EASTERN RIBBON SNAKE, LOWER KEYS POPULATION
Thamnophis saurita pop. 1

Order: Squamata
Family: Colubridae
FNAI Ranks: G5T1Q/S1
U.S. Status: none
FL Status: none

Current
Historical

Description: A medium-small (to 40 in. = 102 cm), slender snake with a pair of light longitudinal stripes on the sides, and usually a pale mid-dorsal stripe on the back. The dorsal stripe may be yellow, orange, or brown, often bordered by black. Dorsal ground color olive to brown; belly pale yellow. Small white spot in front of eye; lip scales whitish. Scales on back and sides keeled; anal scale undivided. Tail, as measured from behind vent, is long and narrow, comprising nearly one-third of the snake's total length.

Similar Species: No other striped snakes occur in the Keys. On the mainland, the closely related eastern garter snake, Thamnophis sirtalis, is similar but has a heavier body and shorter tail, usually less than one-fourth of total length.

Habitat: Generally near water, including mangroves and spartina marsh as well as freshwater depressions and ditches.

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

Florida Distribution: The state-protected Lower Keys population is known from No Name, Big Pine, Middle Torch, Cudjoe, and Upper Sugarloaf keys; may occur on others.

Range-wide Distribution: T. sauritus, the eastern ribbon snake, inhabits non-mountainous areas throughout the eastern U.S. The peninsula ribbon snake, *T. s. sackenii*, ranges from southeastern South Carolina through Georgia and the Florida peninsula to the Keys.

Conservation Status: Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge protects some habitat, but much habitat is threatened by development and drainage.

Protection and Management: Manage all Lower Keys wetland habitats to prevent disturbances.

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

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