



The Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake

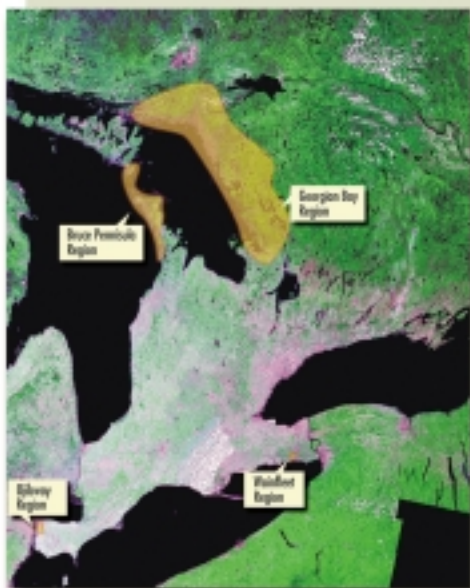
Ontario's only venomous snake, the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake is a unique and fascinating reptile. Many people will never get to see a massasauga because of the snake's behaviour. They are non-aggressive and will avoid people. They rely on their colouration and remaining still to stay hidden. The rattle may be used as a warning if someone moves too close.

... A Threatened Species

The Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake once had a much wider distribution in Southern Ontario than it does today. Persecution, habitat fragmentation and loss have resulted in their decline. This threatened species is protected by both Provincial and Federal legislation. Massasauga rattlesnakes are a unique component of Ontario's natural heritage. By being aware of your surroundings and following some precautions, you can safely share habitat with the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake.

Identifying Ontario's Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake

Learn to identify Ontario snakes, and to distinguish the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake from other snakes. Teach your children and visitors how to identify the massasauga. Ask children to tell an adult if they see a snake. The message is not meant to scare them, but to make them aware.



What To Look For

Colour

Brownish grey to dark grey background with dark saddle-shaped blotches on the back with several rows of alternating blotches on the side. Blotches are edged in white. Belly is dark.

Shape

Heavy-bodied snake. Head is diamond shaped with white stripes along jaw. Neck is narrow in contrast to wide head and body. Stubby tail has a brown, segmented rattle.

Eyes

Vertical (cat-like) pupils. Heat sensitive pits are located between eye and nostril. If you can see this you are probably too close! Try using binoculars to see these features.

Length 47 - 76 cm

www.massasauga.ca

Snake Safety Tips



DO NOT
pick up snakes or
other wild animals.

DO NOT
harass, chase, or
threaten a snake.

Canada



THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION
LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada

1. Wear protective footwear (such as hiking boots that cover the ankle) and long, loose fitting pants, especially when hiking at night or in open rocky areas, through brush or long grass.
2. Use a flashlight when traveling at night.
3. Always watch where you are putting your feet and hands. Poke around gently with a stick before reaching into brush, under rocks, or into dark places where snakes may be hiding.
4. Keep pets on leashes; curious pets are more likely to encounter a snake than people.
5. If you hear a rattlesnake, **STAY CALM!** Stop walking, and then determine the snake's location. Slowly move away from the snake and give it room to also move away. Enjoy the unique encounter but observe it from a distance and try not to disturb the snake.

If a Snakebite Does Occur

1. Do not panic. Remain calm. Remember that the person may have been bitten but no venom injected.
2. Call emergency services to request transportation to the hospital. If possible, carry the patient or assist them in reducing activity. Ensure they are laying down while waiting for transportation. Remaining calm and inactive will slow the circulation of venom through the body.
3. Wash and cleanse the wound.
4. Remove any jewellery from the bitten limb in case of swelling.
5. Loosely splint the limb to reduce movement.
6. Always seek medical attention.

Never apply a tourniquet, ice, cut the bite area or apply suction. Never try to catch or kill the snake; this is unnecessary, dangerous, and illegal due to its protected status.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE!

The massasauga rattlesnake's striking distance is limited to 1/2 its body length. The fangs and venom glands of the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake are quite small. The fangs are not likely to penetrate leather-hiking boots or loose clothing. If a rattlesnake does bite, there is a 25% chance that no venom is injected. In many other instances, only a small quantity of venom may be injected.

Keep the danger of snakebite in perspective. There have only been two fatalities in Ontario linked to snakebite. These fatalities occurred over 40 years ago, and in both cases, neither person received appropriate medical attention.

For more information: www.massasauga.ca