



## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Initiates Status Review of the Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently announced a 90-day finding on a petition to list the eastern diamondback rattlesnake as threatened and designate critical habitat for the species under the Endangered Species Act.

This finding stems from a petition submitted last summer by the Center for Biological Diversity, the Coastal Plains Institute Inc., Protecting all Living Species, and One More Generation. The decision, known as a 90-day finding finds that the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that listing the eastern diamondback rattlesnake may be warranted. The Service will undertake a more comprehensive review of the snake's status throughout the species' range to determine whether listing is warranted under the ESA.

Eastern diamondbacks can grow to a length of about eight feet and are the largest rattlesnakes in

the world. The eastern diamondback historically ranged along the coastal lowlands of the southeastern United States from North Carolina to eastern Louisiana, including all of Florida and its Keys. Although once abundant in longleaf pine ecosystems across the southeastern United States, its population size and range has declined. Nearly all of the old growth longleaf pine savannas are gone, and the eastern diamondback survives wherever its native habitats still exist or where open-canopy forests and grasslands are similar to longleaf pine savannas.

Based on the status review, the Service will make one of three possible determinations:

- Listing is not warranted, in which case no further action will be taken.
- Listing as threatened or endangered is warranted. In this case, the Service will publish a proposal to list, solicit independent

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scientific peer review of the proposal, seek input from the public, and consider the input before a final decision about listing the species is made. In general, there is a one-year period between the time a species is proposed for listing and the final decision.

- Listing is warranted but precluded by other,

higher priority activities. This means the species is added to the federal list of candidate species, and the proposal to list is deferred while the Service works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk. A warranted but precluded finding requires subsequent annual reviews of the finding

until such time as either a listing proposal is published, or a not warranted finding is made based on new information.

The ESA says that determinations as to whether any species is threatened or endangered must be made "solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available."

## Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake: Are You Worth Saving?

The eastern diamondback rattlesnake is a venomous pit viper species found in the southeastern United States from southeastern North Carolina south to the Florida Keys and west to southeastern Louisiana.

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, is the heaviest venomous snake. The heaviest known specimen, measuring 7.8 feet in length, was shot in 1946 and weighed 34 pounds. The average size specimen is 3.5 to 5.5 feet and 5.1 pounds.

The color pattern consists of a brownish, brownish yellow, brownish gray or olive ground color, overlaid with a series of 24-35 dark brown to black diamonds with slightly lighter centers. Each of these diamond-shaped blotches is outlined with a row of cream or yellowish scales. Posteriorly,

the diamond shapes become more like cross-bands and are followed by 5-10 bands around the tail. The belly is a yellowish or cream colored, with diffused dark mottling along the sides. The head has a dark postocular stripe that extends from behind the eye backwards and downwards to the lip; the back of the stripe touches the angle of the mouth. Anteriorly and posteriorly, the postocular stripe is bordered by distinct white or yellow stripes.

This rattlesnake inhabits upland dry pine forest, pine and palmetto flatwoods, sandhills and coastal maritime hammocks, longleaf pine/turkey oak habitats, grass-sedge marshes and swamp forest, cypress swamps, mesic hammocks, sandy mixed woodlands, xeric hammocks, and salt marshes, as well as wet prairies during dry periods. In many areas, they

seem to use burrows made by gophers and gopher tortoises during the summer and winter.

Like most rattlesnakes, this species is terrestrial and not adept at climbing. However, they have on occasion been reported in bushes and trees, apparently in search of prey. Even large specimens have been spotted as much as 32 feet above the ground.

In contrast, they are well known to be excellent swimmers. Specimens have often been spotted crossing stretches of water between barrier islands and the mainland off the Georgia coast, in the Gulf of Mexico and in the Florida Keys, sometimes miles from land.

The eastern diamondback rattlesnake is the ultimate "sit and wait" predator, using its natural body camouflage to

blend in with its surroundings and sit silently until prey comes within striking distance of its deadly venomous fangs. The venom also contains digestive enzymes which help break down the prey before the snake even begins to consume it. The snake will then again wait patiently until the prey has died before devouring it whole. These snakes forage actively or lie in ambush for small mammals, especially rabbits and rice rats. Their diet also includes birds. Because of their large size, the adults have no problem eating prey as large as fully-grown cottontail rabbits. In fact, eastern cottontails and marsh rabbits form the bulk of their diets in most parts of Florida. Squirrels, rats, and mice are also on the menu, along with birds such as towhees and bobwhite quail.

Gestation periods last six or seven months. Females give birth to between 7 and 21 young at a time, usually doing so between July to early October. Ne-

onates are 12–14 inches in length and are similar in appearance to the adults, except for having only a small button instead of a rattle on the tip of the tail. The young only stay with the mother for a few hours or days before they set off on their own to hunt and find reclude, thus mortality rate is very high.

This species has the reputation of being the most dangerous venomous snake in North America. While not usually aggressive, they are large and powerful. It has a very high venom yield: an average of 400–450 mg, with a maximum of 858-1,000 mg. The estimated human lethal dose is 100–150 mg. Their venom contains potent hemotoxin which kills red blood cells and causes damage to the tissue. Studies show a mortality rate of 10-30%.

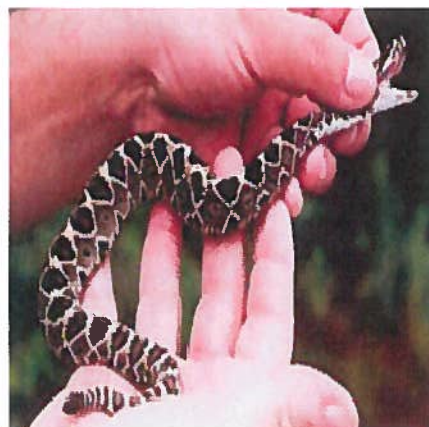
CroFab and Wyeth's ACP are effective antivenoms against bites from this species, although massive doses may be

needed to manage severe cases of envenomation. However, Wyeth's ACP production is sporadic at best.

The eastern diamondback Rattlesnake receives no federal protection despite the fact that it has declined over much of its range. This species is protected in North Carolina, where none have been seen since the early 1990s and is likely extinct. Rattlesnake roundups take place throughout its range every year but fewer and fewer snakes are being caught each year. In fact, the emphasis on some snake roundups has shifted to greater environmental awareness and a change in focus from collecting rattlesnakes to other activities. Habitat destruction and highway mortality are also take their toll on this slow moving and slow to reproduce reptile.



Areas Home to Eastern Diamondback



Neonate



Blending In

## Did You Know?

- Eastern Diamondback rattlesnakes can live for 20 years in the wild, but the average lifespan is 10 years.
- Females only reproduce every 2-3 years and do so only underground.
- It can spend as much as a week coiled in the same position.
- A home range for an adult male can be as large as 500 acres.
- They can strike to a distance of at least a third of their body length. Many will stand their ground and may strike repeatedly, but they will usually retreat while facing the intruder and moving backwards towards shelter.
- They do not need to eat very often. In fact, it ceases hunting completely during the winter months and all told, probably only requires two or three large meals a year.
- Rattlesnakes gain a new segment to their rattle every time they shed their skin. Since they may shed from one to three times per year, one cannot accurately estimate the age of the snake simply by counting segments. Segments also break off as the snake grows older.
- Snake fangs fold against the roof of the mouth when not in use.

## Protect Yourself with ICE Contacts

No one likes to think about the possibility of being seriously injured in an accident, but take a moment to consider what might happen if you're rendered unconscious in an accident or other disaster. How would emergency personnel notify your loved ones? By tracing your car's license number or looking at your driver's license, it may be possible to obtain your home phone number, but your loved ones may not be there to receive the call.

Because of this difficulty in locating family members of accident victims, the ICE ("in case of emergency") idea was born. The ICE concept is simple - write your health information on a card you keep right behind your driver's license in your wallet. Why near your driver's license? Because when paramedics or nurses arrive to help you, they grab a wallet or a

purse so they'll know who you are and who your next of kin is.

The National Institute on Aging recommends that you list your name, a list of your medical problems, a list of your medications (including herbs and supplements), the name and phone number of your doctor, the name and phone number of family or close friends and whether you wear contact lenses on your ICE card. Some professionals recommend that you also list your blood type and whether you are an organ donor.

You can further protect yourself by ICEing your cell phone. Most SmartPhones have ICE apps that you can buy for a nominal fee. You can also simply enter a contact in your cell called ICE Emergency. In the notes section, list all of the above information. You may even choose to simplify the process further for the emergency

responders. You do this by entering a contact such as "ICE1-Wife - Jane", etc. Enter her phone numbers and enter the other contacts and medical into notes. That will tell the responders to call Jane first at the programmed numbers. If they can't get Jane they can call your other contacts.

You can even help the responders by purchasing or making stickers to affix to your car window and cell phone to alert emergency personnel to the fact that you have emergency contact information stored in your wallet or cell phone. You can also put a sticker on the back of your driver's license or other form of identification so that rescuers will know where to look for emergency contact information.

Programming your cell phone takes only minutes to accomplish, yet it may save you

comply, yet it may save you and your loved ones hours of anguish in the event of an emer-

gency. Rapid access to your medical information can also enhance the success of your

emergency treatment.

## What is a Forest Inventory?

A forest inventory is the systematic collection of data and forest information for assessment or analysis. A good forest inventory is the basis for making good, sound forest management decisions. The following are usually measured during a forest inventory: Species, diameter at breast height (DBH), height, site quality, age and quality of the trees. Inventories are used to calculate the number of trees per acre, basal area, volumes of the trees in an area and the value of the timber in an area. All of these are needed in the decision making process. Inventories are also useful in visually assessing timber, determining fire hazards and evaluating wildlife populations.

A forest inventory is based on a timber cruise. A timber cruise is a sample

measurement of a stand used to estimate the amount of standing timber that a forest contains. Measurements are taken at sample locations called plots or points. Each plot or point is one observation in a series of plots called a sample. Plots are usually laid out in some random fashion in the form of a line plot survey. Depending upon the size of the plot and the number of plots measured, the data gathered can be used to achieve varying levels of certainty for an estimate that can be applied to the entire stand.

There are several different types of plots. We will discuss the two most common types. These are fixed radius and variable radius. In a fixed radius plot, the forester finds the center of a plot and every tree within a fixed distance from that

point is measured. An example of a fixed radius plot is a 1/10 acre plot which has a radius of 37.2 feet. In this case, any tree within 37.2 feet of the center of the plot would be measured. A variable radius plot is just what it says. The radius of the plot is based on the size of the tree surrounding the point or center of the plot. An angle is created and all trees that are larger than the projected angle are measured. Both types of plots are used by foresters and both result in accurate inventories. Use of one or the other is usually a matter of personal preference.

The most important factor in timber cruising is that proper and conscientious techniques be followed in the cruising process. Please let us know if we can help you with your timber inventory needs.

## Bottomland Hardwood Management: Species/Site Relationships

Bottomland hardwood forests are frequently flooded forests occurring along waterways such as rivers and their tributaries as well as creeks and some smaller streams. They are found in the southeast and south central United States. These forests are helpful in reducing the risk and severity of flooding by providing areas for floodwaters.

Bottomland hardwood forests have other benefits including the production of a

number of valuable forest products as well as the providing of habitat for a multitude of wildlife species and a variety of recreational activities.

Bottomland hardwood habitat is being lost largely due to conversion to croplands and urban development. Invasive species, namely feral hogs, are also damaging bottomland hardwood habitat. Because of this, the proper management of bottomland hardwood forests has become increasingly important.

The management of bottomland hardwoods is one of the most demanding and complicated tasks facing today's foresters. It requires a unique knowledge of the many hardwood species that are found in our forests along with an understanding of species/site relationships. Knowledge of each species needs for survival and growth including nutritional and moisture needs and the types of soils that meet these needs is essential. This article will focus

on species and site relationships.

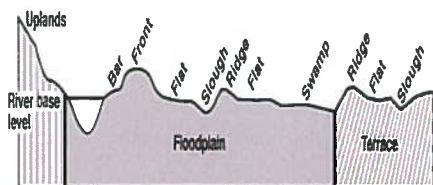
There are three main types of forested sites in the south. These include uplands, terraces and flood plains. As mentioned above, bottomland hardwoods are usually found on floodplain sites. Soils on these sites are young and fertile because they are formed from stream deposits as a result of flooding.

The variation of sites in floodplains is due mainly to elevation differences. It is important that these differences be taken into account because a change in elevation of as little as two to three feet can have a significant effect on site and species. Variables affected by a change in elevation include: drainage, class, soil moisture, soil types, texture, structure and pH. All of these help determine species occurrence and growth.

A major stream valley or bottomland features several topographic positions or sites. These are shown in Figure "1" and include bars, fronts, flats, ridges, sloughs and swamps. Desirable species found in each are listed in Table "1". It is vital that each site be managed for the species that are best adapted for it.

It cannot be emphasized enough that successful hardwood management is dependent

Figure "1": Cross section of stream valley showing minor



upon correctly matching species and site. Factors to be considered are topographical features, elevation, soil characteristics, the presence of hardpans, pH and nutrient levels. Soil maps can be very helpful in determining and understanding these factors. Most of the time, it is advisable to manage an area for a combination of species due to site variability.

If management objectives include timber, wildlife or both, species/site relationships and forest succession must be understood. Reforestation and management efforts will be doomed to failure or poor re-

sults if the species and sites are most correctly matched. A hardwood forest will change over time toward its climax species. Active management can be used to maintain diversity of your stands and to keep them growing and productive while meeting your management objectives.

I hope you have found the above information helpful. We will have a series of articles on bottomland hardwood management in our following newsletters. If we can assist you with the management of your bottomland hardwoods please contact Gary at 289-0051.

Topographical	Desirable/Suitable Species	
	Major River Bottoms	Minor Stream Bottoms
Bars	cottonwood and black willow	river birch and black willow
Fronts	cottonwood, sycamore, sweetgum, sweet pecan, green ash, water oak, cherrybark oak, swamp chestnut oak	cherrybark oak, Shumard oak, sycamore, sweetgum, yellow poplar
Ridges	willow oak, water oak, sweetgum, sycamore, green ash, cherrybark oak, swamp chestnut oak	cherrybark oak, Shumard oak, swamp chestnut oak
High Flats	Nuttall oak, green ash, sufarberry, willow oak	cherrybark oak, water oak, willow oak, Shumard oak, swamp chestnut oak
Low Flats	overcup oak, water hickory, green ash, persimmon, sugarberry	willow oak, overcup oak, persimmon, green ash
Sloughs	overcup oak, black willow, water hickory	overcup oak and persimmon
Swamps	baldcypress and water tupelo	baldcypress, swamp tupelo, water tupelo

## Listings in West Central Alabama

**140 acres, more or less, Perry County:** On YC Stone Road in east central part of Perry County, Alabama. Premerchantable pine plantations and standing timber. Three wildlife food plots with shooting house. Good hunting and investment property. Call Gary Butler for more information at 334-289-0051.



**3469 County Road 19, Greensboro:** Three bedroom/two bath ranch-style home on 200 acres just north of Greensboro in Hale County. Truck shed, horse stable, three barns, four small shooting houses, one large shooting house, a water well and two five-acre lakes with a pier each are all featured on this great property listed at \$550,000.00! Owner is willing to sell the house and 2-5 acres separately. Call Gary at 334-217-0595 for more information.



**281 Phillips Street, Gallion:** Don't miss out on this one! House features three bedrooms/two and one-half baths. Beautiful family room with vaulted ceilings! Amazing master bedroom suite! Study, formal dining room and a custom kitchen that features a great view of the lake. Relax in the great pool on hot summer days. Nice utility room. Room above garage is perfect for a teen or a potential mother-in-law's room. Located on 5.21 acres +/- . Offered at \$332,000.00! Call Barbara at 334-216-1225 to view!!!



**120 Cassimore Road, Greensboro:** Great location with 6 acres of pasture. Front lot fenced with rear lot fenced on 2 sides. Home recently upgraded with new roof in 07 and new heat pump in 06. In 09 installed vinyl siding, windows, rear deck, water heater, floor covering, remodeled baths, and painted home. Large game room or 4th bedroom. If you want a good home with some privacy and pasture for horses or cattle, this is it. Priced at \$138,900. Call Jim Mayton at 334-507-8379 to view!



**124 Riverwood Circle, Greensboro:** Beautiful river cabin located on slough off Big Prairie Creek at Lock 5. Interior is all wood with open floor plan. Stainless kitchen appliances. 2nd bedroom/bath upstairs. Lower level has parking, patio area, outdoor kitchen, storage room, and half bath. Relax and enjoy the great view of the creek from the porch. Good access to the water. \$159,000! Call Jim at 334-507-8379.

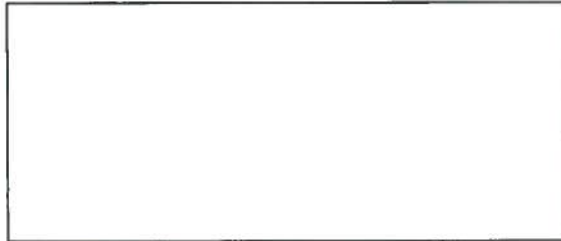
*Thinking about selling your property? Why not list it with Butler and Company? Call Gary at 334-289-0051 to discuss your options.*



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## Housing Market Update

Existing home sales decreased 5.4% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.37 million in June from 4.62 million in May. This is 4.5 % higher than June 2011 sales.

Single-family home sales dropped 5.1% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.9 million in June from 4.11 million in May, and are 4.8% above the 3.72 million-unit level in June 2011.

Existing condominium and co-op sales decreased 7.8% at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 470,000 in June and are 2.2% higher than the 460,000-unit pace one year ago.

Total housing inventory at the end of June fell 3.2% to 2.39 million existing homes available for sale, which represents a 6.6-month supply at the current sales pace, up from a

6.4-month supply in May.

Building permits dropped 3.7% from 760,000 in May to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 755,000. Builders broke ground on 760,000 homes, a 6.9% increase over's Mays totals.

Source: Department of Commerce and National Association of Realtors Press Releases

**We hope that you have enjoyed this newsletter, but if you haven't and wish to opt out of future issues, please send an email to [dawn@butlerandcompanyinc.com](mailto:dawn@butlerandcompanyinc.com) with your name or organization.**