

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE WORKING TOGETHER TO SAVE THE EASTERN MASSASAUGA RATTLESNAKE



The Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake is Ontario's only venomous snake and is at risk of extinction. This snake is timid and prefers to move away from danger and avoid conflict. In addition, loss of wetlands and habitat fragmentation due to expanding human settlements and high road mortality are threatening the survival of this species.



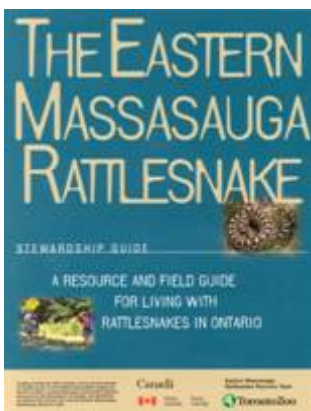
In Ontario, the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake is found in populations on the Bruce Peninsulas and eastern shores of Georgian Bay; Wainfleet Bog near Port Colborne and La Salle/Windsor. These populations are vulnerable to inbreeding and disease, and may be unable to recover from road mortalities or human persecution. If isolated populations decrease in size, they will continue to decline to extinction.

CONSERVATION AT THE TORONTO ZOO



The Toronto Zoo initiated the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake conservation strategy in the late 1980's in response to increasing demand from the public for information about the species. At the same time, it was reported that populations in Ontario were in decline and becoming isolated. In 1991, COSEWIC listed the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake as Threatened and the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake National Recovery Team was founded. The team is a network of researchers, biologists, government and park representatives and zoo officials working for the species' conservation. The Toronto Zoo was one of the team's founding members and in this position the Toronto Zoo is able to contribute to the rattlesnake's conservation through research, education, and public outreach programme.

To learn more about the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake visit: www.massasauga.ca



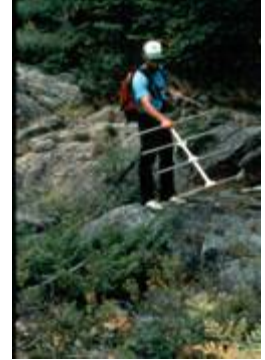
Over the years, the Toronto Zoo has produced a variety of outreach and education resources including informative posters, snake identifiers and stickers intended to make the public more familiar with the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake, and consequently, more tolerant towards the species. A newsletter, "Rattlesnake Tales", no longer published, celebrated people who peacefully share habitat with rattlesnakes to inspire other people in Ontario to do the same. A Stewardship Guide provides information about sharing habitat with rattlesnakes and how to live with wildlife.

To receive a copy please email aap@torontozoo.ca

To learn more about Ontario's snakes visit <http://www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/>



In addition, the Toronto Zoo contributes to the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake National Recovery Team with veterinary expertise and research. A two year capture and translocation project led by Toronto Zoo found that snakes moved to safety outside their home range died. This led to changes in the management of all rattlesnakes as snakes are no longer moved from their familiar habitat. Toronto Zoo veterinarians perform transmitter implants for tracking rattlesnakes and studying their habitat, disease screening of captive and wild snakes, and post mortem



examinations. The Toronto Zoo also provides recommendations for husbandry protocols of captive populations to ensure their health and encourage breeding. We also provide qualified staff at conservation and education facilities and national and provincial parks. With team and MNR approval, in 2006, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) designated the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake a Species Survival Plan status. Under the SSP®, the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake populations will be managed to maintain genetic diversity in AZA members' facilities, such as Toronto Zoo.

COME MEET THE EASTERN MASSASAUGA RATTLESNAKE!

The Toronto Zoo hosts "Living with Rattlesnakes" workshops twice a year, in April and November. Attendees learn about the challenges facing the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake, the conservation efforts to save it, and how they can help. They become familiar with the rattlesnakes' biology and behaviour. Attendees also learn to identify the rattlesnake and other snake species that are similar in appearance. Some snake species are often misidentified as rattlesnakes and are killed by humans out of fear.



Workshop, attendees meet the Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake, the fox snake, the milk snake, the largest snake in Ontario; the black rat snake, and children friendly snake visitors!



For more details about the “Living with Rattlesnakes” workshop and registration, please email alentini@torontozoo.ca

TORONTO ZOO AND ENVIRONMENT CANADA’S STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMME

Come visit the snakes of Ontario at the America’s Pavillion at the Toronto Zoo!
Do not miss our interactive exhibit!



You can also take the rattlesnake interactive quiz and tour the rattlesnake’s range!
Go to: <http://www.massasauga.ca/module/index.html>

RATTLESNAKES IN CANADA



In addition to Ontario’s Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake (link to zoo’s webpage for species), Canada is home to the Prairie rattlesnake in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the Northern Pacific rattlesnake in British Columbia (link to Cdn Desert webpage).

The prairie rattlesnake is protected by the Alberta Wildlife Act and the Saskatchewan Environment Act in response to populations’ declines. In Alberta, the prairie rattlesnake’s hibernation dens are protected by law and are monitored yearly. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development has initiated research on the rattlesnake’s population size and distribution, hibernation dens inventory, and tracking rattlesnakes using radio telemetry to identify and protect critical habitats. In Saskatchewan, the prairie rattlesnake is protected by the Saskatchewan Environment Act. Remarkably, a concerned citizen named Pat Stewart and her sister Wendy Michael initiated the production of a poster providing information about the species status in Saskatchewan,

©Mike Lockhart its identification, precautionary measures, and instructions for bite treatments. The poster was produced in cooperation between Pat Stewart and Wendy Michael, Val Marie & District Ambulance Inc., and Grasslands National Park. The Toronto Zoo provided consultation and funding. The poster was distributed to the public to raise awareness about prairie rattlesnake’s conservation and public safety.



To learn more about the prairie rattlesnake in Alberta visit:

http://www.abheritage.ca/abnature/speciesatrisk/prairie_rattlesnake_intro.htm

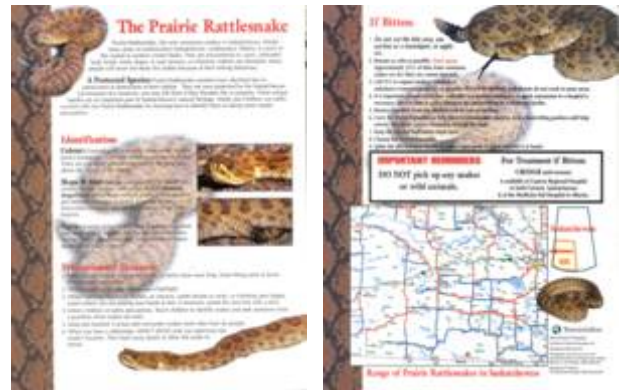
http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/fishwildlife/escc/pdf/prairie_rattlesnake.pdf

To download the poster in colour:

[link](#)

To download the poster in black and white:

[link](#)



The Northern Pacific rattlesnake (make link to Osoyoos page) can only be found in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia. This species is protected under the British Columbia Wildlife Act. Community outreach programmes are offered in cooperation between the Osoyoos Indian Band and researchers to help conserve this species and its habitat.

To learn more about the Northern Pacific rattlesnake, visit:

<http://nkmipcentre.osoyoos.com/moreinfo.htm>

http://www.bcreptiles.ca/snakes/n_pacificrattle.htm

<http://www.bcreptiles.ca/SiteCM/U/D/3F3AF57DC9C45E78.pdf>

For posting online:

(Link for Rattlesnake tales <http://www.massasauga.ca/>)

(Link for stewardship guide: <http://www.massasauga.ca/html/stewardship/index.htm>)