

Saving Queensnake:

What you can do to help

The Queensnake (*Regina septemvittata*) is a long, narrow snake that spends most of its time in the water. It is brownish-olive, olive-brown or grayish-olive (even chocolate brown or chestnut) in colour, with three slightly darker (often hard to see) stripes running down its back. A distinctive yellow stripe runs along each lower side of the body, and the belly is cream to yellow with four distinct brown stripes. The scales of the Queensnake are keeled (rough to the touch).

Do you live near Queensnakes?

The Queensnake is only found at a small number of sites in the Carolinian zone. Most of the year they are not often found more than 3m from water. In these waterbodies they need a lot of cover, such as flat rocks submerged, and many crayfish. Other important habitat items may include rocky, gravelly, or slate streambeds, a swift to moderate current, and woodland surroundings.

During the winter they may hibernate in the abutments of old bridges, bedrock outcrops and possibly crayfish burrows.

What you can do to help

- ✓ **Protect natural wetlands.** Tile drainage, filling, clearing vegetation, stream channelization and ditching change water levels, divert waterflow, and potentially dry the habitat. Contact your local Conservation Authority or Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Office before starting any work in or near your wetlands.
- ✓ **Control erosion** to minimize risk of sediment release into rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands.
- ✓ **Ensure protection of water quality** for both snakes, and their prey, crayfish.
- ✓ **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.



Photo: Scott Gillingwater

Field check

- ✓ Only Ontario snake with a striped belly: cream to yellow belly with four brown stripes
- ✓ The irises of the eyes are dark brown with brassy flecks
- ✓ The tongue is dark reddish-brown
- ✓ Usually found in or very near the water

Did you know?

Ontario Queensnakes have a very restrictive diet: they eat almost exclusively one species of crayfish (*Orconectes propinquus*). They eat newly-molted (have just shed their skin) crayfish that are less able to defend themselves. In turn, crayfish may eat juvenile and hibernating snakes!

- ✓ **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.
- ✓ **Provide a 30m undisturbed area** around known hibernation sites.
- ✓ **Restrict recreational use near shorelines** where Queensnakes occur to prevent disturbing or injuring them.

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.
- ✓ **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.
- ✓ **Report any illegal activity** related to plants and wildlife to 1-877-TIPS-MNR (847-7667)

Did you know?

Females reach sexual maturity at 3 years old. They give birth to 10-15 live young under stones or other cover items near water. Litter size is directly related with the body length of the female: bigger females have more young!

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Status

The Queensnake is listed as Endangered nationally and provincially. It is illegal to kill, harm or collect the species, or to destroy its habitat in Ontario.

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.

Good sources of information

Carolinian Canada Coalition:

www.carolinian.org

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources:

Includes information about Ontario Species at Risk

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

Government of Canada Species at Risk Public Registry:

www.sararegistry.gc.ca

Find your local Stewardship Council:

www.ontariostewardship.org

Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

Includes information about the Environmental Farm Plan

ontariosoilcrop.org

Toronto Zoo Adopt-a-Pond

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

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_l_atlas.php