

# Northern Brown Snake

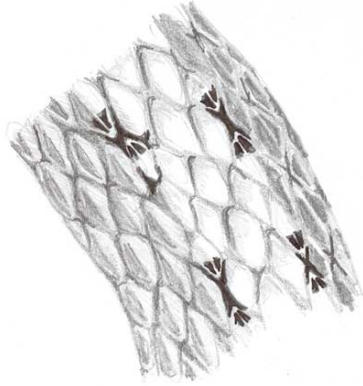
*Storeria dekayi dekayi*



## Identification

**Length:** 13-18"

The Northern Brown Snake is a non-venomous snake. Its back color is a shade of brown or gray. Along the center of its back is a broad, light-colored stripe bordered with two parallel rows of black spots. This species has a dark downward streak on the side of the head. Brown snakes have 17 rows of scales, which are keeled (scales with a central ridge). Their unmarked bellies may be cream, pinkish or yellowish in color.



## Habitat

Marshes, streams, ponds, lakes, and open grasslands with woodland borders.

## Life History

A Northern Brown Snake is also called a DeKay's snake, named after James Edward DeKay who was a New York naturalist. Most brown snakes are harmless and do not bite; however, some snakes may release a foul-smelling musk when they are harassed. Brown snakes are sensitive to vibrations and they use their forked tongues to sense and interpret their surroundings. Like other snakes, they wiggle their tongues through the air to collect chemicals. To analyze these chemicals, the snake places its forked tongue into a special organ, called a Jacobson's organ, located on the inside of their mouth.

## Ecology Link

At the Dike 14 Nature Preserve, Northern Brown Snakes help to control populations of snails, slugs, and earthworms. They also serve as a valuable food supply for their predators, which include American Crows, hawks, mink, and Blue Jays.

## Web Link

To learn more about snakes, visit *Ohio Snakes* online at [www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/resources/reptiles/reptiles.htm](http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/resources/reptiles/reptiles.htm).

# Eastern Garter Snake

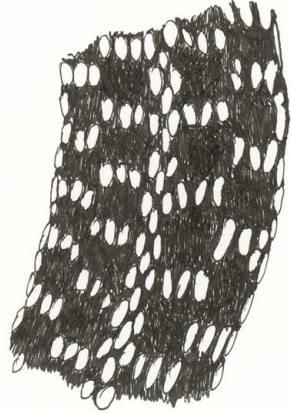
*Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*



## Identification

Length: 14-48"

The Eastern Garter Snake is a non-venomous snake. This snake has a light brown to black colored back with a double row of alternating black spots. The stripe down the middle of its back is usually yellow. The stripes on its sides are cream to yellow and are located on the second and third scale rows. Its belly may be white, yellowish or bluish in color.



## Habitat

Moist habitats, and may be found at the waters' edge, open plains, grasslands, and forests or forest edge.

## Life History

The Eastern Garter Snake is active during the day (diurnal). They can be aggressive at times, and if threatened, may even bite or release a foul-smelling musk to keep back enemies. Like other species of snakes, the Eastern Garter Snake is cold-blooded and will periodically bask throughout the day in order to maintain its body temperature. To hide, they slither underneath logs, rocks, boards, and in mammal burrows. During the winter, garter snakes may hibernate with other species of snakes. The place where snakes hibernate is called a hibernaculum. Garter snakes may be seen crossing roads in October as they migrate to their hibernaculum.

## Ecology Link

At the Dike 14 Nature Preserve, Eastern Garter Snakes eat meadow voles, bird eggs, carrion (dead meat), or just about anything they can catch and swallow.

## Web Link

To learn more about snakes, visit *Ohio Snakes* online at [www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/resources/reptiles/reptiles.htm](http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/resources/reptiles/reptiles.htm).