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JUNE 27, 2022

Record-Breaking 215-Pound Burmese Python Captured In Florida

BY KAVI DOLASIA

WORD COUNT

373 words

READING LEVEL

Original

Simplified

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 2-Minute Listen



The 215-pound Burmese python set a new weight record in Florida (Credit Conservancy of Southwest Florida)

On June 22, 2022, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida **revealed** they had captured a 215-pound (98-kilo) female Burmese python in Everglades National Park. Measuring 18 feet long (5 meters), it is the heaviest Burmese python ever caught in the state. The **previous** record-holder was a 185-pound (84-kilo) **specimen** captured in Naples, Florida, in 2021.

Further **examination** of the **euthanized** snake revealed she was carrying 122 developing eggs — the most ever found in a female python during a breeding cycle. The biologists also found **evidence** of an adult white-tailed deer inside the snake's

stomach. The deer are an important food source for the critically **endangered** Florida panthers that call the Everglades home.

"The removal of female pythons plays a **critical** role in **disrupting** the breeding cycle of these apex **predators** that are wreaking **havoc** on the Everglades **ecosystem** and taking food sources from other native **species**," said Ian Bartoszek, the Conservancy's environmental science project manager. "This is the wildlife issue of our time for southern Florida."



A 15-foot-long female Burmese python captured in February 2022 (Credit: Conservancy of Southwest Florida)

A male python called Dionysus, or Dion, who is fitted with a radio **transmitter**, led the biologists to the **massive** reptile. Male

pythons are attracted to the largest females. Hence, when Dion visited the same area in the western Everglades for several weeks, they suspected he was meeting a female. The male "scout" has also led the team to four other female Burmese pythons this year.

Native to Southeast Asia, Burmese pythons were first brought to the United States as exotic pets. The reptiles are believed to have **established** a **stronghold** in the Everglades **ecosystem** sometime after **Hurricane** Andrew struck Florida in 1992. The Category 5 storm destroyed a nearby breeding **facility**, releasing many snakes into the swamps.

The reptiles have a **tremendous** ability to reproduce and Florida officials have long given up trying to **eradicate** the **invasive** animals. Instead, they focus on curtailing their spread with various methods, including using python "scouts" like Dion and snake-sniffing dogs. The state also holds an annual "Python Challenge." The two-week-long competition invites both experts and **amateurs** to hunt down as many snakes as possible in **exchange** for prize money. In 2021, the competition helped **remove** 223 Burmese pythons from the Everglades.

Resources: conervancy.org, CNN.com, History.com

