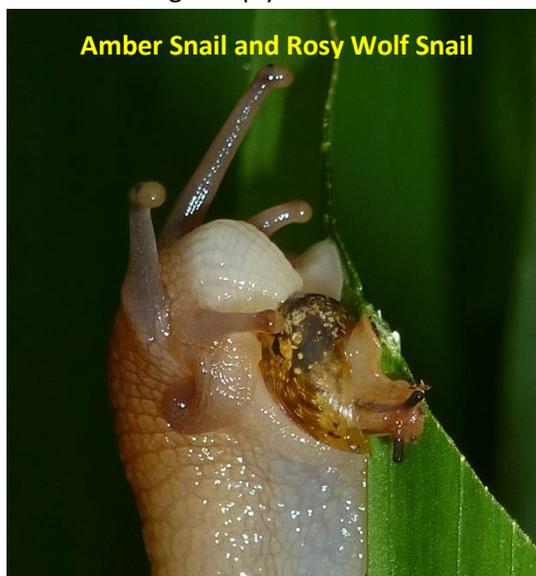


The Rosy Wolf Snail – A Welcome Garden Inhabitant in the Southeastern US

Growing up in a nursery, we were taught that all snails no matter how big or small were bad. Snails, slugs included, eat plants and so should be destroyed immediately, right? Whoa, not so fast, there are a few snails who have advanced well beyond getting their nutrients directly from plants and instead garner them from the gatherers. The Rosy Wolf Snail, *Euglandina rosea*, is likely the most noticeable and most common carnivorous snail in our area. It has a broad native distribution across the Gulf Coast region ranging naturally from Louisiana (east Texas according to some) to the Carolinas. Because of its voracious appetite it has been introduced in California as well as in other parts of the world to control invasive land snails. In Hawaii, along with several other islands in the region, the Rosy Wolf Snail was introduced to combat the invasive Giant African Land Snails. Unfortunately that didn't turn out so well for many of the native Hawaiian land snails but it does eat the Giant Land Snails as well. At this point the Rosy Wolf Snail is now itself considered an invasive species in some parts of the world, it has even earned a spot in the top 100 worst invasive species. Here in its native habitat it should be a revered and welcome garden guest where it helps to keep the herbivorous snails and slugs in check.

A cheetah among land snails, the Rosy Wolf Snail can travel at speeds up to 3-4 times faster than your average, leaf eating garden snail or slug. Not only is it faster but it is carnivorous and strictly eats snails and slugs at all stages of its lifecycle. Some carnivorous snails may eat plants when young but move on to snails when mature but not this one. When hunting, the Wolf Snail extends two sensory appendages, oral lappets, from the sides of its head that look for all the world like a handlebar moustache out of the old Wild West. These appendages are used to locate and follow the slime trails of other snails and slugs and so it tracks them just as a hunting wolf would do. Small snails can be devoured whole, the Calcium from their shells is digested and repurposed to add to the Wolf Snail's own shell. Slugs simply do not stand a chance, if they are too large to devour whole they will simply eat them piecemeal



Amber Snail and Rosy Wolf Snail

using their rasp-like radula (we might call it a tongue but it contains rows of sharp teeth). Large snails really don't have any hope for escape either, as the Wolf Snail will simply insert its esophageal tube and radula inside their shell scraping and sucking out pieces of escargot until the shell is empty. It appears that the Wolf Snails may actually nibble on the shells of these larger snails to garner at least some Calcium from this encounter as well. This snail is serious about hunting and will even go diving for aquatic snails for short periods if need be. Another name for the Rosy Wolf Snail is the Cannibal Snail because it is not uncommon for them to eat each other. If you find two or more together they are likely mating as they do not hunt in Wolf Snail packs.

The Rosy Wolf Snail can live to be about 2 years old and mature snails will lay between 25 and 40 eggs per year. They are hermaphroditic, both male and female, but require cross fertilization from another Rosy Wolf



Snail to produce viable eggs. The shells of young snails have the same shape as older snails but it tends to have much more of a yellow coloration than the more typical rosy pink of more mature snails. Their shells can become quite large and these are one of the larger native North American land snails with shells that can reach 3" long and 1" in diameter.

Many birds do appreciate a good healthy meal of escargot as well and so the Rosy Wolf Snail has evolved to become a mainly nocturnal hunter the same as its meals. During the day they can be found under leaves, under boards, hanging out on the sides of plant containers, or in any other cool, moist, shaded area. It may be easier to spot them at night with a flashlight if you are curious about what your carnivorous snail populations are like. If you do find one, consider leaving it in place as if you do relocate it, you could be placing it into the hunting grounds of another Wolf Snail.

If you find a Rosy Wolf Snail snug inside its shell and stuck to a wall or other surface it may be 'estivating' which is kind of like hibernating but for snails, so don't remove it. They will actually seal themselves in with dried mucus and slow their heart and metabolic rate to about 1/10 of normal until suitable conditions occur for them to return to feeding. We've learned that snail feeding is not an Indy car race, a large snail can consume a smallish snail in about 5 minutes. A juvenile Rosy Wolf Snail may take up to 30 minutes to consume another garden snail of near equal size, but not to worry there doesn't seem to be any quit in them when it comes to their appetite and nothing goes to waste! If you would like to watch a Rosy Wolf Snail devouring its prey check see the following links.



[NCSU Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets – Rosy Wolf Snail – *Euglandina rosea*](#)

<http://fsg.ces.ncsu.edu/publication/rosy-wolf-snail-euglandina-rosea/>

[University of Florida – Featured Creatures – Snail-Eating Snails of Florida](#)

http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/misc/gastro/snail_eating_snails.htm

[Island Biodiversity – *Euglandina rosea*](#)

<http://islandbiodiversity.com/euglandina.htm>

Thank You & Good Growing,

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[Almost Eden](#)

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