

# Free the snakes: Florida scientists release America's longest snakes into the wild

June 12 2019, by Tiffini Theisen

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Scientists opened plastic storage bins to set 15 eastern indigo snakes free this month into a north Florida preserve.

The release of 10 females and five males was part of an effort to repopulate the region with the native, nonvenomous apex predator, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said Tuesday.

Eastern indigos, which have all but disappeared from north Florida thanks to development, can grow up to 8 feet long.

It's the third year in a row that snakes raised specifically for recovery of the species have been released at The Nature Conservancy's Apalachicola Bluffs and Ravines Preserve in Bristol.

The Central Florida Zoo's Orianna Center for Indigo Conservation bred and hatched the snakes, which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. All hatched in 2017 and spent their first year at the zoo before being moved to the Welaka National Fish Hatchery for another year.

All of the released snakes got passive integrated transponders at the zoo.

"The eastern indigo [snake](#) (*Drymarchon couperi*) is the longest snake native to North America and an iconic and essential component of the now rare southern longleaf pine forest," the FWC said in a statement. "It serves a critical function to balance the wildlife community—it consumes a variety of small animals including both venomous and non-[venomous snakes](#)."

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Citation: Free the snakes: Florida scientists release America's longest snakes into the wild (2019, June 12) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-06-free-snakes-florida-scientists-america.html>

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