

## NATURAL HISTORY NOTES SERPENTES

**LAMPROPELTIS GETULA FLORIDANA** (Florida Kingsnake). **Combat Ritual.** Combat rituals between male snakes have been recorded in rattlesnakes, *Sistrurus miliarius* (Carpenter 1979. Copeia 1979:638-642), and *Crotalus lepidus* (Carpenter and Murphy 1976. Copeia 1976:764-780), and speckled kingsnakes, *Lampropeltis getula holbrooki* (Carpenter and Gillingham 1977. Southwest. Nat. 22:517-524). Zug (1993. Herpetology: An Introductory Biology of Amphibians and Reptiles. Academic Press, Inc., San Diego, California. 527 pp.) noted that combat rituals in snakes may be performed due to territoriality, or to establish dominance in the presence of a sexually receptive female. Here we describe a combat ritual observed in Florida kingsnakes (*Lampropeltis getula floridana*) in southern Florida. On 7 February 1993, at 1415 h and 24°C, two male *L. g. floridana* were observed along a canal bank just north of Clewiston, in Glades County, Florida, USA. It had been raining all morning, was overcast and very windy. The snakes (116 cm and 130 cm SVL) were first noticed after hearing them rustling in dry grass. The snakes were entwined, with their anterior segments off the

ground, biting one another, swaying, and pushing against each other, with each one briefly forcing the other beneath it. After ca. 5 min of observation, both snakes were captured. Both had numerous, bloody bite marks along their bodies, and the largest snake had one hemipenis everted. Although no females were observed in the immediate vicinity, five other *L. g. floridana*, including two females, were captured within 50 m and 0.5 hr of these two males, indicating great activity at this time. Our observation suggests that *L. g. floridana* may begin breeding as early as February in southern Florida. All snakes were released at their capture site after data collection.

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