

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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ATLANTIC SALT MARSH SNAKE LISTED AS THREATENED

The Atlantic salt marsh snake, a slender, striped water snake of the Atlantic coast of Florida, has been listed as threatened on the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, reported today.

This species inhabits brackish and salt water environments along the coast of three counties in central Florida. It usually is found associated with fiddler crab burrows in which it lives and to which it retreats when confronted by danger.

The main threat to the Atlantic salt marsh snake is from the continued destruction of its habitat for development. Habitat modification not only destroys the environment of this snake, but also may lead to the breakdown of ecological isolating mechanisms which keep it from interbreeding with adjacent species of salt marsh snakes, and thus from hybridizing.

Unlike most water and salt marsh snakes, this species is docile and will not attempt to bite. Fewer than 35 specimens are known to science, even though this snake was first described in 1895.

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