

Eastern Ribbonsnake

Thamnophis sauritus



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Species Description

The Eastern Ribbonsnake is a long, slender, semi-aquatic snake (up to 70 cm). It is jet-black with three yellow stripes running from head to tail along its back and sides; it has a caramel brown shade on the lower sides, and a white tear-drop scale in front of each eye. It is a harmless snake, and it is not poisonous.



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Distinguishing features:

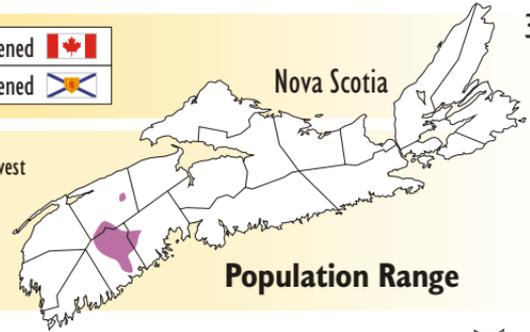
Vertical white bar in front of each eye, solid yellow stripes (on 3rd and 4th scale row up from the belly).

STATUS

Threatened 

Threatened 

Occurs throughout southwest Nova Scotia, with known concentrations in Kejimikujik and on Molega Lake.



Habitat

Found in freshwater wetlands, such as stillwater streams, marshes, swamps, bogs, lakeshores and coves. They are rarely found more than 30 m from the water's edge, and are typically seen in areas with aquatic vegetation, shallow pools, and amphibians.



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Eastern Ribbonsnakes are typically observed around wetlands in spring, and along tracks and roadsides near water in summer. They are also seen swimming along water's edge, or curled up under cover.

Interesting Points

- Females are ovoviviparous (they give birth to live young) and are typically bigger than males.
- The Nova Scotia population is a subspecies of the Eastern Ribbonsnake, and is known as the Northern Ribbonsnake.
- Individuals eat mostly small fish and amphibians



Newborn ribbonsnake

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Similar Species

Maritime Garter Snake:

Bigger; diamond-shaped head; various colours; checkered patterning.

Note:

There are five snake species that live in Nova Scotia (none are venomous): Smooth Green Snake, Ring-necked Snake, Red-bellied Snake, Maritime Garter Snake and the Eastern Ribbonsnake. The garter looks the most similar to the ribbonsnake, but has many different colourations (photos to the right).

Threats to Survival

- People often harm or kill snakes intentionally.
- Vehicles run over snakes on roads, tracks, and trails.
- Shoreline development destroys their habitat.
- Our lack of knowledge limits our ability to help them.



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How You Can Help

Learn about snakes and tell your friends and family they are harmless. Reduce vehicle mortality by watching for snakes on roads and trails. Keep domesticated pets from disturbing/harming snakes. Work to prevent shoreline development/disturbance.



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Searching for ribbonsnakes

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: Parks Canada (Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site) (902) 682-2770

Info: www.speciesatrisk.ca or www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or sightings@speciesatrisk.ca

Stewardship: Kejimikujik Area Stewardship Program, www.speciesatrisk.ca/stewardship