

BURMESE PYTHON

<http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/aug/14/everglades-17-foot-pyhton-pregnant-87-eggs-snakes/>

Record snake: 17-foot python Pregnant with 87 eggs Caught in Everglades



Florida Museum of Natural History researchers, from left, Rebecca Reichart, Leroy Nunez, Nicholas Coutu, Claudia Grant and Kenneth Krysko examine the internal anatomy of the largest Burmese python found in Florida to date, Aug. 10, 2012, on the University of Florida campus. The 17-foot, 7-inch snake weighed 164 pounds and carried 87 eggs in its oviducts, a state record. Following scientific investigation, the snake will be mounted for exhibition at the museum for about five years, and then returned for exhibition at Everglades National Park.



University of Florida herpetologist Kenneth Krysko displays eggs found in the largest Burmese python from Florida to date. Florida Museum of Natural History researchers examined the internal anatomy of the snake. The 17-foot, 7-inch snake weighed 164 pounds and carried a state record 87 eggs in the python's oviducts.



WEST PALM BEACH — The biggest Burmese python ever caught in Florida — 17 feet, 7 inches long and 164½ pounds — was found in Everglades National Park, the University of Florida announced Monday. The snake was pregnant with 87 eggs, also said to be a record. Scientists said the python's stats show just how pervasive the invasive snakes, which are native to Southeast Asia, have become in South Florida.

"It means these snakes are surviving a long time in the wild," said Kenneth Krysko, a snake expert at the Florida Museum of Natural History, where the euthanized snake was brought. "There's nothing stopping them, and the native wildlife are in trouble."

The python had feathers in its stomach that scientists plan to use to identify the types of wildlife it was eating.

"A 17½-foot snake could eat anything it wants," Krysko said.

Tens of thousands of Burmese pythons are believed to be living in the Everglades, where they thrive in the warm, humid climate. While many were apparently released by their owners, others may have escaped from pet shops during Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and have been reproducing ever since.

The snakes kill their prey by coiling around it and suffocating it. They have been known to swallow animals as large as deer and alligators.

Authorities have taken repeated steps to try and reduce the python problem, banning their importation and allowing them to be hunted. But those efforts have done little to reduce the population.

In and around Everglades National Park alone, some 1,825 Burmese pythons were found between 2000 and 2011.

Rob Robins, a biologist at the Florida Museum of Natural History, said the snakes are very hard to catch, and that since they have established themselves in the Everglades, they will be virtually impossible to eradicate.

"I think you're going to see more and more big snakes like this caught," he said.

<http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2012/feb/10/editorials-voracious-pythons-adapt-too-readily/>

Voracious pythons adapt too readily to Everglades

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The National Park Service says 1,825 Burmese pythons as long as 16 feet have been caught in and around the Florida Everglades since 2000.

The Burmese pythons have been joined in the swamps by other discarded pet pythons and assorted constrictors. They are rapidly vacuuming the Everglades clean of native wildlife: raccoons, opossums, bobcats, marsh and cottontail rabbits, deer, foxes and endangered wood rats and wood storks. One python even tried to eat a live alligator.

The Park Service said in areas where the snakes are known to be active, sightings of medium-size mammals have dropped by as much as 99 percent.

It's not hard to envision what happens next. With their prey exhausted, the snakes will begin moving out of the Everglades in search of food — pets, for example. Florida Sen. Bill Nelson said snakes don't belong in the Everglades in the first place, "and they certainly don't belong in people's backyards."

The state and the federal government have spent millions trying to exterminate the snakes and are resigned to simply try to keep them confined to the Everglades. The fear, however, is that they will spread statewide and into Georgia and Louisiana. Cold weather is a barrier, but the snakes have proved remarkably adaptive.

The battle against invasive species always seems to come too late. The upper Midwest is already afflicted with zebra mussels and sea lampreys. The cost of protecting the Great Lakes from Asiatic carp that escaped from Mississippi fish farms is estimated at around \$9.5 billion.

In January, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, under the Obama administration, finally issued a ban on importing or taking across state lines Burmese pythons, yellow anacondas and northern and southern African pythons.

The administration found itself up against a surprisingly strong reptile lobby. According to figures collected by the Washington Post, the reptile trade is a \$2 billion business in the United States, with 11 million reptiles kept as pets and more reptiles imported into the U.S. than anywhere else in the world. If the snakes can't be eradicated, they have to be controlled. Soon, wearing shoes, belts, jackets, suitcases and hatbands made from Burmese-python skin may not be a fashion statement. It will be a civic duty.

The New Florida Deer Hunter



