



Snakes

Description & Habitat

The two most common snakes seen in Thornton are the Garter snake and the Bullsnake. Both Garter snakes and Bullsnakes are smooth, with the head being the same diameter as the rest of its body.

The Garter snake comes in different color combinations depending on what subspecies they are, but all have a stripe running from behind their head to the end of their tail.

Bullsnakes are primarily brown with a blotch type pattern similar to rattlesnakes. Both snakes nest in wooded areas, fields, and cracks around concrete areas such as steps, porches, patios and driveways. They can be found in wood piles and any accumulation of debris where they can hide.

Behavior

Snakes in general prefer areas where they can avoid human contact, and most will attempt to flee from humans and pets to avoid any conflict. They can be found in residential areas due to loss of habitat or an attractant too tempting to resist. It is not uncommon for people to have snakes in their area and not be aware of it until one day they

see a snake out sunning itself or moving from one location to another.

Garter snakes are generally around three feet long. They eat frogs, toads, salamanders, earthworms, and sometimes small fish and mice. They mate in late March to May, and give birth to live young in July to August. They can have anywhere from 7-85 babies at a time. When they are startled or angry, they give off a strong musky smell, but otherwise they are harmless. They are often found around water or marshy areas.



Bullsnakes are generally around 5-6 feet long. They are also known as a Gopher snake. They primarily eat small rodents, but the larger ones can take down prairie dogs and rabbits too.

They mate in the spring, and lay their eggs around June. They can have 3-24 eggs in the nest, and the young will hatch approximately 70 days later.

Bullsnakes are great imitators, which is key to their survival. If threatened, a Bullsnake will hiss and shake its tail, and flatten its head to appear like a rattlesnake. This is extremely convincing!

While they can bite if cornered, these snakes are non-venomous.

Benefits

Both species help control populations of animals homeowners generally don't want around, such as rodents. It is also believed that bullsnakes will prevent rattlesnakes from moving into an area.



Common Problems and Solutions

In most cases snakes left alone will seek to escape contact. If a snake is found in an enclosed area, such as inside a residence, a broom can be used to sweep the snake into a bucket or other container, then brought outside and released. Remove wood piles and piles of other debris where snakes like to reside. Trim hedges away from the ground and ensure lawns are regularly cut.

