

A Canadian Spectacle

Where would you go to see the largest congregation of snakes in the World?
Manitoba of course!

The Red-sided Garters of Narcisse

Each spring, around Mother's Day more than 50 000 red-sided garter snakes (*Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis*) emerge from their hibernation dens in Narcisse, Manitoba to warm up, breed, and then move away for the summer.

This is a very unique event for many reasons:

- ❖ It is the largest over-wintering population of snakes in the world
- ❖ No other snake in the world lives in communal dens which house up to 10 000 snakes at one time
- ❖ This is the largest aggregation of any terrestrial vertebrate in North America
- ❖ This species is found further north than any other North American reptile

Where is Narcisse?

The Narcisse snake dens can be found in Manitoba, about an hour and a half drive north of Winnipeg.

The red-sided garter is found further north than any other reptile in North America.

Hibernacula

Snakes must overwinter below the frost line to survive the harsh weather. They hibernate in dens, known as *hibernacula*, that are a network of caverns that go underground to protect them from the cold.

The hibernacula at Narcisse are shared, housing up to 10 000 snakes at once.

You can visit the Toronto Zoo's hibernaculum on the zoo site.



Want to Find out more?

More than 35 000 people visit the 4 Narcisse snake hibernacula each year and so can you!
You can also visit the Manitoba Conservation Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection Branch website for information and updates on what's happening in the dens.

Links

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/managing/snakes.html>

<http://www.manitobaphotos.com/Narcisse/title.jpg>

<http://www.manitobaphotos.com/narcisse.htm>

<http://www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/snakehibernacula.asp>