



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

**Hearing on H.R. 2811, a Bill to Amend Title 18, United States Code, to Include
Constrictor Snakes of the Species Python Genera as an Injurious Animal**

**U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security**

**Testimony of Nancy Perry
Vice President, Government Affairs
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November 6, 2009

I am Nancy Perry, vice president, Government Affairs of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Thank you, Chairman Scott and members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 2811, introduced by Rep. Meek, which would add certain nonnative constrictor snakes to the list of injurious species that cannot be imported or moved in interstate commerce for the pet trade.

On behalf of The HSUS, the nation's largest animal protection organization, and our more than 11 million supporters, and the Humane Society Legislative Fund, we support H.R. 2811 and urge that it be amended to include all nine large constrictor snake species identified as posing risk to our environment by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in a comprehensive report released last month. If only some of these species are included, just a portion of the problem will be addressed. The trade would simply shift to other species, and risks to public safety, animal welfare, and the environment would remain.

Dangerous Wild Animals in the Pet Trade

The HSUS has long advocated for legislation to restrict the trade in dangerous wild animals as pets. Wild animals kept as pets can injure and kill, and can spread disease, and the average pet owner cannot provide the sophisticated care needed to maintain these animals in a healthy condition in captivity. People often purchase wild animals while they are young and manageable, and when the animals grow too dangerous to handle they no longer want them, but there are very few options for placement. If the animals escape or are turned loose, they can put people and pets at risk, can impose costs on cash-strapped communities, and can threaten wildlife and wreak havoc on the environment.

Congress passed the Captive Wildlife Safety Act unanimously in 2003 to prohibit importation and interstate commerce in lions, tigers and other big cats for the pet trade. The House earlier this year passed by an overwhelming margin the Captive Primate Safety Act (H.R. 80), which would provide the same protections for monkeys, chimpanzees, and other primates. That bill was approved by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works in May, and is awaiting action in the full Senate. In both cases, Congress sought to proactively address entire categories of dangerous wild animals (big cats and primates) rather than introduce legislation each time there is a problem with one or two species.

Similarly, we support H.R. 2811, which will prohibit importation and interstate commerce of certain constrictor snakes for the exotic pet trade by adding them to the list of injurious species under the Lacey Act, but we believe the public policy must be crafted to address the entire category of large constrictor snakes. As it was introduced, H.R. 2811 would have addressed the trade of all species in the python genus. The House Judiciary Committee amended the bill to apply only to Burmese pythons and African rock pythons. We believe such a policy would be incomplete. Other large constrictor snakes also pose dangers, such as green anacondas, which are the world's heaviest snakes, and reticulated pythons, which are the world's longest snakes.

If only some species are restricted, the trade will shift to others, and the risks will remain. As the USGS report noted, "Should the species that currently dominate the trade become less readily available, one would expect a compensatory increase in sales and interest in the related taxa, as has been seen in response to export bans of particular species from several countries in recent decades."

Passage of H.R. 2811 would not result in confiscation of people's pets. The bill applies to interstate movement of these animals. It does not affect possession of the animals within a state. People would keep their existing pet constrictor snakes. In addition, H.R. 2811 targets the trade in these dangerous animals as exotic pets, while allowing the animals to continue to be imported and moved across state lines for zoological, educational, medical, or scientific purposes with a federal permit. This is a reasonable and moderate solution that balances private ownership of snakes with the very real and serious public safety and ecological threats posed by these creatures.

Danger to People and Pets

The danger of keeping large constrictor snakes as pets was demonstrated tragically in July 2009 when a 2-year-old Florida girl was killed by an 8-foot Burmese python kept as a pet in her home. At least four people have been killed by pet pythons since 2006; seven people have been killed since 1999.

These grim statistics include adults with experience handling reptiles. A Virginia Beach woman was killed by her 13-foot reticulated python in October 2008. She was found dead of asphyxiation, with a note to herself on a whiteboard, "Medicate Diablo." News reports say she may have been attempting to squirt medication into the snake's mouth. It reportedly took two men to drag the snake back to his enclosure. In 2006, an Indiana man told family members he was going to treat his 14-foot pet reticulated python for a medical condition. He was found dead in a shed by asphyxiation, with the python nearby. An Ohio man was strangled by his pet Burmese python in 2006. He was taken to a hospital, but it was too late to save him.

In addition to deaths, many people have been injured. According to news reports, in January 2009, a 3-year-old Nevada boy was constricted to the point of unconsciousness by an 18-foot reticulated python temporarily being kept in the family's home. As the boy began turning blue, his mother stabbed the snake with a kitchen knife to free the child, who survived.

First responders who face serious risks on a daily basis should not have to confront these deadly snakes. According to news reports, firefighters responding to a warehouse fire in Florida in 2007 found more than 100 snakes in the building, including 8-foot boa constrictors and pythons between 12- and 17-feet long. A firefighter found a large Burmese python in the basement of a New York home after a fire was doused in 2007. A California firefighter found a 6-foot anaconda alive among the debris after a fire gutted a music studio in 2006.

Constrictor snakes on the loose also have attacked and killed family pets, such as a Siamese cat who was eaten by a Burmese python roaming a Florida neighborhood in 2005 and a small dog who died of injuries after being attacked by an escaped pet python in 2006.

The Appendix to this testimony provides details of attacks, escapes, and other incidents involving constrictor snakes compiled from news reports. Many more incidents likely have occurred but gone unreported.

Risk to Public Health

Like other reptiles, constrictor snakes carry the bacteria *Salmonella*. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that reptiles and amphibians account for approximately 74,000 cases of reptile-associated salmonellosis each year -- 6 percent of U.S. *Salmonella* cases and 11 percent of cases in people under 21. The CDC recommends keeping reptiles out of homes with children under five and people with weakened immune systems, who are most susceptible.

Direct contact with a reptile is not necessary to contract *Salmonella* because the bacteria can live on surfaces. In December 2001, a 3-month-old California infant was taken to an emergency department after a day of bloody diarrhea and fever. The

child's father, a high school biology teacher, often draped a large snake (i.e., a boa) over his shoulders in the classroom. He was careful to wash his hands -- but not to change clothing -- before going home and holding his child. The snake was found to be the source of the child's *Salmonella* infection.¹

In April 2001, a woman died in Oklahoma related to a *Salmonella* infection after obtaining a transfusion of blood platelets. The platelet donor's 9-foot pet boa constrictor was identified as the likely source of the *Salmonella*. A second patient who received platelets from the man also contracted *Salmonella* but was healthier initially and lived.²

Environmental Threat

On October 13, 2009, the USGS released a comprehensive 300-page report, "Giant Constrictors: Biological and Management Profiles and an Establishment Risk Assessment for Nine Large Species of Pythons, Anacondas, and the Boa Constrictor." This peer-reviewed research quantified the ecological risk that nine species of large constrictor snakes pose to the United States, looking at both the probability that the snakes would become established and the resulting consequences.

The species studied are the Indian or Burmese python (*Python molurus*), Northern African python (*Python sebae*), Southern African python (*Python natalensis*), reticulated python (*Python [or Broghammerus] reticulatus*), boa constrictor (*Boa constrictor*), green anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*), yellow anaconda (*Eunectes notaeus*), Beni or Bolivian anaconda (*Eunectes beniensis*), and De Schauensee's anaconda (*Eunectes deschauenseei*).

The USGS concluded that overall risk was high for five of the giant constrictor snake species and medium for the other four species. Because all nine species share a large number of traits that promote invasiveness or impede population control, none of the species was found to be low risk.

For example, the species all have remarkable reproductive capacities and the ability to move large distances quickly. These traits make limiting their spread very difficult. The snakes also blend well into their surroundings, hindering efforts to find and remove them. Moreover, according to the USGS report, no current control tools seem adequate to eradicate an established population of giant snakes that has spread over a large area.

¹ "Reptile-Associated Salmonellosis --- Selected States, 1998—2002," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, December 12, 2003 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5249a3.htm>

² Mehrdad Jafari, M.D., Ph.D., et al., "Salmonella Sepsis Caused by a Platelet Transfusion from a Donor with a Pet Snake," *The New England Journal of Medicine*, October 3, 2002 <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/347/14/1075>

Removal efforts should occur when a population is limited to a local area less than a few acres, but USGS says the snakes are rarely detected until they have spread more widely.

Two of the species studied are confirmed to be already established and breeding in the United States -- Burmese pythons and boa constrictors. From a relatively small number of animals released or escaped from the pet trade, Burmese pythons are now distributed across thousands of square miles of south Florida, probably numbering in the tens of thousands. The well-known photograph of a Burmese python who tried to swallow an alligator in the Florida Everglades illustrates the magnitude of the potential impact. If Burmese pythons can challenge alligators for top predator status, they can upset the balance of the ecosystem.

Burmese pythons will eat a wide variety of reptiles, birds, and mammals of all sizes, and can deplete vulnerable species. According to the USGS report, "A very large number of imperiled species are at risk from giant constrictors in the State of Florida." The report lists several species of special concern that have been eaten by Burmese pythons in Florida including the endangered Key Largo woodrat, round-tail muskrat, limpkin, and white ibis.

According to the USGS, large areas of the United States have a climate that appears suitable for survival of Burmese pythons, including most of California, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South and North Carolina. With global warming, the potential range for these snakes is expected to move northward.

Boa constrictors also are already established in Florida, but over a much smaller area. With proactive measures to stop the influx of these snakes and remove existing animals, it may be possible to halt their spread. According to the USGS, "extant technology would not appear to be capable of eradicating any of the giant constrictors from south Florida unless the colonization were caught very early, perhaps around the present range of the Boa Constrictor population now in Miami (several hundred hectares or less)."

The USGS report sites evidence strongly suggesting that a third species, northern African pythons, has established a reproducing population along the western edge of Miami. Individual animals of other species also have been found in the wild, raising concerns that they, too, could become established. The USGS notes that a green anaconda was found dead near Florida's Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park in 2004, and two adults and a juvenile were observed in the area. Yellow anacondas, a smaller species that can still grow to 10-feet long, have been found in or near Florida's Big Cypress National Preserve. A wildlife official reported seeing a yellow anaconda approximately 6-feet long in Arkansas's Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge in 2005.

Another characteristic that creates risk is the ability of the snakes to serve as hosts for parasites and disease. As the USGS report notes, snakes taken from the wild and

imported often carry exotic parasites or pathogens that may transfer to other captive snakes during transport, sales, and pet ownership, or to native snakes or livestock if the animal escapes or is released. For example, snake ticks originating in Africa may carry heartwater, which is potentially devastating to cows, deer and other ruminants, and ticks from Asia can carry capillariasis, a disease of human health significance. Wild-caught anacondas imported to Europe are reported to be riddled with parasites, as noted by USGS.

Environmental risk assessment, by its nature, is not an exact science. The USGS report says the certainty is greatest for Burmese pythons and boa constrictors because they are unequivocally reproducing in the United States. Because of the potential danger large constrictor snakes pose to people and our ecosystems and the extreme cost and difficulty of removing these animals once they get established, it is important to err on the side of caution. The USGS report leaves no doubt that action is needed now to prevent the spread of Burmese pythons and boa constrictors to new areas and to prevent the introduction of other species.

Risk to Animal Welfare

Though often marketed as low maintenance pets, reptiles have complex needs that are difficult for the average pet owner to meet in captivity. Their requirements for light and temperature frequently are not met, and heating elements that can harm them are often used. Constrictor snakes can grow very large very quickly, resulting in enclosures that are inadequate for their size and to prevent their escape.

Constrictor snakes may suffer from starvation, dehydration, and other symptoms of neglect when owners cannot provide proper care. Underfed snakes may pose particular risks to people. By one account, the snake who killed the Florida toddler was about half the appropriate weight. The USGS report notes that the snake who killed the Ohio man in 2006 also was underweight.

Constrictor snakes have been found kept in deplorable conditions by both dealers who move large numbers of the animals and by individuals keeping them as pets. For instance, a Florida woman was arrested for animal cruelty in 2008 after authorities reportedly found animals in substandard conditions including a Burmese python kept in a small dog crate full of feces and shedded snake skins.

Officials investigating a report of an alligator in a Connecticut apartment in 2006 also found 36 snakes including boa constrictors, pythons, and an anaconda. The tenant had been evicted the previous day. The animals were left in extremely dirty and unhealthy conditions, with no food or water.

A Maryland man was charged with animal cruelty following an investigation of conditions at a reptile wholesale business in a warehouse in 2003. Boa constrictors were among the animals being housed in the facility; 199 animals were found dead.

A Pennsylvania man was charged with cruelty after admitting he turned loose his 10-foot Burmese python and 9-foot reticulated python in July 2009. When the snakes were found -- one along a road and the other along a creek behind a home in the same area -- they were severely malnourished. The person who took the snakes reportedly said it probably took years for them to deteriorate to that condition.

Once species are established, methods used to remove animals may be inhumane. Preventing the animals from becoming established in the first place is only failsafe humane approach.

Comprehensive Legislation Is Needed

H.R. 2811 is an important step to address the trade in dangerous large constrictor snakes as pets. But if only Burmese pythons and African rock pythons are included, the trade will shift to other species. All one needs to do is a Google search for "anacondas for sale," "boa constrictors for sale," or "reticulated pythons for sale," and their ready availability for sale across state lines to untrained individuals is apparent.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Had Burmese pythons been listed as injurious 20 years ago, the colonization of the Everglades National Park could have been avoided, along with tremendous ecological and financial costs. If Congress does not take comprehensive action now, it will have failed just as policymakers failed to prevent the invasion of Burmese pythons 20 years ago.

The Humane Society of the United States urges passage of H.R. 2811 with an amendment to include the nine species identified by the USGS as posing risk to our environment. We appreciate and celebrate snakes, but nonnative large constrictor snakes belong in their natural habitats and range countries around the globe, not in America's wilderness and private homes, harming our natural resources and putting people at risk.

We applaud the Subcommittee's interest in addressing the trade in these dangerous constrictor snakes as pets and look forward to working with you to pass comprehensive legislation to protect public safety, animal welfare, and the environment.

Appendix

Incidents Demonstrate Risks to Public Health and Safety, Animal Welfare, and the Environment

October 2009 (California): A 7-foot boa constrictor on the loose went under a car and was found wrapped around the car's engine compartment. The snake was reportedly one of three snakes someone left in a box on a corner in Compton. Another one was taken by a neighbor, and the third one was dead. Source: Fox 43

October 2009 (Massachusetts): A 5-foot boa constrictor was caught in a makeshift trap in the attic of a six-family dwelling in Fall River. It was unclear where the snake came from. The snake was thought to be sick with an upper respiratory infection and about 10 pounds underweight. Source: *The Boston Globe*

October 2009 (North Carolina): Two brothers found an injured 7-foot boa constrictor in a driveway. Source: Star News Online

October 2009 (Florida): A mother and daughter found an 8 or 9-foot Burmese python in their residential neighborhood in Vero Beach, the second nonnative snake caught in Vero Beach this year. Source: 12 News

October 2009 (Florida): Authorities found an 11-foot Burmese python crawling uncaged in a Crestview man's home. Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

October 2009 (Florida): Charges were filed against a Wewahitchka man after his 11-foot Burmese python escaped and was killed in a neighbor's chicken coop. The man had no cage for the snake, who crawled freely about his Wewahitchka apartment. Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

September 2009 (Florida): A 10-foot boa constrictor was on the loose in Hillsborough County. Wildlife officials say they are not going after the snake because so many people have dumped pet snakes, and they don't have the resources to go after them all. Source: Fox Tampa Bay

September 2009 (Florida): Authorities were alerted to an 18-foot Burmese python at an Apopka home. The snake reportedly weighed 400 pounds and was 30 inches around. Source: WBIR.com

September 2009 (Florida): Authorities removed two large Burmese pythons from a Lakeland home, an 11-foot male and a 17-foot female who weighed more than 150 pounds. Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

September 2009 (Florida): A 7-foot reticulated python was found near a state park. Source: *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*

September 2009 (Florida): An 8-foot python was found along a roadside in Placer County. Source: KTVU.com

September 2009 (New York): A 10-foot Burmese python was on the loose in Elmira Heights. This was the second time one of the owner's pythons escaped into the neighborhood. Source: WETMtv.com

September 2009 (Arkansas): An 11-foot Burmese python escaped from an enclosure in a garage, was found in a neighbor's yard, and was recaptured. Source: *The Morning News*

September 2009 (Florida): A dead 10-foot python was found in the water at the Largo Nature Preserve. Source: *Largo Leader*

August 2009 (California): A boa constrictor between 6 and 8 feet long was found on a road in Escondido. Source: *North County Times*

August 2009 (New York): A 4-foot boa constrictor was found in a in a Manhattan laundromat. Source: NY1

August 2009 (Florida): A 5-foot boa constrictor was found on a Daytona Beach road. Source: News Journal Online

August 2009 (California): An 11-foot Burmese python escaped from a Riverside County home and was found in a neighbor's yard. Source: *The Press Enterprise*

August 2009 (Missouri): A 9-foot Burmese python was spotted at a park and captured a few days later. Source: *St. Joe News*

August 2009 (Oregon): A 10-foot python was found on a road. Source: KVAL News

August 2009 (Utah): An 8-foot Burmese python was found outside a woman's home. Source: *Deseret News* (Associated Press)

July 2009 (Florida): A 2-year-old girl was killed by an 8-foot Burmese python who escaped from an enclosure in her home. Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

July 2009 (Florida): A 17-foot Burmese python was found on the grounds of a veterinary hospital. The snake was spotted by the 11-year-old nephew of the hospital owner. Source: *Miami Herald*

July 2009 (Indiana): A 5-foot-long red-tail boa constrictor escaped and was missing. Source: *The Republic*

July 2009 (Illinois): An 8-foot boa constrictor was caught after escaping and being on the loose for a few weeks. The snake was a few houses away. Source: *Connect Tristates*

July 2009 (Florida): A large boa constrictor was found hiding in the gutter of a vacant Pasco home. Source: FOX Tampa Bay

July 2009 (Florida): Two Burmese pythons, one 8 feet, one 9.5 feet, were captured after escaping from a home. Source: *The Ledger*

July 2009 (Florida): A 12-foot plus Burmese python was found loose around a neighborhood of town homes. Source: *Orlando Sentinel*

July 2009 (Pennsylvania): A 10-foot albino Burmese python and 9-foot reticulated python were found. Both snakes were malnourished. The owner reportedly admitted to releasing the snakes because he could no longer afford to care for them. Source: *Lebanon Daily News*

July 2009 (Maryland): A 3-foot Burmese python escaped from a home. Source: *The Gazette*

July 2009 (Arizona): A Yuma family found a 6-foot long python on their front porch. Source: *The Arizona Republic*

May 2009 (Florida): A Punta Gorda police officer removed an injured 4.5-foot python from an intersection. The snake suffered from a broken jaw and died soon afterward. Source: NBC2 News

May 2009 (Florida): An investigation into the escape of a 10-foot Burmese python in Pinellas Park determined the snake had escaped almost two months earlier. Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Division of Law Enforcement Field Operations Weekly Report

May 2009 (Maine): A 2-foot boa constrictor escaped from a cage in a high school. He hid in an old computer printer, and was not discovered until the school gave the printer to a student to take home and dismantle. Source: WHNT 19News (AP)

February 2009 (Wisconsin): Two Burmese pythons were turned over to a shelter after the owners were arrested on drug-related charges. Source: *Beloit Daily News*

January 2009 (Nevada): A 3-year-old boy was bitten and squeezed to the point of unconsciousness by an 18-foot python. His mother stabbed the snake with a kitchen

knife and freed the child. The snake had been in the home for four to six weeks. Source: kvbc.com and *Las Vegas Review-Journal*

January 2009 (New York): A 7-foot reticulated python escaped from an enclosure, and authorities were called to capture and remove the snake. Source: *New York Daily News*

January 2009 (New York): A Burmese python was found in a field in Brooklyn. The cold weather had taken a toll on the animal who had lost an eye and developed an infection, causing some teeth to fall out. Source: *York Daily Record*

December 2008 (Ohio): A man called animal control when his 6-foot boa constrictor became aggressive during a nighttime feeding. Authorities helped find the snake a new home. Source: WLWT

November 2008 (Florida): Investigators captured three Burmese pythons, ranging from 9 to 11 feet, within a 50-yard span of an area known as the 8.5 Square Mile in Miami-Dade County. Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Law Enforcement Field Operations Weekly Report.

November 2008 (Florida): A woman nearly tripped over a 10-foot boa constrictor in Punta Gorda. Source: nbc-2.com

October 2008 (Virginia): A woman was found dead by asphyxiation, and her 13-foot pet reticulated python, who she was apparently medicating, was found outside his enclosure. Source: *The Virginian-Pilot*

October 2008 (Colorado): A woman was attacked by her 6-foot albino Burmese python. The animal was sprayed with a fire extinguisher to get him to let go of her finger and then according to the woman it took five paramedics to hold the snake down. Source: KRDO.com

October 2008 (Florida): A 12-foot 100-pound Burmese python was found crossing a road in Jupiter Farms. The snake appeared to be injured and may have been hit by a car. Source: South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

September 2008 (Oklahoma): A woman found a 4-foot boa constrictor in her motor home. Source: *The McAlester News-Capital*

September 2008 (Florida): A Myakka City homeowner found a 10-foot albino Burmese python in her driveway. Source: *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*

August 2008 (Nevada): A 13-year-old girl was visiting her father and was attacked by a pet Burmese python; her father killed the approximately 15-foot snake to rescue her. The snake reportedly escaped from a large tank with locks. The same

day, a student zookeeper in Venezuela was crushed to death by a Burmese python. Source: KVBC

August 2008 (Michigan): A state trooper shot and killed a nearly 7-foot long snake, believed to be a Burmese python, seen on a Port Sheldon Township road. Source: *The Grand Rapids Press*

July 2008 (Maine): A man discovered an 8- to 9-foot reticulated python under the engine compartment of his pickup truck in Wilton. It was the second such incident in Maine in less than a week. A Gorham woman found a reticulated python in a washing machine on Wednesday. The snake had injuries on its upper jaw from being dragged. Source: *Sun Journal*

June 2008 (Florida): A woman found a 7-foot Burmese python in her Key Largo yard. She and a friend killed the snake. Source: *The Reporter*

June 2008 (Illinois): A woman found a 4-foot albino Burmese python in a Starbucks parking lot in Rockford. Source: rrstar.com

June 2008 (New York): A 14-foot 80-pound Burmese python was found after more than two days on the loose in the Jordan-Elbridge area. He had been at a reptile rescue center and the owner believed someone cut the bungee cords on his cage, letting him get out. Source: news10now.com

May 2008 (North Carolina): A 4-foot python was found loose in a restaurant. Source: WECT TV6

May 2008 (Florida): Firefighters battling fires in the Everglades encountered pythons, boa constrictors, and other exotic animals. Source: National Geographic News

April 2008 (Oregon): A pet store owner reached into a cage to show a customer a 12-foot Burmese python when the snake bit her hand and coiled around her arm, throwing her to the floor. It took several emergency responders to unwrap the snake. Source: MSNBC (Associated Press)

April 2008 (Florida): Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior Lynn Scarlett found an 8- to 9-foot Burmese python while hiking in the Everglades. Source: People, Land & Water, U.S. Department of the Interior

April 2008 (Connecticut): A 6-foot python escaped from a home and was found two days later curled up in the yard. Source: *The News-Times*

April 2008 (Florida): A Burmese python about 8-feet long was found in the rafters of a Marco Island Executive Airport hangar. Source: *Naples Daily News*

April 2008 (Illinois): A red-tail boa was among the animals who escaped when a car crashed into a home and broke open their tanks. Most of the animals were recaptured. Source: *Belleville News-Democrat*

March 2008 (Kentucky): Authorities seized a boa constrictor and python, along with venomous snakes and other reptiles, from a man's home. At the time of the seizure, the owner of the animals was in the hospital having two fingers amputated because of a snake bite. Source: LEX 18 News

March 2008 (California): A woman pleaded guilty to animal cruelty. A nearly 15-foot Burmese python was one of more than 200 animals found in her home, many of them malnourished and in need of veterinary care. Source: *The Sacramento Bee*

February 2008 (Florida): A 4-foot python was found beneath a water heater in a newly rented home. Source: *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*

February 2008 (Florida): A 13-foot python was seen in a Wal-Mart parking lot. A rescue worker found the animal in a culvert more than two weeks later. Source: *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*

February 2008 (Florida): A woman was arrested for animal cruelty after authorities found a Burmese python and other animals living in deplorable conditions in her home. The snake was kept in a small dog crate that was full of feces and shedded snake skins. Source: *St. Petersburg Times*

January 2008 (Montana): A man was driving with a 5-foot long Burmese python when the animal crawled out of a pillow case and into the van's duct system. Auto mechanics retrieved the snake. Source: *Great Falls Tribune*

December 2007 (Ohio): A 7-foot African rock python was found in the Metzger Marsh State Wildlife Area. The animal was alive though it was 37 degrees and sleeting. Source: *The Toledo Blade*

December 2007 (Florida): A man mowing the lawn for the county ran over and killed a 16-foot python. An animal control officer said the snake was among the largest of the 20 large pythons or boas he has found in the past decade in Indian River County, comparable in size to one found two years before. Source: tcpalm.com

October 2007 (Florida): A Summerland Key resident was cited for allowing the escape of captive wildlife and inadequate cage size for a reptile. The incident began after citizens saw a 14-foot python in the bushes along a public parking lot. The owners of the snake – who used the animal for photos with tourists – said the snake had escaped two days before. Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Field Operations Weekly Report

September 2007 (Florida): His barking dog alerted a man to the presence of an 11-foot Colombian red tail boa constrictor in a park. Source: local10.com

September 2007 (Florida): An animal control officer was bitten twice by a 5-foot boa constrictor, on the back of the hand and on the finger. The snake was being removed from underneath a woman's car, where he had wrapped himself around coil springs in the wheel well. Source: abc3340.com

September 2007 (Florida): Firefighters responding to a Delray Beach warehouse found more than 100 snakes in the building, including 8-foot boa constrictors and pythons between 12- and 17-feet long. Several small snakes were killed in the fire. The owner says he sells the animals to retailers. Source: firstcoastnews.com

September 2007 (Florida): Officials removed a python from beneath the deck of a private residence in Collier County. Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Field Operations Weekly Report

August 2007 (Ohio): A man brought a 10-foot python to a festival. The snake was killed by a boy who stomped on the animal's head. Source: 13abc.com

August 2007 (Florida): Two large snakes were captured in Lee County: a 10-foot Burmese Python found by two maintenance workers at an apartment complex and a boa constrictor longer than 6 feet who was spotted in the middle of an intersection. Source: *Naples Daily News*

July 2007 (Florida): A reticulated python approximately 15-feet long was found in a yard in a residential community. Source: WFTV.com

July 2007 (New York): Two Burmese pythons were found on the loose in Albany. An 8-foot snake had escaped from a second-floor pen and was claimed by the owner. No one had claimed the 4-foot snake. Source: *The Times Union*

July 2007 (Rhode Island): A man took a 6-foot boa constrictor to the police, claiming he found the snake along the road. The police discovered the snake belonged to the man, and he had tried to sell the animal to a pet store the day before. Though the store declined to buy the boa, the man purchased a small python even though he could no longer care for the larger snake. Source: The Providence Journal's Daily News Blog

June 2007 (Pennsylvania): Officials caught a 9 1/2-foot Burmese python, but a second large snake remained on the loose. That snake was thought to have killed a cat, a bird, and several kittens. Source: Courier Times

May 2007 (New York): A firefighter found a large Burmese python in the basement of a home after a fire was doused. Source: *The New York Times*

April 2007 (Florida): A 7.5 foot Burmese python was captured on Key Largo. The animal was found by researchers tracking a Key Largo wood rat -- an endangered species -- fitted with a radio transmitter collar. The remains of two wood rats along with the radio transmitter were found inside the python. Source: keynoter.com

April 2007 (Florida): A 3-year-old boy was bitten in the face by a 6-foot boa constrictor when posing with the snake for a photograph at a theme park, and was taken to a hospital for treatment. Source: CBS4

March 2007 (Alaska/Alabama): An Alaska woman took in an 8-foot Burmese python around 2002 after a landlord found the animal without food in an empty apartment, two weeks after the previous resident was evicted. The snake grew to 16 feet, outgrowing the home. The snake was shipped to an Alabama zoo, but during transport she spent many hours in cold temperatures in a small crate. The snake died four weeks later. Source: *Anchorage Daily News* and KTUU.com

December 2006 (Ohio): A man died at the hospital after being strangled by his pet python. Source: United Press International

December 2006 (Florida): A 14-foot, 14-year-old Burmese python being exhibited at an aquarium wrapped around the handler's arm and waist and bit her. A police taser was needed to get the snake to let go. The woman was treated at the hospital for wounds to her hands. Previously a man was bitten when feeding the snake. Source: *St. Petersburg Times*

September 2006 (Indiana): A 23-year-old man with experience handling reptiles was killed by his 14-foot reticulated python. A medical examiner determined that the death was consistent with asphyxiation caused by compression of the neck and chest. Source: MSNBC and *The Corydon Democrat*

September 2006 (Montana): A man trying to enter Canada with five snakes turned them over to U.S. authorities rather than obtain the proper permits to export them. Two red-tail boa constrictors were among the animals who were dehydrated and had mites. Source: *Great Falls Tribune*

August 2006 (Michigan): A woman reported her 6- to 7-foot boa constrictor missing. Source: *The Macomb Daily*

August 2006 (Florida): A 9-foot Burmese python was found near the Tallahassee airport. After police initially captured and put the snake in a bag, the animal escaped from the back seat of the patrol car and had to be recaptured. Source: KHOU-TV Animal Attraction Blog

July 2006 (Michigan): Two boa constrictors were on the loose in a matter of days. Source: WJRT-TV

June 2006 (Connecticut): Officials investigating a report of an alligator in an apartment also found 36 snakes including boas, pythons and an anaconda. The tenant had been evicted the previous day. There were two dead lizards and the remaining reptiles were left in extremely dirty and unhealthy conditions, with no food or water. Source: 2006 Annual Report, State of Connecticut, Department of Environmental Protection, Division of State Environmental Conservation Police

June 2006 (Utah): A couple returned surprised to find a former roommate's pet 7-foot red-tailed boa possibly preparing to attack their pet cat. Source: KSL TV

April 2006 (California): A firefighter found a 6-foot anaconda alive among the debris after a fire gutted a music studio. The owner of the studio and snake was arrested on suspicion of setting the fire. Source: *Orange County Register*

March 2006 (Florida): A man driving with his pet snake wrapped around his neck crashed his car into roadwork barricades after the snake began biting him. According to reports, when police first encountered the man, he had numerous small cuts on his body, and freshly dried blood on his forehead and right hand. Source: *Naples Daily News*

March 2006 (Colorado): An evicted renter abandoned a 7-foot constrictor snake in an apartment. Source: *Glenwood Springs Post Independent*

February 2006 (Florida): A man walking his dog – an 8-pound rat terrier – let the dog off his leash. A neighbor's pet python had gotten free and grabbed the dog by the head, wrapping around him. The man used a golf club to get the snake to release the dog, but the dog ran away and was found dead the next day with injuries consistent with constriction. Source: orlandosentinel.com (AP)

February 2006 (Idaho): After being missing for two weeks, a Burmese python was found in the bathroom ceiling of the apartment below the one she from which she escaped, apparently through a hole in the wall. Source: [Foxnews.com](http://foxnews.com) (AP)

December 2005 (Hawaii): A 4-foot boa constrictor was found in the laundry area of a home. The home was undergoing renovation and the door may have been left open during construction. Source: Hawaii Department of Agriculture

November 2005 (Georgia): A woman found a 7-foot Burmese python in a pillowcase in her backyard. Source: The Associated Press

October 2005 (Florida): A woman looking for her pet Siamese cat instead found a bulging Burmese python in her backyard. X-rays showed that the snake had eaten the cat. Source: NBC6.net

October 2005 (Florida): A 10-foot African rock python was found after crawling into a turkey pen and eating a turkey. The bulging snake was too large to fit back through the fence. Source: NBC6.net

September 2005 (Delaware): An 8-foot boa and three 4- to 6-foot boas were abandoned at an apartment complex after a tenant's eviction. The local animal shelter was helping place those snakes, plus a fifth one about 5-feet long who was seized the same week from a man walking in the street with the snake around his neck. Source: *The News Journal*

September 2005 (Florida): Captured in a now-famous photograph, the body of a Burmese python who tried to swallow an alligator was found in the Everglades. Exactly what happened may remain a mystery, but with the Burmese python as a new top predator in the Everglades, each of the snake's potential prey species could be at risk. Source: *St. Petersburg Times*

August 2005 (Missouri): A UPS driver found a 9-foot Burmese python among packages in his truck. The teenager who ordered the snake instead received an empty box. The python was shipped in a plastic container that was taped shut and placed inside the box. The tape was intact but the container was cracked and the cardboard box had tears in it. Source: First Coast News (AP)

July 2005 (California): A 15-foot Burmese python was discovered in a Sacramento warehouse. The animal belonged to a man who worked down the street. He had unknowingly poked a hole in the cage with a forklift. This was the snake's third escape. Source: *The Sacramento Bee*

July 2005 (Pennsylvania): The owners of a 9-foot Burmese python turned the snake over to authorities. The animal was reportedly underfed and living in a cage that was too small. Source: *The Intelligencer Journal*

June 2005 (Arkansas): Wildlife officials say there have been two sightings of yellow anacondas in the Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge, one by a person fishing in 2004 and a recent sighting by a wildlife official. Source: KAIT8.com

June 2005 (Florida): Police responded twice in a month to reports of snakes roaming a neighborhood. A 13-foot Burmese python was recaptured, then got loose and was recaptured again. An 8-foot python (and five monitor lizards) remained at large. Source: News4Jax.com

February 2005 (Florida): A giant python was found sprawled across a busy street in Englewood. Source: *Venice Gondolier-Sun*

November 2004 (Connecticut): A New Haven couple reported their 15-foot python was missing. Authorities responding did not find the python, but did find other animals the couple had illegally including an Argentinean boa. Source: WTNH

September 2004 (Michigan): A 6-foot boa constrictor escaped from a home. Source: cm-life.com

September 2004 (Mississippi): A 17-foot Burmese python missing for four days was lured out of hiding with a rabbit. The snake had escaped from the bathroom where she was being kept when the door was left open, and taken refuge underneath insulation in the attic of the apartment building. Source: *The Sun Herald*

August 2004 (Florida): A green anaconda was collected from Big Cypress Swamp in Collier County. Source: U.S. Geological Survey Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Database

August 2004 (Texas): Authorities searched for weeks for a large snake who was reported missing. A 7-foot python believed to be a different animal was caught the previous week at a landscaping company. The curator of the Houston Zoo's herpetology department said his department receives dozens of calls each week from people looking to turn over a snake to the zoo -- 15 to 20 calls per week just on boas. Source: *Brenham Banner-Press* and The Associated Press

July 2004 (Florida): A 16-foot-long Burmese python was captured on a city street. An animal control officer said he had picked up dozens of loose Burmese pythons and boa constrictors over the years, but this was the largest. Source: cbsnews.com

June 2004 (Kansas): A teenager was showing off the family's 15-foot pet python when the animal coiled around his arm and began to squeeze, turning the boy's arm blue. The snake bit the teen and his mother, and they called 911. Emergency crews used a fire extinguisher to get the snake to loosen his grip. Source: News4jax.com

February 2004 (Florida): A 14-foot reticulated python escaped. Source: Local6.com

October 2003 (New Jersey): Pythons, boa constrictors, and an anaconda were among the 180 reptiles authorities took into custody when their caretaker had not been seen for a week. The man was in the hospital being treated for a venomous snake bite. Source: *The Star-Ledger*

September 2003 (Virginia): A Burmese python about 12-feet long was found after being on the loose for more than three weeks. The snake had pushed open a window to escape. Source: *The Virginian-Pilot*

September 2003 (Florida): A teenager took his 9.5 foot Burmese python into the backyard and the animal disappeared. He found the snake 20 hours later in the neighborhood. Source: *The News-Press*

September 2003 (Florida): A couple walking their dogs spotted a boa constrictor. They called rescue workers who picked up the animal. Source: *St. Petersburg Times*

August 2003 (Illinois): A man was doing plumbing work at home when he heard that a snake had gotten loose in the area. Two days later, after driving many miles, he found the 6-foot boa constrictor under the hood of his van. Source: *Chicago Daily Herald*

August 2003 (Washington): A man found an escaped 7-foot python passing through his yard. The week before, a park ranger found a similar-size python in a lake. The local animal shelter generally takes in about 10 loose snakes a year. Source: *The Seattle-Post Intelligencer*

August 2003 (Arizona): Authorities took a 12-foot Burmese python from a yard. The mobile homes on the property seemed to be vacant, and the animal appeared to be abandoned. Source: The Associated Press

August 2003 (Florida): A 12-foot Burmese python escaped from a Florida home and was on the loose. Source: United Press International

July 2003 (Connecticut): A 3-foot boa constrictor was found outside a condominium complex. Source: *Connecticut Post*

July 2003 (Florida): A man reported his 12-foot Burmese python was missing and had not eaten for a week. A neighbor found the snake the next day. The python had a bulge in his stomach but it was unclear what he had eaten. Source: *The Bradenton Herald*

July 2003 (Rhode Island): A 14-foot Burmese python escaped from his tank and through a window screen. Source: The Associated Press

June 2003 (Florida): A 13-foot Burmese python escaped from a home. The mother of the snake's owner found the snake in the yard wrapped around her 3-year-old Mountain Feist dog. She was able to free the dog, but the snake then wrapped around her leg. Rescue workers freed her and returned the snake to his cage. Source: *Florida Today*

June 2003 (Maryland): A man was charged with animal cruelty following an investigation of conditions at a reptile wholesale business in a warehouse. Boa

constrictors were among the animals being housed in the facility; 199 animals were found dead. Source: *Washington Post*

June 2003 (Florida): More than 100 snakes were stolen from a breeder, including 10 boa constrictors. Other snakes were left crawling loose in a room, including one who was found crawling out a broken screen. Source: *Tampa Tribune*

June 2003 (Illinois): Officers found an 8-foot reticulated python on a bike trail in Blackwell Forest Preserve; previously a 5-foot boa was found. Source: Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Law Enforcement

May 2003 (California): Authorities removed a red-tailed boa constrictor from a home, along with 100 to 200 mice, about three dozen rats, and a cat. They found debris piled in the house, which smelled of animal waste. Source: *San Jose Mercury News*

October 2002 (California): A 6-foot boa constrictor was spotted on a fence and on the loose until being captured a day later. Source: City News Service

September 2002 (New Jersey): A 7-foot boa constrictor was found in a roadway. Source: *The Star-Ledger*

September 2002 (Ohio): A 10-foot Burmese python escaped and was on the loose about three weeks. The snake was found in a vacant home being renovated, with a telltale bulge in its middle. X-rays showed the snake had eaten a small canine, possibly a fox or stray dog. Source: The Associated Press

September 2002 (Tennessee): A Burmese python about 8- to 10-feet long escaped – for the second time. The first time the snake was at large for about a month. Source: *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

July 2002 (Texas): A landlord in southwest Houston found reptiles including three Burmese pythons in a house he owns. The reptiles were in cages and had been abandoned for at least two months. None of the cages had water and the animals were dehydrated. Source: KSBW.com

July 2002 (Maine): A sheriff's deputy investigating an abandoned SUV was startled to discover a 5-foot-long boa constrictor in the back seat and another snake coiled in a terrarium. Source: *Portland Press Herald*

July 2002 (Louisiana): A 12-foot Burmese python escaped and was recaptured a week later. Source: *Times-Picayune*

June 2002 (North Carolina): A 12-foot pregnant Burmese python escaped and was on the loose for two days. Source: *News & Record* (Greensboro)

May 2002 (Florida): Six snakes ranging in length from 9 to 20 feet escaped from a woman's apartment. Two were found curled up in a friend's apartment, but authorities were looking for four large Burmese pythons. Source: *Florida Today*

April 2002 (Florida): An 18-foot Burmese python who had been living for at least a year near a service plaza on Florida's Turnpike was captured. A state crew mowing the grass in the area had reported seeing the animal a year before, and there had been several sightings since. Source: *Orlando Sentinel*

February 2002 (Colorado): A man had his pet Burmese python wrapped loosely around his neck when the snake suddenly constricted. By the time rescue workers wrestled the animal off the man, it was too late and he later died. Source: *Rocky Mountain News*

December 2001 (California): A 3-month-old infant was taken to an emergency department after a day of bloody diarrhea and fever caused by *Salmonella*. The infant's father was a high school biology teacher who often draped a large snake (i.e., a boa) over his shoulders in the classroom. He would wash his hands -- but not change his clothing -- before going home and holding his child. The snake was found to be the source of the child's *Salmonella*. Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

April 2001 (Oklahoma): A woman died from septic shock related to a *Salmonella* infection after obtaining a transfusion of blood platelets. The platelet donor's 9-foot pet boa constrictor was identified as the likely source of the *Salmonella*. The type of *Salmonella* found in a stool sample from the snake matched that found in the platelets. The man exhibited no symptoms at the time of his donation, but had been ill two weeks before and taken antibiotics. A second patient who received platelets from the man also contracted *Salmonella* but was healthier to begin with and lived. Source: *The New England Journal of Medicine*

August 2001 (Pennsylvania): An 8-year-old girl was strangled by her father's pet Burmese python. The child had been left home alone, and the snake broke through the top of the cage. Paramedics said she was not breathing when they arrived; she was taken to a hospital and placed on a ventilator until she was pronounced brain dead two days later. An autopsy showed the cause of death was compression of her neck and chest. Source: *The Augusta Chronicle* (Scripps) and *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

August 1999 (Illinois): A couple's 7.5-foot African rock python escaped from an enclosure and killed their 3-year-old son. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

October 1996 (New York): A 13-foot python, kept as a pet by two teen-age brothers who hoped to have careers caring for reptiles, killed one of the brothers, possibly

mistaking him for food. The 19-year-old was found by a neighbor with the snake coiled around his midriff and back. Source: *The New York Times*

1993 (Colorado): A 15-year-old was killed by his brother's 11-foot pet python. He had snake bites on his body, and an autopsy found he was suffocated. The 8-year-old snake had been a family pet since she was only a foot long. Source: The Associated Press

1984 (Iowa): An 11-month-old boy was killed by his father's 10-foot pet python who escaped from an enclosure. Source: *Fort Madison Daily Democrat* and *The Loss of Innocents* by Cara Elizabeth Richards

1983 (Missouri): A man was crushed to death by his 16-foot pet Burmese python. Source: The Associated Press

August 1982 (Nevada): An 8-foot python escaped from his cage, crawled into an adjoining bedroom, and killed a 21-month old boy in his crib. The snake belonged to an unrelated man who lived in the house. Source: United Press International

November 1980 (Texas): A 7-month-old girl was killed by her father's 8-foot pet reticulated python. The child died of asphyxiation and her head was covered with dozens of needle-like tooth marks. The snake had forced his way out of a covered 30-gallon aquarium and crawled into the baby's crib. Source: The Associated Press