

Eastern Indigo Snake (*Drymarchon couperi*)

Background

The eastern indigo snake was federally listed as Threatened in 1978 and is state listed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as Threatened. The snake is generally, albeit locally, distributed in southeastern Georgia with several recent records (i.e., 2000-present) available for Trail Ridge, Charlton County, Georgia (Enge et al. 2013). An extant eastern indigo snake population occurs at the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Charlton County, Georgia, approx. 18 km N of the Twin Pines site (Stevenson 2010). Other indigo snake records located relatively close to the Twin Pines site (with year date of most recent collection and distance from Twin Pines, in parenthesis) include Cary State Forest, Nassau County, Florida (1965; 21 km E of Twin Pines) and Whitehouse Naval Outlying Field, Duval County, Florida (1996; 29 km SE of Twin Pines) (Enge et al. 2013; Kevin Enge, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, pers. comm., 2019).

I conducted surveys for eastern indigo snakes following methods described by Stevenson et al. (2003, 2009) and Bauder et al. (2017) that are effective for the species in the southern Georgia portion of its range. Specifically, I conducted visual encounter surveys for indigo snakes overwintering in gopher tortoise colonies. I surveyed for basking indigo snakes, and shed skins, at/near all active/inactive gopher tortoise burrows on-site ($n = 118$) on 2-3 dates during the cooler months (my surveys were conducted from 17 December 2018 to 19 March 2019). Maps of indigo snake survey areas and gopher tortoise burrow locations are provided (Figures 10 and 11).

On each indigo snake survey, each tortoise burrow was carefully examined for the presence of fresh snake tracks (if found, burrows with tracks are scoped with a gopher tortoise burrow camera in an effort to locate snakes resting deep inside the burrow). From 1-4 TTL biologists assisted me on these surveys.

No eastern indigo snakes or eastern indigo snake shed skins were found by my visual encounter surveys at the Twin Pines site, and no fresh snake tracks were located at burrows. A single pygmy rattlesnake (*Sistrurus miliarius*), the shed skin of an eastern coachwhip (*Coluber flagellum*) and two observations of gopher frogs (*Rana capito*) were observed during my surveys (Table 4).