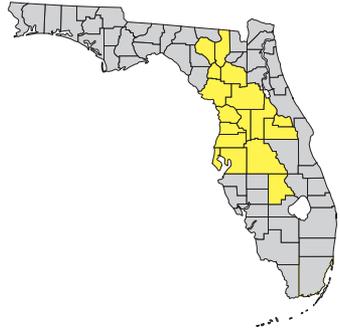


SHORT-TAILED SNAKE

Stilosoma extenuatum

Order: Squamata
Family: Colubridae
FNAI Ranks: G3/S3
U.S. Status: None
FL Status: Threatened



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Description: An extremely slender, spotted snake with a cylindrical body rarely exceeding 20 in. (510 mm) total length; even very large specimens two ft. (61 cm) long are only the diameter of a pencil. Grayish ground color with 50 - 80 dark brown blotches lacking darker edges and often separated by areas of yellow to red along back, and alternating with a series of smaller blotches on sides; belly with many dark blotches. Tail, as measured posteriorly to the anal scale, comprises only 7 - 10 percent of total length. Head small, no wider than body; scales smooth (no keels); anal scale undivided.

Similar Species: All other Florida snakes have tails greater than 10 percent of total length. Young rat snakes (*Elaphe*) and black racers

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(*Coluber*) are strongly blotched but have heads substantially wider than neck. Anal scale of racer is divided, while most scales on back and upper sides of rat snakes bear a single low keel. Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula*) may have large black blotches but is more heavy-bodied and grows much larger. Mole kingsnake (*L. calligaster*) is similar but lacks areas of orange or yellow between blotches, which are dark-edged.

Habitat: Dry upland habitats, principally sandhill, xeric hammock, and sand pine scrub. A secretive burrower only rarely seen above ground or under cover objects.

Seasonal Occurrence: Most above-ground activity occurs in October and November, with a few sightings in March and April.

Florida Distribution: Northern and central peninsula, from the Suwannee River to Highlands County.

Range-wide Distribution: Restricted to Florida.

Conservation Status: Occurs on some state and federal lands, including Ocala National Forest. Decline directly related to loss and conversion of habitat for citrus, mining, silviculture, and development.

Protection and Management: Maintain upland longleaf pine and sand pine scrub habitats with prescribed fire as needed. Able to tolerate some disturbance, including limited harvest of longleaf pine and low-density development.

Selected References: Ashton and Ashton 1988b, Conant and Collins 1991, Ernst and Barbour 1989, Moler (ed.) 1992, Tenant 1997.



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