

SNAKES OF ONTARIO IDENTIFIER

An identification guide to the Massasauga Rattlesnake and other Ontario snakes.

Recovery through education and conservation.

This guide will help you identify the Massasauga Rattlesnake and other snakes in Ontario. The Massasauga is one of five Ontario snakes with blotches. Snakes on this identifier are grouped by appearance (blotched, striped and no pattern). When you see a snake, look at its size and pattern. Does it have blotches, stripes, or no pattern?

Snakes are illustrated at quarter-life size. These snakes are not found in all Ontario regions. Consult a field guide for maps of snakes in your area. The size of snakes includes U.S. populations as listed in 'Conant, Roger and Joseph T. Collins. 1991 *A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America*. 3rd edition. Houghton Mifflin Co. Boston'



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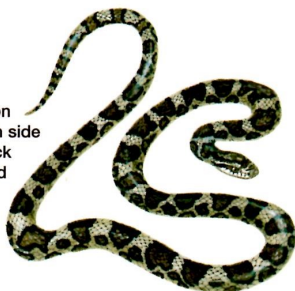
Visit the Massasauga Rattlesnake

Recovery Team website: www.massasauga.ca

Milk

Lampropeltis triangulum

- 61-90 cm; record 132.1 cm
- Cream, tan, or light grey with red or dark brown black-bordered blotches or rings on back alternating with blotches along each side
- Young have red blotches bordered in black
- Blotch on neck may appear Y or V shaped
- Belly whitish with black checkerboard pattern
- Scales smooth; anal scale single
- Lays eggs
- SPECIAL CONCERN (COSEWIC); SPECIAL CONCERN (OMNR)

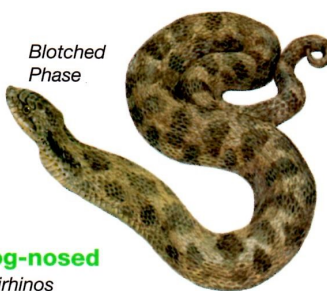


Blotched Phase

Eastern Hog-nosed

Heterodon platirhinos

- 51-84 cm; record 115.6 cm
- Large dark blotches down back alternating with smaller blotches along sides
- When threatened, spreads neck to display darker neck pattern and will roll over to play dead
- Can be blotched phase, plain grey, green-brown or even black
- Heavy-bodied
- Flat head with upturned snout
- Belly yellow-grey with greenish grey pattern
- Underside of tail lighter colour than body
- Scales keeled; anal scale divided
- Lays eggs
- THREATENED (COSEWIC); THREATENED (OMNR)



Northern Water

Nerodia sipedon sipedon

- 61-106.7 cm; record 140.5 cm
- Well patterned individuals have reddish brown squarish blotches down back with row of alternating blotches along each side
- At front of body, some blotches extend as saddles over back and on to sides
- Pattern on older individuals may be obscured and they appear black or brown
- Usually found in or near water
- Belly cream with irregular rows of reddish half moon crescents
- Scales keeled; anal scale divided
- Gives birth to live young

Lake Erie Water

Nerodia sipedon insularum

- 61-106.7 cm; record 140.5 cm
- A sub-species of the more wide spread Northern Water snake
- Range from uniformly grey with no markings to dark grey-brown with some banding
- Only found at western end of Lake Erie and on Pelee and surrounding islands
- Belly whitish yellow to grey
- Scales keeled; anal scale divided
- Gives birth to live young
- ENDANGERED (COSEWIC); ENDANGERED (OMNR)



Eastern Fox

Elaphe gloydi

- 91-137 cm; record 179.1 cm (large snake)
- Yellow-brown with large brown or black blotches on back that alternate with smaller blotches along sides
- May have red-brown head
- Belly yellow with black checkerboard pattern
- Scales weakly keeled; anal scale divided
- Lays eggs
- THREATENED (COSEWIC); THREATENED (OMNR)

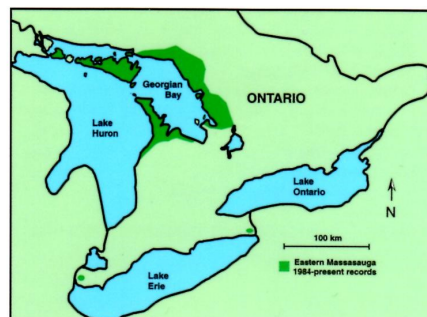
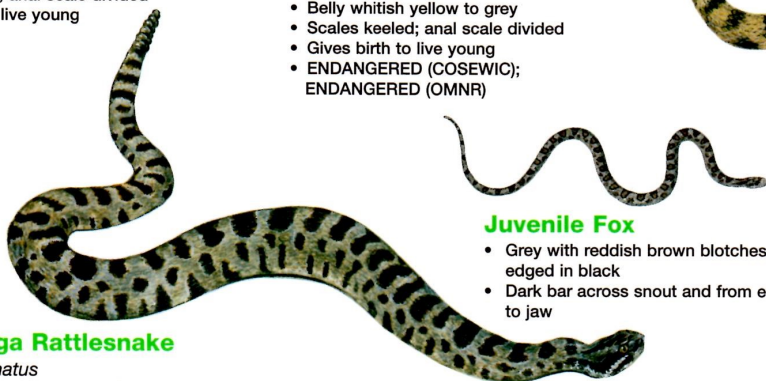
Juvenile Fox

- Grey with reddish brown blotches edged in black
- Dark bar across snout and from eye to jaw

Massasauga Rattlesnake

Sistrurus catenatus

- Ontario's only venomous snake
- 47.2-76 cm; record 100.3 cm
- Grey to brownish grey with darker blotches along back and several rows of alternating blotches along sides; blotches edged in white
- Black snakes with no pattern, very rare
- Pit on each side of head between eye and nostril
- Distinct segmented rattle
- Tail thick, squarish; does not taper to a point like all others
- Does not always rattle a warning; relies on pattern and remaining motionless to go undetected
- Heavy bodied; often found coiled
- Belly black
- Scales keeled; anal scale single
- Gives birth to live young
- THREATENED (COSEWIC); THREATENED (OMNR)



DeKay's Brown

Storeria dekayi

- 23-33 cm; record 49.2 cm (small snake)
- Light grey-brown to red-brown
- Two rows of spots along light coloured stripe on back
- Rows of spots may be joined by narrow lines
- Dark downward bar on side of head
- Juveniles have three yellowish spots on neck
- Belly cream or pinkish
- Scales keeled; anal scale divided
- Gives birth to live young

Northern Red-bellied

Storeria occipitomaculata occipitomaculata

- 20.3-25.4 cm; record 40.6 cm (small snake)
- Reddish brown to grey-brown in colour
- Three light brown or yellow spots on neck
- Orange-red belly; few dark spots may be present
- Scales keeled; anal scale divided
- Gives birth to live young

Smooth Green

Opheodrys vernalis

- 30.3-51 cm; record 66 cm
- Bright green and shiny
- Belly white or yellow
- Scales smooth; anal scale divided
- Lays eggs

Ring-necked

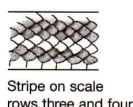
Diadophis punctatus

- 25.4-38 cm; record 70.6 cm
- Shiny steel blue, slate or brown in colour
- Neck ring and belly orange-yellow
- Scales adjacent to neck ring darker
- Belly has interrupted row of small black spots
- Scales smooth; anal scale divided
- Lays eggs

Eastern Ribbon

Thamnophis sauritus

- 45.7-66 cm; record 96.5 cm
- Black with 3 yellow stripes
- Lateral stripes on scale rows 3 and 4
- Distinct white half-moon spot in front of eye
- May have brown colour along each side of belly
- Belly yellow-green
- Scales keeled; anal scale single
- Gives birth to live young
- SPECIAL CONCERN (COSEWIC); SPECIAL CONCERN (OMNR)



Queen

Regina septemvittata

- 38-61 cm; record 92.1 cm
- Yellow-brown with yellow stripe along lower flank
- 3-5 dark stripes may be found on back
- Belly cream-yellow; brown stripes may be visible
- Usually found near rivers and marshes
- Scales keeled; anal scale divided
- Gives birth to live young
- THREATENED (COSEWIC); THREATENED (OMNR)

Eastern Garter

Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis

- 45.7-66 cm; record 123.8 cm
- Black, green or brown with three yellow or yellow-green stripes
- Stripes may be orange or reddish in some parts of range
- Some snakes may be all black with no stripes (melanistic)
- Lateral stripes on scale rows 2 and 3
- May have dark scales or spots between stripes giving it a checkered pattern
- Belly yellowish green
- Scales keeled; anal scale single
- Gives birth to live young

Stripe on scale rows two and three



Blue Racer

Coluber constrictor foxii

- 90-152 cm; record 182.90 cm (large snake)
- Grey to greenish blue
- Head dark, throat white
- Belly light blue
- Only found on Pelee Island
- Scales smooth; anal scale divided
- Lays eggs
- ENDANGERED (COSEWIC); ENDANGERED (OMNR)

Red-sided Garter

Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis

- 41-66 cm; record 124.1 cm
- Black-brown with 3 yellow stripes
- Red bars between stripes and reddish wash on sides between scales
- Lateral stripes on scale rows 2 and 3
- Belly green-black
- In Ontario, only found along the Manitoba border
- Scales keeled; anal scale single
- Gives birth to live young

Juvenile Blue Racer

- Grey with central row of dark grey-brown blotches
- Few or no blotches on brown or grey tail
- Side of head speckled white and black

Butler's Garter

Thamnophis butleri

- 38-51 cm; record 69.2 cm
- Black or brown-green with 3 yellow stripes
- Stripes may be orange
- Lateral stripes on scale row 3 extending onto row 2 below and 4 above
- Towards back of body lateral stripe on scale rows 2 and 3
- Smallish head
- Belly green-yellow
- Only found in SW Ontario
- Scales keeled; anal scale single
- Gives birth to live young
- THREATENED (COSEWIC); THREATENED (OMNR)



Eastern Rat

Elaphe obsoleta

- 106.7-183 cm; record 256.5 cm (large snake)
- In some, faint blotched pattern may be seen
- Throat white
- Belly grey-brown wash
- Scales weakly keeled; anal scale divided
- Lays eggs
- THREATENED (COSEWIC); THREATENED (OMNR)

Juvenile Eastern Rat

- Light grey with grey-brown blotches on body and tail
- Dark bar across snout and from eye to jaw