

COMMON GARTER SNAKE

(Thamnophis sirtalis)

The Common Garter Snake is the most widespread snake in North America reaching lengths of 18-48". Garter snakes in New York usually have yellow back and side stripes though colors of brownish, greenish, or bluish will also sometimes occur. Some specimens will lack stripes or appear all black in color.



The Common Garter Snake can be found in a variety of habitats. Garter snakes have a varied diet including frogs, toads, salamanders and earthworms, as well as fish and small mammals.

Garter snakes mate from late March to early May and the females will give birth to 7- 85 live young in late June to August.

EASTERN RIBBON SNAKE

(Thamnophis sauritis)



The Eastern Ribbon Snake is 18 - 66" long. They have three bright stripes contrasting against a dark colored body. They also have a spot of the eye. Their tail is exceedingly long

This species is typically encountered in wet habitats that are grassy/shrubby or areas with no tree canopy. Their diet consists of amphibians—mainly frogs.

SNAKES OF NEW YORK

There are 17 species of snakes in New York. At least 8 species occur on Fort Drum. In contrast, Fort Wainwright in Alaska has 1 species; Fort Stewart in Georgia has 36 species of snakes.

Typically, snakes in New York are active from April to October. Snakes will hibernate during the winter months and can often be found with other snakes in rocky crevices or underground "dens" where they are protected from freezing.

Snakes are carnivorous and valued for their ability to kill rodent and insect pests. Depending on the species, they will eat everything from earthworms, slugs and insects to small birds, mammals, frogs, fish, and even other snakes. The jaws of a snake are adapted to allow them to swallow prey larger than their heads.

Although snakes may look "slimy," they are actually covered with dry, shiny scales. Snakes shed their skin periodically as they increase in size. Instead of eyelids, the eyes of a snake are protected by a single clear scale. This scale turns bluish-white when the snake gets ready to shed its skin. Snakes can see well for short distances and instead of hearing with ears, they feel vibrations in the ground.

Depending on the species, snakes either give birth to live young or lay eggs.

Per New York State regulations, harvesting, taking, or possessing any native snakes, lizards, or salamanders is prohibited at any time.

VENOMOUS SNAKES

Of the 17 species of snakes found in New York State, only 3 are venomous and all of those are rarely seen. Venomous snakes in New York State include Timber Rattlesnake, Northern Copperhead, and Eastern Massasauga (also called Swamp Rattlesnake).

THERE ARE NO KNOWN VENOMOUS SNAKES ON FORT DRUM.

All photos are from Fort Drum Natural Resources Branch our used by permission by Paul Block (Eastern Ribbon Snake).



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EASTERN MILK SNAKE

(*Lampropeltis triangulum*)

The Eastern Milk Snake is generally 26 - 52" in length. They are pale gray to yellowish in color with reddish brown patches outlined in black. There is usually a V- or Y-shaped patch on the neck.

Mating occurs in the spring and 2 - 17 oval eggs are laid in rotting logs in June or July. Young milk snakes will hatch after approximately 6-9 weeks.



The Eastern Milk Snake is very adaptable and can be found in many different habitats including forests, grasslands, rural, and suburban areas. The Milk Snake got its name from the myth that they drank cows' milk causing them to go dry. The Eastern Milk Snake actually eats rodents, birds, lizards, and other snakes.

SMOOTH GREEN SNAKE

(*Opheodrys vernalis*)

The Smooth Green Snake is 14 - 26" in length. They are bright green in color but their belly tends to be white and is often tinged with yellow.

Smooth Green Snakes are usually found in meadows and grassy fields near the edges of forests. The green color of the snake helps camouflage it as it hunts in the vegetation for insects and spiders.

Mating season occurs from spring to late summer and 3 - 11 elongated eggs are laid. The young snakes hatch 4 - 23 days later.



NORTHERN WATER SNAKE

(*Nerodia sipedon*)

After the Common Garter Snake, the Northern Water Snake is probably the second most common snake on Fort Drum and one of the longest at 24 - 42". Their colors and patterns can be highly variable, although they are usually brown or gray with brown or reddish markings. Some adults look solid black or brown when dry.

The Northern Water Snake is regularly found near bodies of water such as streams, marshes, ponds, and lakes. These snakes have a varied diet and will eat fish, frogs, smaller snakes, and small mammals.

The Northern Water Snake tends to be aggressive and will tend to bite when harassed. Because they are found in or near water and are aggressive, they are often

confused with the Cottonmouth/Water Moccasin which DOES NOT occur in New York State.



NORTHERN RED-BELLIED SNAKE

(*Storeria occipitomaculata*)

The Northern Red-bellied Snake is usually 8 - 16" in length. The body is plain brown, gray or black with a single wide light stripe or 4 or 5 narrow dark stripes. Their belly is typically red, orange or yellow but will occasionally be black.



Red-bellied snakes give birth to 1-21 live young.

Red-bellied snakes can often be found in hilly woodlands or sphagnum bogs.

NORTHERN RING-NECKED SNAKE

(*Diadophis punctatus*)

The Northern Ring-necked Snake is 10 - 30" in length. Their back is usually black, olive, or gray with a yellow, orange or cream-colored ring around its neck. Their belly is usually bright yellow, red, or orange.

Northern Ring-necked Snakes lay 1 - 10 eggs in communal nesting sites. The young hatch about eight weeks later.



The Northern Ring-necked Snake is secretive and can most often be found hiding under rocks and logs. If threatened, this snake will coil around its tail and flash its colorful belly. If continued to be bothered or handled it will emit a strong musk scent. Their prey includes earthworms, slugs, salamanders, lizards and smaller snakes.

NORTHERN BROWN SNAKE

(*Storeria dekayi*)

The Northern Brown Snake is 10 - 20" in length. Although called a "brown" snake, they vary in color from gray, yellowish-brown, brown or even reddish-brown. They have a white stripe down the back bordered by two rows of dark spots. The belly is usually a pale yellow, brown or pink with several dark spots.

The Northern Brown Snake prefer areas near water or other damp places. They are often found under rocks, leaf litter or other debris where they feed on earthworms, snails and slugs.



Female Northern Brown Snakes give birth to 3 - 31 live young.