

Eastern Foxsnake

Pantherophis gloydi

Georgian Bay Population



Status: **Threatened**

Threats:

- ◆ Habitat loss through shoreline development and wetland degradation
- ◆ Road mortality
- ◆ Illegal pet trade
- ◆ Human persecution when mistaken for a rattlesnake



Photo: Joe Crowley



Photo: Scott Gillingwater

Description:

- ◆ Second largest snake in Ontario
- ◆ Size between 90-140 cm
- ◆ Head often reddish in colour
- ◆ Body yellowish-brown in colour with dark brown blotches down the back and a row of smaller blotches along each side
- ◆ Belly yellow with black checkerboard pattern
- ◆ Scales on back are not flat, scales on the sides are smooth

Biology:

- ◆ Lays 10-20 eggs in rotting logs or leaf litter in late June or early July
- ◆ Reproduction is slow ; females only breed every 2 years
- ◆ Are excellent swimmers and may swim up to 2 km
- ◆ Eats small rodents, birds and frogs that they kill by constriction
- ◆ Produces a scent similar to that of a fox
- ◆ Will rapidly vibrate its tail when excited; may produce a rattling sound similar to a rattlesnake
- ◆ In winter, individuals hibernate together in burrows or rock crevices called hibernacula

Habitat:

- ◆ Found along Georgian Bay usually within 150 m of the shoreline; rarely found more than 1 km from the Georgian Bay coast
- ◆ Prefers barren, rocky shorelines close to marshes
- ◆ Can also be found in fields, woodlands, sand pits, rock barrens, or beaches located near water

Species at Risk
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

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How to *Move A Snake*

Foxsnake on Your Property?

Here's What You Can Do:

◆ **If you see a Foxsnake, 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:

✓ 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 an at-risk snake?** Submit your sighting to the Natural Heritage Information Centre at 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.

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.

