**Racer**

*Coluber constrictor*

 Photo by Gary Nafis Photo by Jim Conrad, <http://www.backyardnature.net/n/a/racer.htm>

DESCRIPTION

* Slender body
* Uniform pattern, solid color – brown, black, blue or green
* Lighter-colored belly
* Adults are typically 20 – 60 inches
* Non-venomous

LIFE CYCLE

* Mate in the spring, from April to early June
* About a month later the female lays 3-30 eggs in a hidden nest
* 8 – 10 inch juveniles hatch in early fall

BEHAVIOR

* Fast moving, highly active
* diurnal
* Nervous, flee from predators, but will strike or bite if captured
* Some will climb trees to eat eggs and young birds
* Not true constrictors, they subdue prey by pinning it down with one or two coils, rather than suffocating it.
* Curious, with excellent vision; sometimes raise their head above the grass to view what is around them.
* Rattling their tails in dry leaves, they can sound like rattlesnake

HABITAT

* Prefer open grasslands, but also light forest
* Common in suburban neighborhoods in brush, trash piles, roadsides
* Spends most of the time on the ground, but are good tree climbers

FOOD

* Small mammals
* Reptiles
* Amphibians
* Insects

SOURCES

* <http://www.birdsandherps.com/bvsnakes/>
* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coluber_constrictor>
* http://www.backyardnature.net/n/a/racer.htm