

## Eastern Foxsnake (*Pantherophis gloydi*)

### Status and Protection

Within Ontario, the Eastern Foxsnake (Carolinian population) is listed as an endangered species and receives protection in Ontario under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA) and in Canada under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). The Eastern Foxsnake (Carolinian population) also receives general habitat protection under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007*. Protection prohibits actions such as killing, harming, harassing, possessing, selling or trading.

### Description

The Eastern Foxsnake is Ontario's second largest snake species, attaining lengths of over 150 centimetres. The Eastern Foxsnake varies in colour from yellow to light brown with a row of relatively large dark brown or black dorsal blotches with smaller dark blotches running laterally. The belly has alternating yellow and dark brown patches. The head of adults is generally light brown to reddish brown appearing orange or copper from a distance. Juveniles possess a less striking coloured head; however, dorsal and lateral blotches are much more vivid. Males, on average, may be slightly larger and have a longer more evenly tapering tail than females. Eastern Foxsnakes defend themselves either by striking or emitting an unpleasant musk odour.



Eastern Foxsnakes are active from mid April to the end of October. They usually hibernate through the winter in abandoned mammal burrows but are known to hibernate in residential homes and backyard sheds. Small mammals make up the largest part of the diet but they will climb trees to feed on bird eggs and nestlings. Breeding takes place in spring and early summer. Females lay eggs in late June and July, depositing clutches of seven to 29 eggs in rotted stumps, shallow burrows, under logs or mats of decaying vegetation.



The Eastern Foxsnake is harmless to humans. It is non venomous, however its reddish head color and tail buzzing habits makes it intimidating to individuals unfamiliar with the species who may mistake it for the Massasauga Rattlesnake.

## Habitat

Habitats utilized by Eastern Foxsnake in the Essex-Kent region are generally unforested and include old field, prairie, marsh and dune-shoreline. This species is generally found in close proximity to aquatic settings. Foxsnakes have also been found to live in close association to disturbed areas, particularly within Essex County.

## Distribution

In Ontario, particularly along the Lake Erie and Lake Huron shoreline, the species has a fragmented population distribution. In Ontario the species is found mainly in Essex and Kent Counties. Globally, the Eastern Foxsnake is restricted to Ontario, Michigan and Ohio, with an estimated 65-70% of its global population being found within Ontario<sup>i</sup>.

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<sup>i</sup> URS Corporation and LGL Limited. 2009. Eastern Foxsnake (*Elaphe gloydi*) Impact Assessment Report for the Detroit International River Crossing Study.