

# Eastern Hog-nosed Snake

*Heterodon platirhinos*



Status: **Threatened**

## Threats:

- ◆ Loss of habitat due to development
- ◆ Road mortality
- ◆ Human persecution due to its harmless display of aggression



## Description:

- ◆ Thick, heavy-bodied snake
- ◆ Size between 51-150 cm
- ◆ Flat head with up-turned snout
- ◆ Plain phase: grey, dark brown or black in colour
- ◆ Blotched phase: dark brown blotches down the back alternating with smaller blotches along the sides
- ◆ Belly yellow-grey with greenish grey pattern
- ◆ Underside of tail lighter in colour than the body
- ◆ Dark blotch behind each eye

## Biology:

- ◆ Very gentle, harmless, non-venomous
- ◆ When threatened, it will flatten its neck like a cobra and hiss, then it may turn belly-up with its tongue out to play dead
- ◆ May strike out if harassed, but very rarely bites
- ◆ Prefers to eat toads, but will also eat other amphibians and insects.
- ◆ Lays eggs in burrows

## Habitat:

- ◆ Is at the northern limit of its range
- ◆ Found near sandy shorelines, wet areas such as swamps, and pine or oak woodlands
- ◆ Prefers loose, sandy soil surfaces for burrowing, hibernating and hunting for their preferred food, toads

Species at Risk  
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

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### How to *Move A Snake*

#### Hog-nosed Snake on Your Property? *Here's What You Can Do:*

- ◆ **If you see a Hog-nosed Snake, leave it alone.** It may only be passing through to reach a preferred area for hibernation or summer feeding. It will continue on within a few hours or a couple days if you allow it safe passage. Make sure other people on your property know you've seen it so they won't be so surprised to come across it, and won't accidentally get too close to it.



#### ◆ **Live and let live:**

- ✓ Learn to appreciate these animals and the fact that we are lucky enough to have one of the few areas in Ontario where populations are still relatively healthy.
- ✓ Keep field guides handy for easy identification.
- ✓ Do your best to develop a live and let live philosophy!
- ✓ Know that your attitude is changing to one that reflects more tolerance to the wild creatures we share Muskoka with.

#### ◆ **Share your property:**

- ✓ The preferred food of Hog-nosed Snakes are toads, which prefer open sandy areas. If you have this habitat type or see lots of toads around your property, then you have the potential to see this snake.
- ✓ Keep your eyes open while cutting grass, and if possible cut after 11 am because the snakes may bask until this time.
- ✓ Excess brush from pruning can be left in a pile for snakes to use as cover at the end of your property, away from the house or cottage.
- ✓ Be aware of your pets. Strange behaviour could mean they are harassing a snake.
- ✓ Teach your family and friends about snakes.

- ◆ **See a snake?** Submit your sighting to the Natural Heritage Information Centre at [nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species\\_report.cfm](http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species_report.cfm).

- ◆ **Learn more.** Check out the Species at Risk section on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at [www.mnr.gov.on.ca](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca).

If you must move a snake, be sure to move it to a safe area of your property or other appropriate area away from roads. Never relocate a snake more than 250 metres from where you found it.

1. If the snake is about to escape or move into brush, leave it alone and allow it to retreat or escape.
2. Tip a garbage bin on its side, and use a broom, rake or shovel to position the bin near the snake.
3. Gently guide or herd the snake into the bin, being careful not to get too close and not to push the snake.
4. When the snake is at the bottom of the container tip the bin up and secure the lid with tape. Never leave the bin in direct sunlight, since this heat will dangerously overheat the snake.
5. Carefully bring the snake to its new location. Place the bin on its side and either gently slide the snake out or allow the snake to leave on its own with the bin on its side. It will seek safety in vegetation or rocks.
6. Never try to handle or tease the snake as this is against the law.

