

Eastern Hognose Snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*)



State Rank Status: Endangered.

Distribution: Southern NH along the Merrimack River, Concord to Massachusetts border.

Description: A thick-bodied snake measuring 20-35 inches. Has a characteristic upturned snout and keeled dorsal scales. Light and dark blotches vary in color from brown to red and orange. There is also a dark phase in which the body is almost uniform in and grayish-black color.

Commonly Confused Species: [Garter snake](#); [Timber rattlesnake](#)

Habitat: Requires sandy, gravelly soils such as open fields, river valleys, pine forests, and upland hillsides. Feeds predominately on toads; therefore needs breeding habitat (e.g., wetlands, vernal pools) for amphibians.

Life History: During summer lays eggs a few inches underground or under woody debris. Hibernates in mammal burrows, under woody debris, or under trash piles. Has a dramatic defense display including hissing, mock striking, and playing dead.

Conservation Threats: Loss of habitat from rapidly developing southern New Hampshire; mortality on roadways, loss of amphibian populations; people killing individual snakes because of fear (**hognose snakes are not dangerous** to humans or pets!...unless you are a toad).



Dark hognose snake with no obvious pattern.
Photo by Mike Marchand.



Hognose snakes often flatten and spread out their heads like a cobra. If this doesn't work, they often flip over and play dead. Photo by Mike Marchand.