

Alert roofers snare 12-foot python

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TARPON SPRINGS - Two Bay Area roofers had quite a job to tackle last week, and it had nothing to do with replacing a roof.

"[It was] just a strange thing to come across here in Pasco County," observed Rob Schram.

Rob found out first-hand how strong a large snake can be. He and his brother Daryl ran into the 12½-foot Burmese python near a retention pond off Ridge Road in Port Richey.

"He tried to catch it and it overpowered him at that time and actually was crawling away and pulling him towards the retention pond," Rob recalled.

These kinds of pythons are native to Southeast Asia, so no one knows how it got here.

"It's hard to say right now. It may have been in the wild for quite some time. These snakes live over 35 years, and a lot of times when people buy these for a pet, they don't intend to keep a snake for 35 years," explained Scott Konger of the Tarpon Springs Aquarium. "Sometimes they just release it out into a wilderness area."

The Pasco County roofer says all he and his brother knew when they saw the python was that they couldn't just leave it.

"We were worried somebody could be in the area. Small animals; there are some houses but we don't know who lives there," he continued.

So they wrestled it together.

"She didn't like it when we picked her up. She tried to curl around Darryl's arm," Rob added.

But the two brothers finally got control of the snake.

"Without controlling the head, it was stronger than both of us put together," he said. "I have more respect for them now knowing how strong the snake really is."

For now, the Tarpon Springs Aquarium is where the snake will stay, and that's a good thing considering the snakes eat a lot.

"Snakes like this can easily eat a small dog, a cat. It would surprise you the size of the prey it can eat," Konger explained.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is now considering new rules for reptiles of concern, like the python. The new rules would make owners get a permit for their exotic pets and as for big snakes, and high tech ID tags would be implanted so owners could be found.