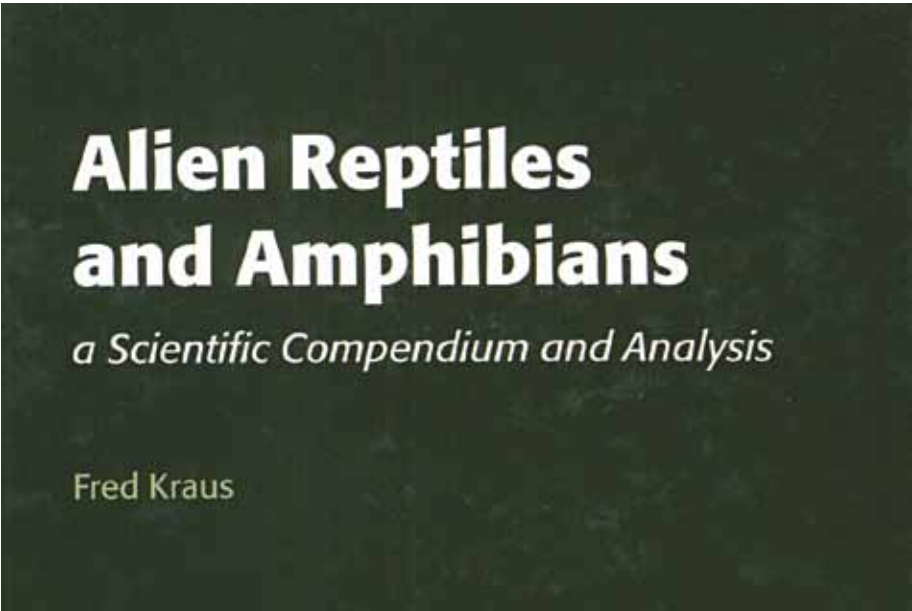


# CONSERVATION RESEARCH REPORT

## Drowning in a Sea of Development

Many reptilian species are declining, yet few studies address the current distribution and conservation status of most species, let alone how these may change with future development of natural habitats. **PIKE AND ROZNIK** (2009. *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 4:96–105) studied the distribution, habitat associations, and conservation status of Florida Sand Skinks (*Plestiodon reynoldsi*), a fossorial sandswimming lizard endemic to Florida. They used data collected between 1912 and 2006 to map the distribution of this species and used Geographic Information System (GIS) data layers to determine the habitats in which it occurs. They determined that Florida Sand Skinks occupy many different habitat types throughout their range, including human-altered areas used for agriculture. However, Florida Sand Skinks appear to be absent from urban areas. Between 1974 and 2004, the amount of natural habitat available to support populations declined by 17.8% (5.9% per decade), and this trend is predicted to continue until at least the year 2060. Projections of future development of natural and disturbed habitats show linear



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Between 1974 and 2004, the amount of natural habitat available to support populations of Florida Sand Skinks (*Plestiodon reynoldsi*) declined by 17.8% (5.9% per decade), and this trend is predicted to continue until at least the year 2060.

increases during this same time, and will further fragment the remaining natural habitats. This makes protection of habitat for this species an immediate and real concern. Florida Sand Skinks (and other

sympatric species) are rapidly losing habitat due to urbanization, and much of the remaining natural habitat outside of protected areas could be lost during the next several decades.

# NATURAL HISTORY RESEARCH REPORTS

## Green Ratsnake Ecology

The Green Rat Snake (*Senticolis triaspis*) has a broad range that extends from Central America north into the Madrean region of southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico, yet very little is known about its ecology. **RADKE AND MALCOM** (2009. *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 4:9–13) used radio telemetry to examine activity patterns, thermoregulating behavior, and habitat use of rat snakes in southeastern Arizona. Telemetered snakes maintained an average temperature near 25°C throughout the active season (May through October), and preferentially used desert scrub and rocky east-facing slopes (females) or riparian areas (male). The scarcity of Green Rat Snakes dictates that ecological information, and a more complete picture of their conservation needs, will be gathered slowly.



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Female Green Rat Snakes (*Senticolis triaspis*) in southeastern Arizona occupy desert scrub and rocky east-facing slopes, whereas males are more likely to be in riparian areas.