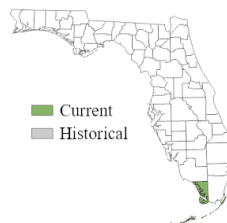


KEY RINGNECK SNAKE

Diadophis punctatus acricus

Order: Squamata
Family: Colubridae
FNAI Ranks: G5T1/S1
U.S. Status: none
FL Status: Threatened



Description: A very small, dark snake usually less than 12 in. (300 mm) long. Back varies from dark gray to black, darker posteriorly; the light neck ring typical of most ringneck snakes is absent or poorly developed in this race. Head pale grayish-brown and faintly speckled with dark pigment. Belly grades from pale anteriorly to yellow-orange or red posteriorly, typically with many semicircular black spots. Smooth scales; divided anal scale.

Similar Species: No other snake on the Lower Keys has a belly that is bright yellow with black spots. Brown snake (*Storeria dekayi*; see species account) has a brown back with spots, pale belly, and keeled scales. Crowned snake (*Tantilla oolitica*; see species account), not known from Lower Keys, has head much darker than paler body and is pale ventrally. Southern ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus punctatus*) in remainder of Florida, including Upper Keys, typically has yellow-orange neck ring.

Habitat: Scrubby pine rockland, and edges and disturbed portions of tropical hardwood hammocks; generally near sources of fresh water.

Seasonal Occurrence: Few data; presumably less active in winter.

Florida Distribution: Restricted to Lower Keys; confirmed from Big Pine, Little Torch, and Middle Torch keys; may occur on others.

Range-wide Distribution: Species occurs throughout much of the United States. The Key race is confined to Florida.

Conservation Status: Occurs on national wildlife refuge, but much of remaining habitat is degraded or threatened by development.

Protection and Management: Manage pine rockland within this species range to

Key Ringneck Snake

Diadophis punctatus acricus

keep it in as natural a state as possible.

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



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