

**DIADOPHIS PUNCTATUS (Ring-necked Snake). HABITAT USE.** *Diadophis punctatus* is a small fossorial snake found in a wide variety of terrestrial habitats throughout much of the United States, northern Mexico, and southeastern Canada; the species is most commonly associated with damp, wooded habitats and depends heavily on the availability of cover sources such as rocks, logs, and leaf litter (Ernst and Ernst 2003. Snakes of the United States and Canada. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C. 668 pp.). At 1531 h on 14 March 2023, we observed one *D. punctatus* in a *Gopherus polyphemus* (Gopher Tortoise) burrow in mesic flatwoods habitat while conducting a burrow survey of the Lower Hillsborough Flood Detention Area in Hillsborough County, Florida, USA (28.1160°N, 82.3583°W; WGS 84). The burrow was 1.5 m long and the snake was first observed (via camera probe) at the very back of the burrow,

suggesting that the snake was sheltering in the burrow naturally rather than having fled into the mouth of the burrow in response to our approach.

Although over 60 vertebrate species (including 13 snakes) are known to use *G. polyphemus* burrows as refugia (Jackson and Milstrey 1989. In Diemer et al. [eds.], Proc. Gopher Tortoise Relocation Symp. Nongame Wildl. Program Tech. Rep., pp. 86–98. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Comm., Tallahassee, Florida), this encounter constitutes (to our knowledge) only the second reported observation of *D. punctatus* as a burrow associate. The first observation was made in March 1991 during a burrow excavation study in Collier County, Florida (Brandt et al. 1993. Herpetol. Rev. 24:149), with no subsequent observations having been published during the ensuing 32 years. Given the substantial research effort focused on *G. polyphemus* and burrow associates during this time period, the absence of additional reports of *D. punctatus* from burrow surveys indicates that this snake does not shelter in tortoise burrows frequently. This is expected, given that the preferred habitats of *D. punctatus* and *G. polyphemus* share minimal overlap due to differences in the species' hydrologic preferences. Nonetheless, our observation suggests that the initial detection made by Brandt et al. (1993, *op. cit.*) was not a fluke occurrence and that, in areas of habitat overlap, *D. punctatus* will use *G. polyphemus* burrows as a source of cover and can thus be considered a burrow associate.

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