

SNAKES OF ONTARIO IDENTIFIER



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

Let us know what you've seen:
SUBMIT YOUR DATA
www.eomf.on.ca/atlas/form_e.html

For information on the Toronto Zoo's Rattlesnake Workshop write to:

Toronto Zoo - Rattlesnakes
361-A Old Finch Ave.
Scarborough, ON, CANADA M1B 5K7
email: alentin@torontozoo.ca
Visit the Massasauga Rattlesnake Recovery Team website: www.massasauga.ca

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

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)



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)



Juvenile Fox

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

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)

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)

