

Reptiles

Short-horned Lizard

Prairie Rattlesnake

Bullsnake

Garter Snakes (Wandering, Plains, Red-sided)

Western Painted Turtle*

Western Hognose Snake*

- At Risk - Endangered

- May be at Risk - Data deficient

- Sensitive

- Sensitive

- Sensitive

- May be at risk

*These reptiles are unique and do not share the same BMPs as the other reptiles. Recommendations for them are included in the Wetland BMP Factsheet.

These reptiles are at the northern extent of their range in North America. Short-horned Lizards are found only in the far southeast corner of Alberta in the Milk River Basin and rattlesnakes live only in the southeast but the other snake species can be found throughout the prairies. These reptiles are associated with large river systems such as the South Saskatchewan River and prefer to live near coulees and river valleys.



Joel Nicholson

Bullsnake

Snake Habitat:

- Sandy, brushy areas in badlands, coulees and river valleys.
- Rock outcrops or steep slopes with fissures, holes or burrows in the side suitable for a hibernaculum (overwintering den).

Lizard Habitat:

- Sparsely vegetated south facing slopes at interface of prairie & coulees.
- Exposed soil surface to dig shallow burrows for over wintering.

Rattlesnake Life Cycle

Late April - Early May

Emerge from Hibernacula. Non-pregnant females and males begin moving to prairie to forage and mate.



June - August

Mate on open prairie. Females mature at 5-7 years old and reproduce every 2+ years.



Prairie Rattlesnake



Mid September

Return to hibernacula for over wintering. Many snakes will spend winter together, including different species.



Late August - October

Females give birth to 4 - 12 live young at birthing areas called rookeries. Usually near hibernaculum and have good cover.

Beneficial Management Practices

- Do not disturb existing shrub communities. Shrubs are used for foraging and shelter from heat.
- Avoid disturbing south, southeast and east facing slopes that have short, sparse vegetative cover. Restrict livestock access if needed.
- Protect known hibernacula from all types of disturbance and report these sites to MULTISAR.
- Avoid grazing near known hibernacula in spring and fall as snakes will bask near them at these times.
- Avoid grazing on slopes when they are wet. Slopes are fragile and easily trampled.
- Create variability in pastures by strategically placing salt blocks and watering sites. Place salt blocks at least 200m away from river escarpments, coulee edges and south facing valley slopes.
- Avoid continuous and/or heavy grazing on reptile habitats. Rotational or deferred grazing systems allow controlled timing in these important habitats.
- Adjust stocking rates based on range health and climate. Reduce stocking rates during dry periods.
- Seed tall, dense crops away from known snake trails because they impede snake movement.
- Tolerate Richardson's ground squirrels (gophers) and American badgers if they are not causing excessive damage. They are an important food source for snakes and dig burrows that all reptiles may use for refuge. Poison is especially harmful as it can kill reptiles accidentally.



Wandering Garter Snake

The best decision you can make for all species at risk is to preserve your native grasslands.



Short-horned Lizard

Development:

- Avoid developments on slopes, in river valleys, coulees and their associated uplands.
- Road construction should not occur within 500m of river valleys in known snake ranges.
- 500m year round setback distances between developments and snake hibernacula are recommended for all permanent structures or activities that cause vegetation and soil disturbance. 100-200m setbacks are recommended for lower disturbance and non-permanent activities.
- 100m (low - medium disturbance) - 200m (high disturbance) setback distances are recommended for short-horned lizard habitat.
- If developments must occur on slopes, north facing slopes should be used not south or southeast.

For more information see the MULTISAR Industrial Guidelines Factsheet and MULTISAR Grazing BMP Factsheet in your binder or online at www.multisar.ca.

Contact:



MULTISAR
2nd Floor, YPM Place
530 - 8th Street South
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1J 2J8
www.multisar.ca

Brandy Downey - Program Coordinator
403-381-5526

Danielle Cross - Medicine Hat Biologist
403-528-5209

Brad Downey - Lethbridge Biologist
403-382-4364