

What is being done?

There is legislation to protect the eastern hognose from being sold or from becoming game species. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has a list of strategies to manage and protect this species including habitat management, life history research, and population monitoring. All of these are recommended because it is important to understand the needs of the eastern hognose in order to successfully manage and promote their populations.



What can you do?

If you see an eastern hognose snake imitating a cobra or displaying another defensive behavior, do not be alarmed. They are not dangerous to humans. It is also important to support organizations and efforts that help conserve and protect eastern hognose snake populations where they are species of concern.



Opportunities to Get Involved

At Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park, we work with our landowning partners to ensure proper management and restoration of these species' ecosystems and welcome volunteers to help our efforts! Contact us using the information below if you are interested in these volunteer opportunities.

80 Scout Road, Wilton, NY 12831 518-450-0321

Website: www.wiltonpreserve.org

Email: info@wiltonpreserve.org

Our mission is to conserve ecological systems and natural settings, while providing opportunities for environmental education and outdoor recreation.

Sources:

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Animal Diversity Web, Florida Museum, and New Hampshire Fish and Game

Photos courtesy of volunteers

The Eastern Hognose Snake

Heterodon platirhinos



Photo by Deb Hall

WWPP is part of the Saratoga Sandplains which makes it an ideal home for the eastern hognose snake; this snake prefers sandy soil habitats. We work with our partners to manage this geologically significant area which provides a safe habitat for this species.

To learn more about the eastern hognose snake or other species residing in Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park, visit www.wiltonpreserve.org

Description and Diet

The eastern hognose snake is an average length of 20-33 inches. Their identifying feature is their upturned nose which is used for digging into sandy soil. This thick-bodied snake varies in color but usually has body colors of either yellow, brown, or black with a gray or yellow underside, and they are patterned with large rectangular spots.

Eastern hognose snakes eat a variety of animals including toads, frogs, salamanders, small mammals, and other invertebrates.

Toads inflate their bodies as a defense mechanism, but these snakes have rear fangs that can be used to deflate toads which makes swallowing them easier. The eastern hognose snake is harmless to humans.



Habitat

Areas with sandy or gravelly soil are the most common locations to find eastern hognose snakes. They require these types of soil to bury themselves for hibernation. WWPP provides great habitat for this snake, as we are located in the Saratoga Sandplains. They are typically found in woodlands and open fields,



Photo by Kenneth Barnett

Life Cycle

Eastern hognose snakes take 2 years to reach sexual maturity. Mating begins in the spring and lasts into early summer months. In order to find a mate, males follow female scent trails. Females lay an average of 10 to 30 eggs at one time during the months of June or July that hatch in September and October. Eastern hognose snakes hibernate during the winter in self-made holes. To make these holes, they burrow their head into the ground and move side to side.

History and Status

Eastern hognose snakes are found in 30 US states; their range extends along the east coast from New York down into southern Florida and then stretches into central United States. They are also found in southern Ontario.

Eastern hognose snakes have a listed conservation status in 4 states. In New York, this snake is a state-designated species of special concern.

Defense Displays

The eastern hognose snake has many predators including raccoons, opossums, predatory birds, and even other snakes. In response to being preyed upon by so many species, the eastern hognose snake has several theatrical defense displays. When first threatened, they will imitate a cobra by sucking in air and puffing up the skin around their head and neck. They will then hiss and lunge at the predator. If this doesn't ward off the predator, the eastern hognose snake will play dead; this involves rolling onto their back, hanging their tongue out of their mouth, and defecating.

Why are they a species of special concern?

While they are not endangered or threatened, the eastern hognose snake still holds a conservation status of special concern in New York State for a few reasons. They require a specific habitat, so development of the sandy areas that these snakes live in leads to loss of habitat and decreases in population. They are highly mobile, but their habitats can be fragmented by roads; this means that the eastern hognose snake is vulnerable to road mortality.



Photo by Kenneth Barnett