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Geographical range

## Species of the Day: Antigua Racer

The **Antigua Racer**, *Alsophis antiguae*, is listed as 'Critically Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. Once abundant across Antigua in the Eastern Caribbean, it was decimated by mongooses, which were introduced in the late 1800s in a futile attempt to control rats in sugarcane plantations. This harmless snake was declared extinct in 1936.

In 1989, 50 individuals were found on Great Bird Island, a nine-hectare islet off the coast of Antigua. The Antigua Racer Conservation Project was launched to rescue the snake. The racers were threatened by alien rats, which attacked even adult snakes and reduced the numbers of their lizard prey. Rats were eradicated from Great Bird Island and a further 11 offshore islets so that the snakes could start to recover and be reintroduced to new sites.

Today, there are more than 300 Antigua Racers on four islets. The species remains highly vulnerable to the reinvasion of rats and other alien species, exacerbated by the numerous tourist boats which visit these islets. Local volunteers play a vital role in educating visitors and keeping the islands predator-free.

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