

Appendix A  
Eastern Indigo Snake Survey Protocol FAQ's

**What is the purpose of the protocol?**

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires that Federal agencies consult with the USFWS on proposed activities that may affect eastern indigo snakes. The purpose of this Protocol is to detect eastern indigo snakes (indigos) on project sites, focusing on areas that will be impacted by development activities.

**Who is supposed to use the protocol?**

The Protocol is designed for use by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Division (Corps) in conjunction with their Eastern Indigo Snake Programmatic Effect Determination Key (exhibit attachment) when a "May Affect" determination is reached. For projects that do not fall under the Corps' jurisdiction, project proponents may contact the USFWS North Florida Field Office (NFFO) to determine if a survey should be conducted.

**Where (geographic area) does the protocol apply?**

The protocol is to be applied in the USFWS North Florida Field Office's area of responsibility. The list of counties can be viewed at: <http://www.fws.gov/northflorida/Area1.htm>. If a proposed project is outside of NFFO's area, then the proponent should contact the local USFWS office.

**What happens if indigo snakes are detected?**

Positive survey results means that the site is occupied and the NFFO will determine if "incidental take" is reasonably certain to occur and subsequently write a biological opinion that will include measures to minimize "take".

**What happens if indigo snakes are NOT detected?**

Failing to detect indigos does not mean they are not utilizing the site at some point in time. However, the USFWS must be reasonably certain that a site is occupied and that "take" is reasonably certain to occur in order to initiate formal consultation and provide incidental take. Therefore, a negative survey would result in a 'may affect, not likely to adversely affect' conclusion issued to the action agency provided the project proponent agrees to implement the current, standard eastern indigo snake protection measures.

**What happens if indigo snakes were not detected during the survey but were later detected after work began?**

The ESA consultation process has a reinitiation process that allows project proponents and the USFWS to discuss any new information relevant to species impacts and resolve any issues.

**What if the project is very large in scale or multi-phased?**

For large projects (DRI's, military, restoration projects and etc.), we recommend contacting our office in advance to discuss the best survey approach to achieve the intended objective.

**When should the protocol be conducted?**

Transect surveys are to be conducted from **October 1 – April 30**, for a minimum of **five (5) survey days** which do not have to be consecutive, with a minimum of 2 “high quality” weather days. The optimal temperature range is **60° F – 70° F (15.55 C – 21.11 C)** for finding indigo snakes. If cold weather prevails outside of these dates, please contact the NFESFO for the potential to work outside of the designated time window.

**If an indigo snake is detected on the first day, can the survey be discontinued?**

If an indigo snake is detected after the completion of **at least one survey day**; then the surveyor may discontinue the survey for the remaining days of the recommended five (5) days since presence has been established.

**If an eastern indigo snake is identified within the project impact area and Section 7 formal consultation is initiated, what would be required in terms of minimization and conservation measures?**

The minimization and conservation measures will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Measures that may be considered by the Service include: (1) those measures provided for other state and federally-listed species affected by the project as requested by other permitting agencies that may benefit eastern indigo snakes; (2) land management activities (burning and etc.); (3) restoration and enhancement activities, and (4) species relocation under specific circumstances. Factors to be considered in evaluating these options include total impact acreage loss, adjacent land use, location of roads and highways, proximity to protected and public lands and other known indigo snake sightings.

**If shed skins or photographs are taken, how can they be identified as that of an indigo snake?**

Positive identification of indigo snakes shed skins or photographs may be obtained by contacting Candace Martino ([Candace\\_Martino@fws.gov](mailto:Candace_Martino@fws.gov); 904-731-3142)