

# Saving Eastern Ribbonsnake:

## What you can do to help

The Eastern Ribbonsnake (*Thamnophis sauritus*) is a long, narrow snake that likes the water. It is dark brown to black with three yellow stripes: one down the back and one on each side. Usually, there is a rust colour below the yellow stripes on each side. Its belly is pale green to white and it has a distinctive white bar or half-moon shape in front of each eye. Males and females look the same, but females are usually a bit longer and thicker than males. The young are miniature replicas of their parents. The scales of the Eastern Ribbonsnake are keeled (rough to the touch).

### Do you live near Eastern Ribbonsnakes?

The Eastern Ribbonsnake can only be found at a few sites in the Carolinian zone, usually close to wetlands. Most of the year they live along the edges of shallow ponds, streams, marshes, swamps, or bogs bordered by thick vegetation that provides cover. They use these areas to hunt for frogs and small fish. They also need sunlit shoreline basking areas such as logs or low shrubs.

During the summer the adult females give birth to live young in wetland and shoreline habitats, usually near upland forested areas.

In the winter Eastern Ribbonsnakes congregate to hibernate in animal burrows, rock crevices and even ant mounds.

### What you can do to help

- ✓ Control erosion to minimize risk of sediment release into rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands.
- ✓ Keep your property as natural as possible. Maintain or create brush piles and leave logs to decay where they lie. This is good for snakes and their food sources.
- ✓ Retain natural shorelines (e.g. vegetation, fallen trees in water, etc.). Provide additional habitat by placing partially submerged logs near the shore to be used by basking snakes.



Photo credit: Scott Gillingwater

### Field check

The Eastern Ribbonsnake is very similar to the Eastern Gartersnake and Butler's Gartersnake. Differences to look for are:

- ✓ White crescent in front of the eye
  - ✓ Chin and cheeks are more white than yellow
  - ✓ The change between the light-coloured chin and the dark head is very distinct
  - ✓ More slender and the black and yellow pattern is very distinct
  - ✓ Lateral (side) stripes on third and fourth scale rows
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- ✓ Construct hibernacula if hibernation sites are lacking.
  - ✓ Do not remove or change the position of rocks on your property, and create new rock piles if possible.
  - ✓ Provide additional thermoregulation and birthing habitat by laying out cover materials throughout the property.
  - ✓ When cutting trees leave stumps in place or even dislodge them slightly to provide access to the root system.
  - ✓ Protect, maintain and restore south-facing rocky slopes adjacent to small forest openings or wetlands.
  - ✓ When possible, restrict boat and fishing access to water bodies where Eastern Ribbonsnakes are known to live to prevent disturbance of and/or injuries to this species.

## General Best Stewardship Practices

- ✓ **Keep domestic pets on a leash** when outside to prevent them from harming or harassing native wildlife.
- ✓ **Learn to identify invasive species.** Your local Conservation Authority or Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Office can provide you with information on invasive species that occur in your area and what you can do to help prevent their spread.
- ✓ **Learn about stewardship activities** in your area and actively participate in protecting Species at Risk. To find more information about stewardship activities in your area, contact your local Stewardship Council or Conservation Authority.
- ✓ **Take advantage of the Environmental Farm Plan program.** To learn more contact the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources or the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.
- ✓ **Report any illegal activity** related to plants and wildlife to 1-877-TIPS-MNR (847-7667)

## Did you know?

If you have Species at Risk on your property, you may be eligible for stewardship programs or financial incentives that support the protection and recovery of Species at Risk and their habitats. Contact the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources for more information.

## Status

The Eastern Ribbonsnake is listed as Special Concern nationally and provincially.

Carolinian Canada Coalition is working with local Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Offices, Conservation Authorities and other Non-Governmental Organizations to recover Species at Risk.

You can help the recovery efforts by protecting this species and its habitat.

## Did you know?

Females give birth to 5 to 12 live young, which are 16 to 24 cm long at birth.

## Good sources of information

### Carolinian Canada Coalition:

[www.carolinian.org](http://www.carolinian.org)

### Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources:

Includes information about Ontario Species at Risk  
[www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/)

### Natural Heritage Information Centre

<http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/>

### Find your local Conservation Authority Office:

[www.conservationontario.ca](http://www.conservationontario.ca)

### Government of Canada Species at Risk Public Registry:

[www.sararegistry.gc.ca](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca)

### Find your local Stewardship Council:

[www.ontariostewardship.org](http://www.ontariostewardship.org)

### Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

Includes information about the Environmental Farm Plan

[ontariosoilcrop.org](http://ontariosoilcrop.org)

### Toronto Zoo Adopt-a-Pond

Learn more about Ontario's reptiles, their habitat and related conservation initiatives.

[www.torontozoo.com/Adoptapond](http://www.torontozoo.com/Adoptapond)

### Ontario's Reptile and Amphibian Atlas

See how you can participate and learn more about Ontario's reptiles and amphibians.

[www.ontarionature.org/protect/species/herpetofauna/atlantlas.php](http://www.ontarionature.org/protect/species/herpetofauna/atlantlas.php)

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