

How Long Do Snakes Live in the Wild?

Survival data for free-ranging snakes are scarce because snakes are often secretive, remain inactive for long periods of time, occur at low population densities, and require long-term monitoring. To help fill in this knowledge gap, we reported survival records for a suite of southeastern snakes that were part of a long-term capture-mark-recapture study.

We captured snakes using 16 box trap arrays or incidentally on roads from 2002-2021. We measured length and mass, and classified individuals into juvenile and adult age classes. Snakes were individually marked with passive transponder (PIT) tags to identify recaptures.

Our data for free-ranging Florida pine snakes, eastern coachwhips, and eastern kingsnakes demonstrate that these three species can survive at least 10 years in the wild. To our knowledge, our survival records are the first to be reported for Florida pine snakes, eastern kingsnakes, timber rattlesnakes, eastern coachwhips, black racers, and southern hognose snakes in the southeastern USA. These regional data may help inform management and conservation of these species, including some wide-ranging species (i.e. eastern kingsnakes) where survival data are limited.

KEY POINTS

Long-term survival data for wild southeastern snakes are deficient.

We used twenty years of capture-mark-recapture data to examine survival for wild snakes on Ichauway.

Six of the seven species had recaptures of 7 years or more, three of which were recaptured 10-13 years after initial capture.

MORE INFORMATION

Gacheny, M., J.M. Howze, and L.L. Smith. 2022. [Survival records of free-ranging southeastern USA snakes](#). Herpetological Review 53(4) 586-588.

CONTACT

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**10 SNAKES
 7 SPECIES
 —
 Number of
 Years Between
 Captures**

Black Racer



♂ 6 ♀ 7

Southern Hognose



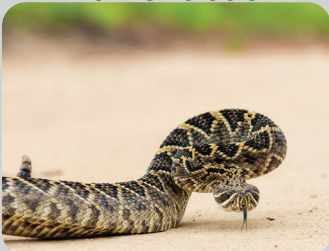
♂ 3

Eastern Kingsnake



♂ 10 ♀ 7

Diamondback



♂ 7

Timber Rattlesnake



♂ 7

Eastern Coachwhip



♂ 10

Florida Pine Snake



♂ 13 ♀ 10