

Unit 9: Snake Catchers

Narrator: Skip Snow and Mike Rochford are snake catchers. They work in Florida, in the Everglades National Park. They're looking for Burmese pythons. Burmese pythons are not a native species here. But over the past decade, these snakes have grown in numbers in the Everglades, and are now eating too many of the native birds, small mammals, and even large reptiles.

Because the pythons are harming the local wildlife, Skip and Mike's team are doing their best to catch and remove this invasive species. They are also studying how the pythons live and move around the swamps. The team puts tiny, harmless tracking devices into several pythons. Then they release the snakes back into the wild, far away from where they were caught.

Burmese pythons can grow up to 7 meters long and weigh up to 90 kilograms. And they are very good swimmers. Minutes after the pythons are released, the team looks for them. The team uses an antenna to search for signals from the tracking devices. But they can't locate the snakes. So, the team uses a plane to help them in their search.

The Everglades National Park covers an area of 1.5 million acres. The team's plane has a more powerful antenna, and Mike is hoping it will pick up signals from the snakes. After much searching, a signal appears. The tracking devices show that the snakes have traveled over 56 kilometers back to the place where they were first caught. This tells the team that it will not be easy to get rid of the pythons. These creatures have made the Everglades their home.

But Skip and Mike are not giving up. They will continue to catch and remove the pythons. It is important they do this, so that they can protect the many other animals that live in the Florida Everglades.