

Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*)

Description: The adult Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake stout body ranges from 47.2-76.0 cm in length. Its body colour ranges from grey to tan, with a row down the centre of its back of large brown black blotches and three smaller rows of alternating spots on the side of the body. Young snakes exhibit the same pattern, but are paler. Its dark brown rattle is found at the end of the tail and is made up of hard, interlocking segments.

Habitat and Range: The Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake prefers wetland and swampy areas. During summer months it can also be found in rocky upland areas. This threatened species is primarily found on the islands and adjacent shoreline areas of Georgian Bay, with small populations present in the Wainfleet Bog (near Port Colborne) and the Ojibway Nature Reserve (near Windsor).

Diet: Consists mostly of frogs and small rodents such as mice. It will also prey on small birds and even on other snakes. With its pair of hollow, curved fangs, the snake injects venom into the prey, very much like a hypodermic needle.



Eastern Massasauga Range
in Ontario

Behaviour: A solitary species, the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake is rather shy and avoids human contact. It is generally non-aggressive and will remain motionless unless disturbed. If approached too closely the snake will rattle its tail loudly as a warning and only bite as its last mechanism of defence.

Rattlesnake Research Project

History: Over the past 100 years, the range of the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake has declined dramatically in Ontario. As a consequence of habitat loss and persecution, this species was on the endangered list for many years. Today, owing largely to greater public awareness, research, and habitat protection, Eastern Massasauga populations are slowly recovering. In Ontario, the shoreline of Georgian Bay is home to the largest remaining populations of this species. To better understand the habitat characteristics and to determine the status of this species in its northern zone, a survey of the Killarney and French River area is currently being carried out.

Objectives of the Study:

To determine the distribution range and population status of the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake in the southern Sudbury district.



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