

Eastern Massasaugas and the Department of Defense

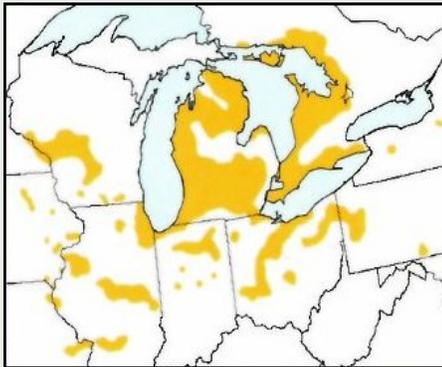


Picture by: Sasha Tetzlaff

The Massasauga (*Sistrurus catenatus*) is a small rattlesnake species native to much of the northern Midwest and Canada. Its name originates from the Chippewa language and roughly translates to “great river mouth”, likely indicative of where the species was generally observed.

Description: This small snake has a thick body, broad head, and vertical pupils. Adult Massasaugas typically measure between 18 and 30 inches (46-76 cm) in total length. Adults are gray or light brown with large, light-edged, black to light brown mid-dorsal blotches and smaller blotches on the sides of the body.

Range: Range extends from southern Ontario and western New York west across Michigan and southern Wisconsin to southeastern Minnesota, eastern Iowa, and eastern Missouri, south to southern Illinois, central Indiana, southern Ohio, and western Pennsylvania.



Source: Peterson Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America

Habitat: This rattlesnake species is typically associated with wetlands (bogs, swamps, marshes, shrub-dominated peatlands, wet meadows), primarily because of their reliance on groundwater for overwintering. During the active season, individuals will disperse into upland habitats including grassland, shrubland and forest. Hibernation occurs in mammal burrows, crayfish burrows, rock crevices, and tree root systems.

Behavior: Massasaugas typically emerge from their hibernacula between April and mid-May. Shortly after, they disperse to their active season ranges where they primarily thermoregulate and feed. Mating occurs in the late summer (July/August) and females give live birth to multiple neonates after approximately one year of gestation.

Conservation Status: The Massasauga is federally-listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. It has a NatureServe conservation ranking of G3 – Vulnerable and is State-endangered in every State or province in which it occurs (except in Michigan where it is listed as a species of special concern).

Threats: Habitat destruction, intentional killing, poaching, road mortality and Snake Fungal Disease (SFD) are threats to this species.

Occurrence on Military Lands

Confirmed	Potential
Confirmed present on less than five military installations across its range.	Up to an additional 5 military installations across its range.

