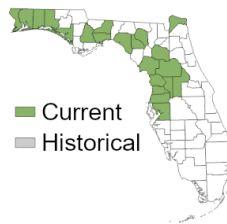


## SOUTHERN HOGNOSE SNAKE

*Heterodon simus*



**Order:** Squamata  
**Family:** Colubridae  
**FNAI Ranks:** G2G3/S2S3  
**U.S. Status:** none  
**FL Status:** none

**Description:** A relatively small (to 20 in. = 508 mm) but very stocky snake with a sharply upturned, pointed snout. Pattern of large dark blotches on a lighter, gray to tan ground color; plain or mottled below, with underside of tail similar to belly. Scales keeled, anal scale divided. Like other hognose species, defensive behaviors include flattening of head and neck, loud hissing, and playing dead.

**Similar Species:** Eastern hognose (*Heterodon platirhinos*) is distinguished by less sharply upturned snout, and underside of tail that is lighter than belly; some specimens are plain rather than blotched. No other Florida snakes have an upturned snout. Pygmy rattlesnake (*Sistrurus miliarius*) is similarly patterned but has narrow neck, triangular head, vertical pupils, pit between each eye and nostril, tiny rattle, and often a rusty stripe on back.

**Habitat:** Principally xeric sandy uplands, especially sandhill, scrub, xeric hammock, and derived oldfields; rare in more mesic hammocks and dry river floodplains. Often associated with ephemeral wetlands that may serve as breeding areas for the toads upon which this snake feeds.

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Active in warmer months of year, from April - May to October - November. Lays eggs July - October.

**Florida Distribution:** Panhandle and northern half of the peninsula, though at least formerly south to the northern edge of Lake Okeechobee.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Lower Southeastern Coastal Plain, from southeastern North Carolina to south-central Florida, west to southern Mississippi.

**Conservation Status:** Declining. Present on some large state and national forests as well as Eglin Air Force Base. Principally threatened by loss and fragmentation of xeric upland habitat.

## Southern Hognose Snake

*Heterodon simus*

**Protection and Management:** Ecologically oriented stewardship of remaining xeric uplands (especially entailing the use of fire) and associated isolated wetlands is crucial. Elimination or control of imported fire ants may be important. Use of non-essential pesticides in and near inhabited areas should be avoided. Education of the public is an important component to maintaining populations of this and all upland snake species.

**References:** Ashton and Ashton 1988b, Conant and Collins 1991, Ernst and Barbour 1989, Mount 1975, Tenant 1997, Tuberville et al. 2000



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