

Massasauga Rattlesnake *Sistrurus catenatus*

Habitat Preference: Prefer a variety of early successional habitats including fens, marshes, old fields, prairies, sedge meadows, pastures and wet grasslands adjacent to bottomland forest, but tend to avoid heavily wooded areas. Wetlands with abundant crayfish or small mammal burrows are required for hibernation. Use uplands adjacent to wetland habitats extensively during summer months. Gravid females need open areas for basking.



Threats:

- Loss of natural habitat
 - Through land management practices
 - Filling or draining of wetland and conversion of suitable habitat to agricultural or commercial use
 - Loss of suitable upland habitat adjacent to wetland areas
 - Loss of pastured upland adjacent to wetland areas
- Accidental fatalities
 - Mowing
 - Disking
 - Fire
 - Roads

Habitat Improvement Guidelines:

- Maintenance of early successional habitats by:
 - Woody Invasion Removal
 - Prescribed Burning
 - Disking
 - Mowing - If mowing is done during the active period it is essential to set the blade height at 10 - 12 inches and should never be done in any known or suspected hibernation areas.

All of the above should be done while snakes are inactive, prior to April 1st or after November 1st.

- Wetland restoration:
 - Needs to be done in close proximity to a known source population.
 - Large areas are preferable to many small tracts. These snakes travel from wetland to upland frequently and small tracts will increase the chances of vehicular fatalities.
 - Needs to include large upland buffer areas consisting of restored prairie.
- Grazing can be an important in keeping open areas for basking. Any grazing that takes place in an area of a known population of Massasauga Rattlesnakes should follow a grazing management plan.
- Be aware of massasaugas crossing roads, particularly July through September.