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## Animal control officer catches 10-foot boa at Pointe West

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VERO BEACH — The cooler weather apparently made it easier to capture a 10-foot boa constrictor Wednesday.

Vero Beach Police Department Animal Control Officer Bruce Dangerfield said he got a call about 3:30 p.m. about the large snake found at the Pointe West development, located on the south side of State Road 60 west of 66th Avenue.

He said the boa constrictor was about as thick as a small man's thigh and probably weighed 60 to 70 pounds.

According to Dangerfield, the cooler weather probably made the snake docile enough for some people at the development to corral it until he arrived.

"If it had been a warm day, that snake would have been biting and striking," he said.

The snake was trying to go down a ditch and one man grabbed it by tail before it could get away, said Dangerfield.

Dangerfield will keep the exotic snake with other native snakes he has penned up at his residence, while he attempts to find it a home. He uses the native snakes in his hunter education programs.

According to Dangerfield, large exotic snakes roaming free in the region are a growing problem.

People purchase the snakes as a pet and may find it increasingly expensive to keep them as their diet goes from mice to rats to rabbits, he said. A large boa constrictor such as the one found Wednesday could kill a dog or even a person, said Dangerfield, although the snakes usually try to avoid humans.

"There have been several people in the United States who have died from constricting snakes," said Dangerfield.

In a report he prepared several months ago, Dangerfield estimated he had been involved in the capture of probably 10 boa constrictors, 17 to 18 big pythons and about 25 smaller ball pythons.

In 2004, Dangerfield captured a 16-foot Burmese python that was found in the 5700 block of Eighth Street. Numerous people from around the country asked to adopt the python. Dangerfield said officials eventually decided to give the snake to Reptile World in St. Cloud.