

Anaconda captured at Florida horse park

January 14 2010, By Jeannette Rivera-Lyles

A 12-foot green anaconda was captured Wednesday by deputy sheriffs at the East Lake Fish Camp in northern Osceola County.

The reptile is the first of its kind to be caught in the wild in [Florida](#), an official with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said.

It was spotted and captured by members of the sheriff's mounted patrol unit, which trains at the public park.

Toni Englert, who keeps horses at the park's stable, witnessed the capture.

"The officers called me over and said 'Toni, I think we know what happened to the ducks,' " Englert said.

Englert, who often exercises her horses at the same time the deputies train, had pointed out to them that the park's ducks and geese -- including a prize-winning goose -- had been disappearing in the past few months. She said she assumed an alligator was feasting on the waterfowl.

"We would only find feathers all over the place," she said.

Englert said the snake was discovered in a drain pipe leading to a pond, which is probably where it eluded discovery -- until the recent cold weather made him sluggish.

"I looked and saw the snake, curled up inside the pipe," Englert said. "It was barely moving."

The snake was taken to Reptile World Serpenterium in St. Cloud, Fla.

Wildlife officer Lt. Rick Brown thinks it's the first time an anaconda has been caught in the wild in the state. Green anacondas are the largest snakes on record and can grow to be 30 feet long. The nonpoisonous constrictors are natives of the Amazon region.

"They are in the same category of concern as the Burmese pythons," Brown said. "Someone purchased this at a time it was no bigger than a couple of fingers and when it got big, released it."

Until early 2008, pet shops in Florida carried exotic reptiles that could be purchased by anyone. The rules were tightened because the foreign species, which were being dumped in the wild by their owners, became a serious menace to the state's [flora](#) and [fauna](#).

A special permit is now required to own the reptiles.

The question now is, Brown said, where the anaconda came from and how many more were released in the wild.

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