



BRANCHING OUT

Summer 2012

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The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, working under the Endangered Species Act, 2007, is proposing that the natural habitat in our area be protected and, where altered, renaturalized so that the Hog-nosed Snake may survive. While this proposal encourages landowners to preserve natural habitat, The Ministry does not forbid human activity, but rather encourages landowners to consult with the Ministry before undertaking projects that have the potential to cause harm to the snake's environment.. Call 519-773-9241 for guidance.

Presenting: The Great Pretender-The Eastern Hog-nosed Snake (Endangered)



The Eastern Hog-nosed Snake

- cold blooded, stout-bodied snake can reach a length of 115 cm, with males smaller than females
- owes its name to the upturned scale, unique to hog-nosed snakes, at the tip of its snout
- highly variable in colour and pattern, but the defensive display, when it is approached by humans, is usually sufficient for identification
- when it feels threatened, it rears back, flattens its head and neck like a cobra, and hisses, vibrates the tip of its tail, then may strike with its mouth closed
- this behaviour often leads people to think this harmless snake is venomous, but it's not
- if its aggressive behaviour fails to scare off an attacker, the Eastern Hog-nosed Snake will play dead. It may also defecate and cover itself with foul-smelling excrement, roll onto its back with its tongue extended, and possibly even exude blood from its mouth.
- when the threat disappears, the snake rolls over and slithers away
- in Ontario, it reaches reproductive maturity at age four or five
- females lay between 7 and 37 eggs in burrows, or nests, which they dig with their upturned snouts in sandy soil about 10 to 20 cm below the surface.
- may also nest in cavities under rocks as well as under driftwood on beaches
- egg laying begins in late June and continues for two to three weeks
- hatching occurs in late August or early September, after two months of incubation
- hibernates in winter in tunnels of other animals or ones it digs itself
- in Canada, toads are their sole food source

Threats

- loss of habitat, road traffic, persecution by uninformed humans, thinking it's venomous, capture for pet trade
- raccoons, skunks, weasels, foxes, wild turkeys, feral cats and dogs
- reduction of toad population, their only source of food
- lawn mowers, weed trimmers, which can cut snakes resting in natural groundcover

What Hog-Nosed Snakes Need to Survive

- natural woodlots with leaf cover for shelter, sun dappled spots for warmth
- sandy, well-drained soil and open vegetative cover, such as open woods, brushland, fields, forest edges and south-facing sandy slopes warm enough for incubation
- in shoreline areas, need driftwood and other ground cover in beach and beach dune habitats, where toads, their prey of choice, are found
- drivers to **slow down** and watch for snakes sunbathing on warm pavement

Coming Events

Sat June 2 at 1:30 Ian Jean's "Forest Walk" Meet in front of Huron Woods mailboxes

Fri July 13 at 9:00 p.m. "The Bat Walk" by Erin Fraser Meet at the clubhouse, lower lounge

**Sat July 28 at 1:30 "Native Plants and Invasive Species" and Native Plant Sale by Haley Hartford
at Huron Woods Clubhouse**