

Boa Constrictors Breeding in Miami Park



Jennifer Possley and Dallas Hazelton hold a boa constrictor found at The Deering Estate at Cutler in Miami.

“This is the third time Kristie and I have found a red-tailed boa while working in the woods together,” writes Jennifer Possley, a field biologist with Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Miami. Dallas Hazelton, also pictured, caught the large snake. Boa constrictors (*Boa constrictor*) are an introduced species, most likely pets that outgrew their owners. This boa was found at the Deering Estate off Old Cutler Road in Miami, where there is both a breeding population and an active removal program for the species.

The Deering Estate at Cutler is one of the most unique parks in south Florida. An environmental, archaeological, historical and architectural preserve, it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The 444-acre property encompasses globally endangered pine rockland habitat, as well as coastal tropical hardwood rockland hammocks, mangrove forests, salt marshes, a coastal dune island and the submerged resources of Biscayne Bay. Alície Warren-Bradley, Natural Resources Manager at the Estate says, “Since 1989 we have removed more than 60 boas from tropical hardwood hammock, pine rockland, and coastal habitats, as well as from the main grounds of the Estate. We are still trying to get a handle on population size, which may be in the hundreds.”

Boas not placed for educational use are surrendered to Dr. Kenney Krysko, Sr. Biological Scientist, Division of Herpetology at the Florida Museum of Natural History. The snakes become part of the museum’s specimen collection, although a few are kept alive to collect data on their reproduction (seasonality and number of offspring).

Dallas, a biologist with Miami-Dade County Natural Areas Management and a self-described snake wrangler, says boa constrictors usually are fairly docile and are not poisonous, but they can give a nasty bite.

For more information, contact Alície Warren-Bradley, Natural Resources Manager, Deering Estate at Cutler, Miami-Dade County Parks & Recreation Department, 305-235-1668, ext. 228; axw@miamidade.gov www.deeringestate.org or Dallas Hazelton, Natural Areas Management, Miami-Dade County Parks & Recreation Department, 305-257-0933 ext. 237, HAZELD@miamidade.gov

Dallas and Erick Revuelta prepare to capture a Burmese python in South Dade Wetlands just a couple of days after the boa constrictor was caught at Deering. This snake was very aggressive, striking at Dallas and biting his boots a couple of times before capture.

