

THE YELLOW RAT SNAKE[©]

by Dan Pemble, Kissimmee, Florida – April 2, 2024

I don't proclaim to be a big fan of snakes and neither love them or fear them but they are of interest to me. Of course living here in Florida, we can all expect a variety of snake encounters; in fact, to date I have had several small black racers in my swimming pool and I gently dip them out and place them outside my screened enclosure. I have also seen a number of black racers, water moccasins, and common garter snakes in the wild. On just one occasion, I encountered a yellow rat snake as I will describe here.



Yellow Rat Snake – Web Site Photo

My first and only encounter with a large yellow rat snake from some years ago has just re-surfaced in my memory. As it happened, this creature was coiled up in a corner just inside my garage door. When I opened the garage door the snake remained in place but after some gentle prodding, it exited the garage. What I remember the most clearly is that almost immediately thereafter, a number of birds that had been quietly and discretely perched in the nearby trees, obviously saw this snake and reverted to the “panic mode” (continuous chirping and fluttering about) like I had never experienced! It was evident to me that these birds with their sharp eyes had spotted this snake and became very concerned about its ensuing activities! To quench my curiosity, I did some research about the yellow rat snake and here are a few facts:

- They are one of five varieties living in Florida
- Non-venomous, they are generally harmless and non-aggressive around humans
- Diet includes rodents, birds, eggs, lizards, and even smaller snakes. This adaptability allows them to thrive in different habitats.
- Can grow up to 6 feet long; may live for 20 years
- Excellent climbers and may live much of their lives in live oak and magnolia trees
- In Native American culture, the Yellow Rat Snake is often regarded as a symbol of transformation, rebirth, and healing. Its vibrant colors and ability to shed its skin make it a powerful spiritual symbol

Have you ever spotted one of these remarkable creatures?