# Black Pinesnake

*Pituophis melanoleucus lodingi*

**Upland Snake Species Profile**

Federally Threatened



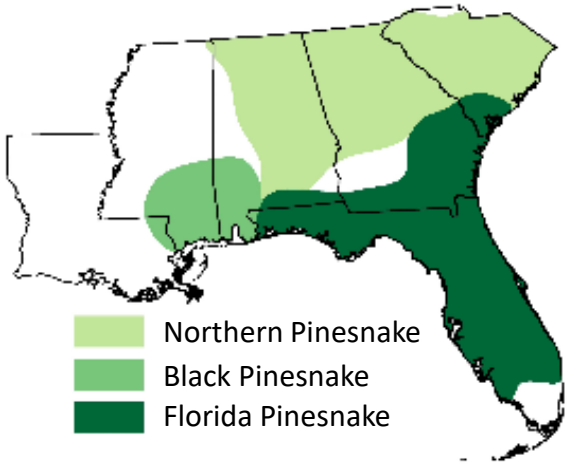
Adult Black Pinesnake



Juvenile Black Pinesnake

### Appearance and Behavior

Black Pinesnakes are typically dark brown or black with little or no pattern visible as adults. Juveniles will have some blotching and visible pattern as shown above for the first year of life, but it typically fades as they grow. Black Pinesnakes can grow to more than 5' long and have keeled scales making them appear as a dull brown or black. If threatened, these snakes will "stand up" and hiss loudly to ward off any would-be predators.




### Natural History

Black Pinesnakes are non-venomous snakes that inhabit the Longleaf Pine forest of South Alabama through Southeast Louisiana with much of their range in Southern Mississippi. They are considered extirpated (no longer occurring) in Louisiana. Black Pinesnakes, like all pinesnakes, rely on a pine forest that is regularly burned every 1-3 years. They are most often found in sandy soil forests dominated by a grassy understory. Black Pinesnakes are highly fossorial and thus spend much of their time in underground refugia such as stumpholes, mammal burrows and Gopher Tortoise burrows. They almost exclusively prey on small mammals.

GOPHER TORTOISE COUNCIL

**Upland Snake Conservation Initiative**

www.gophertortoisecouncil.org

# Black Pinesnake
*Pituophis melanoleucus lodingi*

## Fire: Prescription or Problem?

Fire is a natural and necessary component to the ecosystem function in the southeastern US. Black Pinesnakes, like many other species, rely on fire to maintain an open canopy pine forest with a grassy forest floor. Fire also helps provide snakes refugia by burning pine tree stumps and roots forming complex and deep underground structures that the snakes use to hunt and take shelter in. Fire is a fantastic conservation tool that, when used correctly, is the foundation of conservation and species recovery in the Southeastern Coastal Plain.



Longleaf Pine forest immediately after a prescribed burn





Longleaf Pine forest several months after a prescribed burn

## Conservation Struggles

The Black Pinesnake is federally threatened across its range. There are multiple reasons for decline but the largest contributor is habitat decline. Pinesnakes typically have 60-100 acre home ranges and require large areas of healthy forest to maintain a viable population. Modern issues such as human expansion and over development, roadways, and fire suppression greatly reduce the suitable habitat available to snakes. Populations become more isolated as these issues grow and make species conservation and recovery more difficult.

### How Can You Help?

Black Pinesnakes, like all snakes, face severe mortality rates on roadways. You can help snake conservation by slowing down and letting snakes cross roadways more safely. You can also advocate for prescribed burning to create and maintain healthier ecosystems. If you see a Black Pinesnake please take a photo, record its location, and report it to the relevant state agency. Every snake matters!

### For More Information

Baxley, Danna Leah, "THE BLACK PINESNAKE: SPATIAL ECOLOGY, PREY DYNAMICS, PHYLOGENETIC ASSESSMENT AND HABITAT MODELING" (2007). Dissertations. 1298.

https://msherps.com/snakes/black-pinesnake/

https://www.fws.gov/species/black-pine-snake-pituophis-melanoleucus-lodingi

Created by Bradley O'Hanlon and CJ Hillard
Photographs provided by CJ Hillard
Copyright 2026 The Gopher Tortoise Council