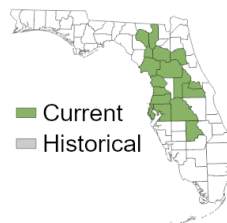


## SHORT-TAILED SNAKE

*Lampropeltis extenuata*

**Order:** Squamata  
**Family:** Colubridae  
**FNAI Ranks:** G2/S2  
**U.S. Status:** none  
**FL Status:** Threatened



**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 (*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:** Found only in north-central peninsular Florida, west of the St. Johns River, in areas with loose, sandy soils. Its preferred habitat is dry sandy uplands, especially longleaf pine-turkey oak sandhills, and sometimes xeric oak hammocks and rosemary-sandpine scrub; this snake has also been found in sphagnum bogs adjacent to typical habitat. This snake is uncommon and rarely encountered, and it spends the majority of its time underground.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Restricted to Florida.

## Short-tailed Snake

## *Lampropeltis extenuata*

**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:** Little is known about the ecology and behavior of this snake. Management for appropriate natural communities usually will involve fire; zoning or greenbelts in residential areas.

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



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