

Florida team hauls in 18-foot, 215-pound Burmese python

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This March 2022 photo provided by the Conservancy of Southwest Florida shows biologists Ian Easterling, left, and Ian Bartoszek with a 14-foot female Burmese python captured in mangrove habitat of southwestern Florida while tracking a male scout snake. Credit: Conservancy of Southwest Florida via AP

A team of biologists recently hauled in the heaviest Burmese python ever

captured in Florida, officials said.

The female [python](#) weighed in at 215 pounds (98 kilograms), was nearly 18 feet long (5 meters) and had 122 developing eggs, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida said in a news release.

The team used [radio transmitters](#) transplanted in male "scout" snakes to study python movements, breeding behaviors and habitat use, said Ian Bartoszek, wildlife biologist and environmental science project manager for the conservancy's program.

"How do you find the needle in the haystack? You could use a magnet, and in a similar way our male scout snakes are attracted to the biggest females around," Bartoszek said.

The team used a scout snake named Dionysus—or Dion for short—in an area of the western Everglades.

"We knew he was there for a reason, and the team found him with the largest female we have seen to date."

Biologist Ian Easterling and intern Kyle Findley helped capture the female snake and haul it through the woods to the field truck.

A necropsy also found hoof cores in the snake's digest system, meaning that an adult white-tailed deer was its last meal.



This Feb. 2022 photo provided by the Conservancy of Southwest Florida shows biologist Ian Bartoszek with a 15-foot female Burmese python captured by tracking a male scout snake in Picayune Strand State Forest. Credit: Conservancy of Southwest Florida via AP

National Geographic documented the discovery, highlighting the continued impact of the invasive pythons, which are known for rapid reproduction and depletion of surrounding [native wildlife](#).

Bartoszek said removal of female pythons plays a critical role in disrupting the breeding cycle.

"This is the wildlife issue of our time for southern Florida," he said.

Since the conservancy's python program began in 2013, they've removed over 1,000 pythons from approximately 100 square miles (25,900 hectares) in southwest Florida.



This Dec. 2021 photo provided by the Conservancy of Southwest Florida shows biologists Ian Bartoszek, right, and Ian Easterling, center, with intern Kyle Findley and a 17.7-foot, 215-pound female Burmese python captured by tracking a male scout snake in Picayune Strand State Forest. Credit: Conservancy of Southwest Florida via AP

Over that stretch, necropsies have found dozens of white-tailed deer inside Burmese pythons. Data researchers at the University of Florida have documented 24 species of mammals, 47 species of birds and 2 [reptile species](#) from pythons' stomachs.

Prior to the recent discovery, the largest female removed through the conservancy's program weighed 185 pounds (84 kilograms) and was the

heaviest python captured at the time in Florida, officials said.



This Feb. 2018 photo provided by the Conservancy of Southwest Florida shows biologist Ian Easterling with a 15-foot female Burmese python captured by tracking a male scout snake in Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Naples, Fla. Credit: Conservancy of Southwest Florida via AP

The state's python removal program runs for two weeks in August. Participants compete for prizes, including \$2,500 for capturing the most pythons.

Last year's challenge involved more than 600 people from 25 states.

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