

RED RAT SNAKE, LOWER KEYS

POPULATION

Pantherophis guttatus pop. 1

Order: Squamata
Family: Colubridae
FNAI Ranks: G5T2Q/S2
U.S. Status: none
FL Status: none



Description: A medium-sized (adults 3 - 4 ft. = 0.9 - 1.2 m), rusty colored snake, with a series of poorly defined, pinkish to orange blotches bordered by slightly darker pigment, along length of back. Belly yellow to orange, often with small, faint, dark marks. Lateral edges of first dorsal blotch extend forward and unite to form a V on top of head. Scales on back and sides weakly keeled; anal scale divided. Juveniles strongly blotched and with dark stripe from eye to neck on each side.

Similar Species: No similar snakes occur in the Lower Keys.

Habitat: Forested habitats, including pine, hardwood, and mangrove, but also around human habitation. Often under cover objects on ground, but climbs well.

Seasonal Occurrence: Few data, but presumably less active in winter.

Florida Distribution: The state-protected Lower Keys population is known from the following keys: Little Pine; Big Pine; Big, Middle, and Little Torch; Ramrod; Summerland; Sugarloaf; Saddlebunch; Stock Island; Key West; and the Dry Tortugas. May occur on others, including the Marquesas Keys.

Range-wide Distribution: *Elaphe guttata guttata*, the red rat or corn snake, is fairly common throughout much of the southeastern U.S., including all of Florida.

Conservation Status: National wildlife refuges in the Keys protect some habitat, but development and drainage threaten many tracts. Fortunately, this snake tolerates limited development and some exotic vegetation, so remains relatively common.

Protection and Management: Maintain habitat in a natural state.

References: Ashton and Ashton 1988b, Conant and Collins 1991, Ernst and

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Barbour 1989, Lazell 1989, Mitchell 1977, Moler (ed.) 1992, Tenant 1997.



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