

# Python leads researchers to a big snake sex party with six males and a 15-foot, 115-pound female

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Wildlife experts call it a "breeding aggregation." It's a more respectable way of saying snake sex party.

A Burmese python nicknamed "Argo" led researchers to a 15-foot-long, 115-pound female python that was surrounded by six randy males—seven including the newly arrived Argo—in what's being called the largest breeding aggregation ever discovered in Collier County, near Naples in Southwest Florida.

"It was intense, it was a lot of [snake](#) in one spot," wildlife biologist Ian Bartoszek said about the reproduction session that—perhaps fittingly—was discovered around Valentine's Day.

This isn't a good thing. These snakes aren't from Florida and aren't supposed to be here, and as a result have no predators in the wild to curtail their proliferation. So they go on multiplying and eating whatever they can, clearing the Florida Everglades of birds and other native wildlife like giant, slithering vacuums.

"It's a laundry list of animals that I've found in the bellies of pythons," Bartoszek said.

Rabbits. Birds. Possums. Bobcat claws. They found a Burmese python with a full baby deer inside its stomach. The fawn was larger than the

snake, but it still got eaten. The pictures were ghastly.

Bartoszek is with the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, an organization that has been tracking and studying Florida's surging [python](#) population. The conservancy outfits male snakes with trackers, and uses those male snakes to lead them to the females, which are far more significant when it comes to population control because of the sheer number of eggs laid by the females.

Bartoszek said they respect the snakes, and he says they're beautiful and amazing creatures. But unfortunately, through no fault of their own, they've somehow ended up in the Florida Everglades as invasive apex predators, which means they sit atop the food chain, unchallenged by other animals, humans being the exception. When the snakes are located, Bartoszek said, they are humanely euthanized, often by chemical means with the assistance of a veterinarian.

"It's very much about the removal, but the research is paramount," he said. "We need to know how these animals are operating so we can more effectively remove them and control the population."

The conservancy said Argo has been an effective means of putting a dent in the invasive snake population, and is still in service, roaming the wild. The female at the center of the breeding aggregation had 60 eggs inside of her, Bartoszek said, adding that most of those would've hatched, but the science is still unclear as to how many hatchlings would be expected to survive.

A photo provided by the conservancy shows the examination of the inside of a dead female—and the dozens of eggs inside her.

It's not known for certain what triggered the exploding invasive snake population in the wild in Florida, but theories include snakes being

dumped in the Glades by pet owners who no longer wanted to care for them, to snakes going loose from illicit, rural breeding labs damaged by Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

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