

FLORIDA CHAPTER  
THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

239 Bishop Drive  
Gainesville, FL 32607



28 March 1984

Mr. Dennis B. Jordan  
Jackson Endangered Species Office  
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
300 Woodrow Wilson Avenue, Suite 3185  
Jackson, Mississippi 39213

Dear Mr. Jordan:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the status of the eastern indigo snake, Drymarchon corais couperi. The Florida Chapter, TWS feels that as part of the review of the status of the eastern indigo snake, it is perhaps appropriate to reconsider some of the factors considered in listing it in 1978.

- 1) Distribution - Recent investigation has shown the indigo snake to be more widespread in Georgia (Diemer and Speake, 1983 [list of literature cited attached]) and Florida (Moler, 1984) than realized in 1978. The indigo snake is now known to occur continuously throughout Florida. While there are no recent records from Alabama or South Carolina, it should be remembered that the indigo snake occurred only marginally in those states. Mount (1975) reports only four historical records for Alabama; Martof et al. (1980) report none for South Carolina. It is doubtful that Alabama and South Carolina combined ever accounted for more than 5% of the eastern indigo snake's distribution.
- 2) Local status - In listing the eastern indigo snake in 1978, the Service acknowledged "that some populations in South Florida are doing well". Indigo snakes are common in portions of central and north Florida as well. Despite the common perception that indigo snakes are residents of drier habitats, they are in fact especially common in the more hydric habitats of the Gulf Hammock and the Withlacoochee River Valley.

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- 3) Inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms - At the time of listing, the indigo snake was protected in Georgia, Florida and Mississippi but was not legally protected in Alabama or South Carolina. It is now protected by South Carolina, as well, but is still not protected by Alabama law. Hence, removal of Federal protection would again leave Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina laws difficult to enforce via the Lacey Act, since Alabama could again be claimed as a legal source for indigo snakes actually taken illegally elsewhere.

Although burgeoning growth of the human population renders the long term future of much of Florida's wildlife uncertain, in much of peninsular Florida the indigo snake is not now threatened. Federal Threatened listing has, however, aided in largely eliminating the illegal commercial traffic in indigo snakes, and some locally depleted populations have reportedly recovered under the protection of the Endangered Species Act. The Florida Chapter, TWS recommends that Federal protection be continued, at least until such time as the indigo snake is legally protected by each state from which it has been historically reported.

Sincerely,



Nicholas R. Holler, President  
Florida Chapter, The Wildlife Society

## List of Literature Cited:

- Diemer, J. E. and D. W. Speake. 1983. The distribution of the eastern indigo snake, Drymarchon corais couperi, in Georgia. J. Herp. 17(3):256-264.
- Martof, D. S., W. M. Palmer, J. R. Bailey and J. R. Harrison III. 1980. Amphibians and reptiles of the Carolinas and Virginia. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. 264 pp.
- Moler, P. E. 1984. Distribution of the eastern indigo snake, Drymarchon corais couperi, in Florida. Manuscript.
- Mount, R. H. 1975. The reptiles and amphibians of Alabama. Agricultural Experiment Station, Auburn University, Alabama. 345 pp.