

# A Field Guide to Fort Erie's Turtles, Snakes, Frogs and Toads



Assistance for this project was provided  
by Environment Canada

**Help protect species at risk from disappearing  
by recording where you find them.**



**When you hike in Fort Erie, keep a record of  
the date and location of your sightings of toads,  
frogs, turtles and snakes.**



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**Checklists are in the envelope on the  
inside back cover.**

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**Bert Miller**



[www.bertmillernatureclub.org](http://www.bertmillernatureclub.org)

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SPECIES NAME	ONTARIO STATUS	FORT ERIE STATUS	LOCATION DATE FOUND
* Blanding's Turtle	threatened	rare	*
Midland Painted Turtle	ok	common	
Northern Map Turtle	special concern	no reported sightings	
Red-eared Slider Turtle	introduced	rare but increasing	
Snapping Turtle	concern	declining	
* Spotted Turtle	endangered	rare and declining	*
* Wood Turtle	endangered	likely extirpated	*
DeKay's Brownsnake	ok	no reported sightings	
* Milksnake	ok	declining now rare	*
* Eastern Hog-nosed Snake	threatened	declining now very rare	*
* Smooth Greensnake	ok	likely extirpated	*
* Eastern Foxsnake	endangered	no reported sightings	*
* Red-bellied Snake	ok	very rare	*
Eastern Gartersnake	ok	common	
* Eastern Ribbonsnake	special concern	very rare	*
Northern Watersnake	ok	declining now rare	
* American Bullfrog	ok	declining now rare	*
American Toad	ok	common	
* Fowler's Toad	endangered	declining	*
* Gray Treefrog	ok	rare	*
Green Frog	ok	common	
Northern Leopard Frog	ok	common	
* Pickerel Frog	ok	very rare	*
Western Chorus Frog	ok	common	
Spring Peeper	ok	declining	
Wood Frog	ok	declining	

\* report location and provide a photograph to [info@bertmillernatureclub.org](mailto:info@bertmillernatureclub.org)





## \* **Blanding's Turtle**

*Emydoidea blandingii*

Bright yellow chin and neck.

Faint spotting on a high domed carapace.

Mature at about age 25. Found in shallow lakes, ponds and wetlands with clean water and mucky bottoms. Look for them basking on rocks or logs.

Size: 12.5-18 cm

ONTARIO STATUS
threatened
FORT ERIE STATUS
rare

\* report sightings



Don Scallen



## Midland Painted Turtle

*Chrysemys picta marginata*

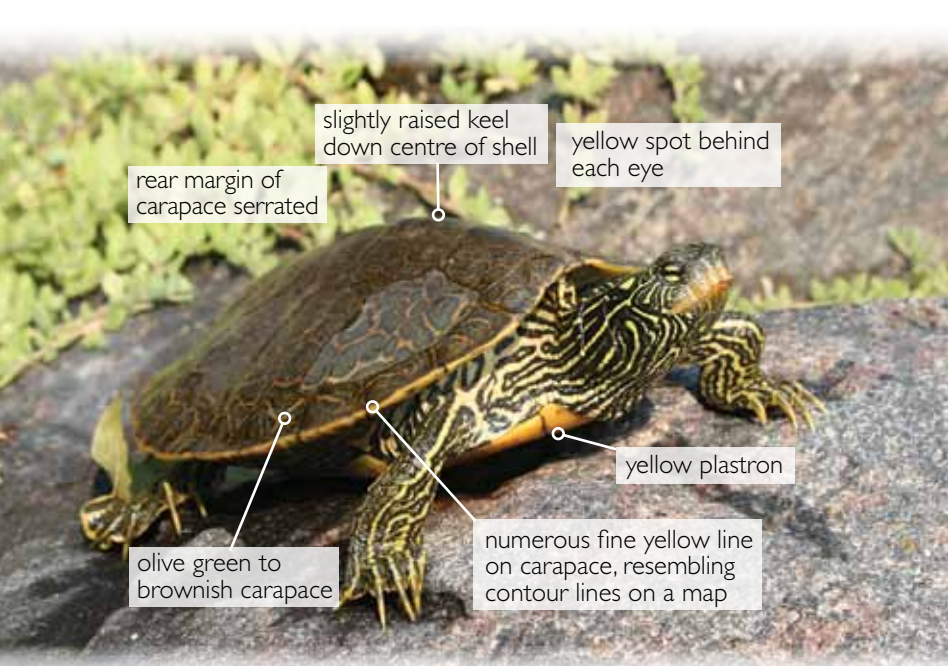
Lower neck, shell edges and legs have red markings. No orange or reddish spot behind the eye. Smooth olive to brownish-grey carapace. Found in ponds, marshes, lakes and slow-moving creeks, that have a soft bottom. Look for them basking on shorelines or on logs and rocks that stick out of the water. Size: 11.5 - 14 cm

ONTARIO STATUS

ok

FORT ERIE STATUS

common



## \* **Northern Map Turtle**

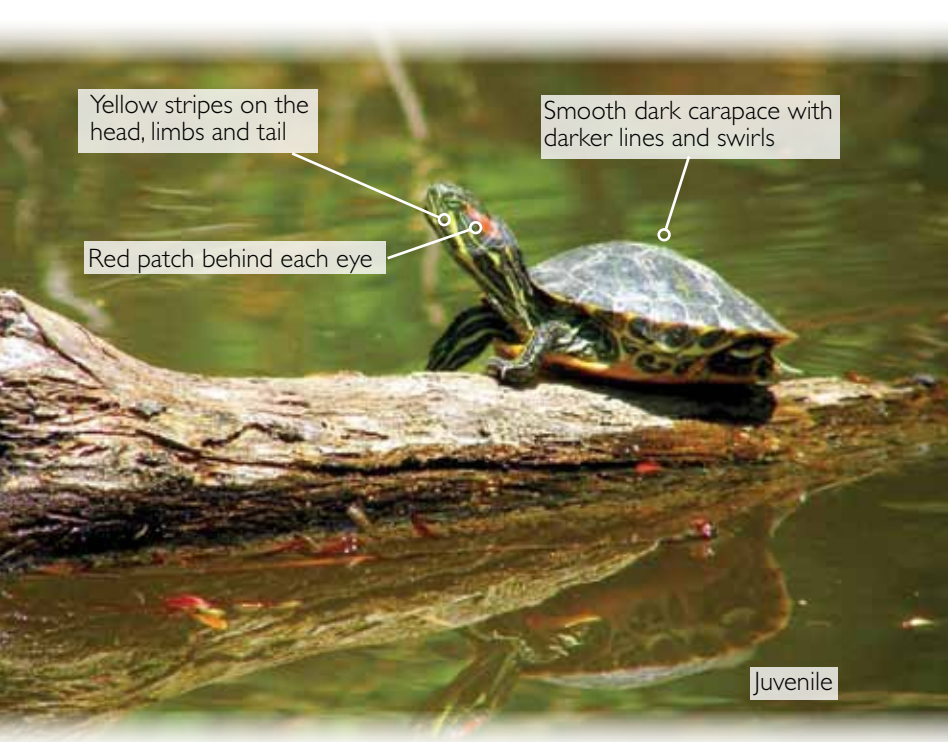
*Graptemys geographica*

Side of head has many small lines. Yellowish spot behind the eye. Line patterns in scutes. Flattened carapace. Found in large rivers and lakes with slow-moving water and a soft bottom and high quality water. Look in the upper Niagara River; eastern Welland River and Chippawa channel areas. Male size: 9-16 cm Female size: 18-28 cm

ONTARIO STATUS
special concern
FORT ERIE STATUS
no reported sightings

\* report sightings





Yellow stripes on the head, limbs and tail

Smooth dark carapace with darker lines and swirls

Red patch behind each eye

Juvenile

Don Scallen



Wikipedia

## Red-eared Slider Turtle

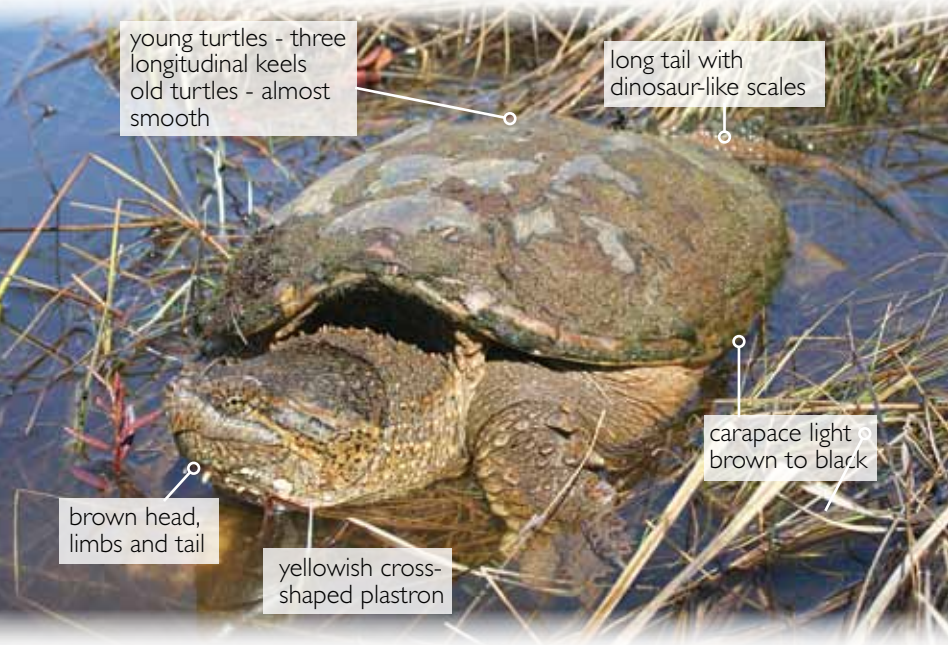
*Graptemys geographica*

ONTARIO STATUS  
introduced

FORT ERIE STATUS  
rare but increasing

Orange or reddish spot behind the eye. Shell edges may have reddish markings. Non-native species. Do NOT release into wild. Found in the same kind of habitat as the Midland Painted Turtle. There is the potential for displacement of native turtles and disease transfer into wild populations. Size: 20-33 cm





## Snapping Turtle

*Chelydra serpentina*

Brown head, tail, limbs. Black, olive or brown carapace, serrated at back, may be covered in algae. Dinosaur-like tail. Found in slow moving water with a soft mud bottom and dense aquatic plants found along rivers, estuaries, shorelines and wetlands. They are found in developed areas such as golf course ponds, irrigation canals, storm water ponds and drains. Mature at age 15-20 years. Size: 20-36 cm

ONTARIO STATUS
concerned
FORT ERIE STATUS
declining



smooth black carapace  
with bright yellow or  
orange spots

males have brown  
eyes and tan chin  
females have orange  
eyes and yellow chin

head, tail and limbs  
are grey to black with  
yellow spots

inside of limbs  
are orange

plastron yellow-orange  
with large dark irregular  
blotch on each scute



## \* Spotted Turtle

*Clemmys guttata*

Bright yellow or orange spots on smooth, black carapace. Blotches or spotting on the head, no lines. Inside limbs orange. Found in small, shallow bodies of water; such as bogs, marshes, fens, coastal wetlands and small ponds  
Size: < 14 cm

ONTARIO STATUS
endangered
FORT ERIE STATUS
rare and declining



## \* **Wood Turtle**

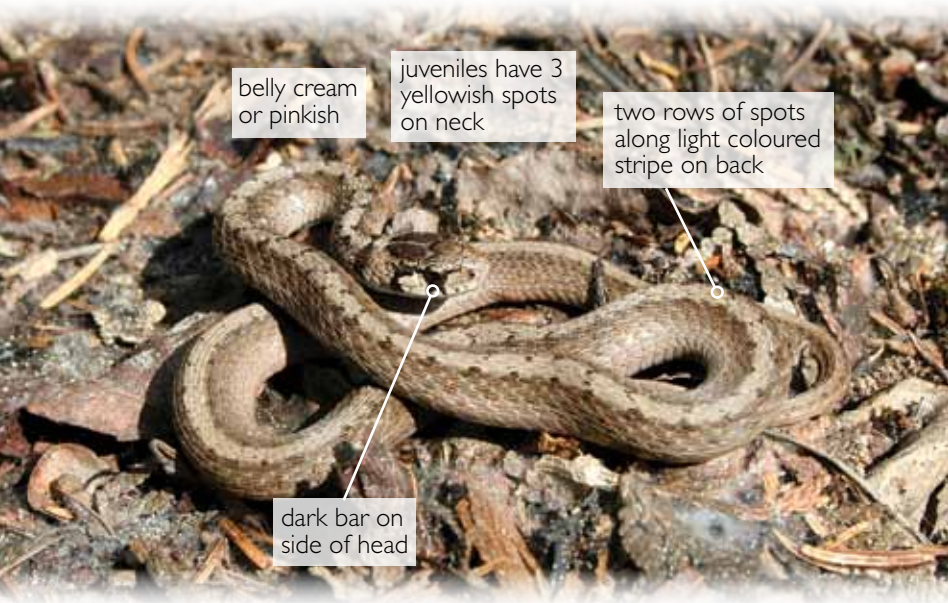
*Glyptemys insculpta*

Tan, grayish brown or brown carapace. Central ridge has pyramidal pattern of ridges and grooves. Dark gray to solid black head. Neck, chin and legs are orange to brick red. Found in rivers and streams with a medium rate of flow and having deep pools, undercut muddy banks, log piles and a bed of sand or gravel. Look in fields, meadows, swamps and bogs. Mature around age 20. Size: 20-24 cm

ONTARIO STATUS
endangered
FORT ERIE STATUS
likely extirpated

\* report sightings





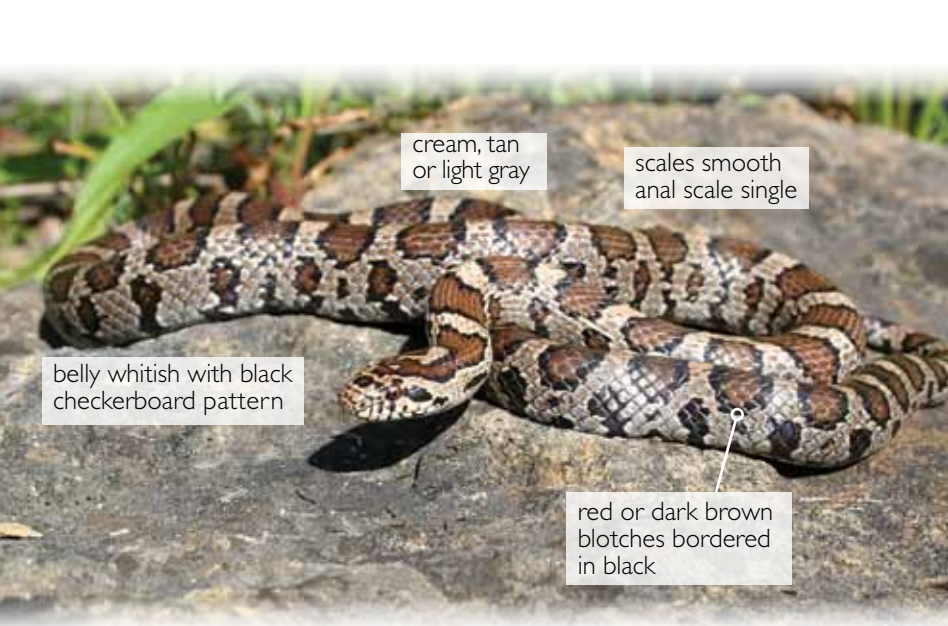
## Dekay's Brownsnake

*Storeria dekayi*

ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
no reported sightings

2 rows of dark spots along light coloured stripe along back. Light grey-brown to red. Similar in size to gartersnakes. Found in forests, wetlands, forest clearings, edge habitats, urban areas, under logs, rocks, boards, leaves and other cover.  
Size: 22-33 cm





## \*Milksnake

*Lampropeltis triangulum*

Y-shaped blotch or marking behind the head. Two-toned coloration, combining pale grey or beige with dark-brown blotches. Found in rocky outcrops, fields and forest edges as well as around barns. Size: 61-90 cm

ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
declining now rare

\* report sightings



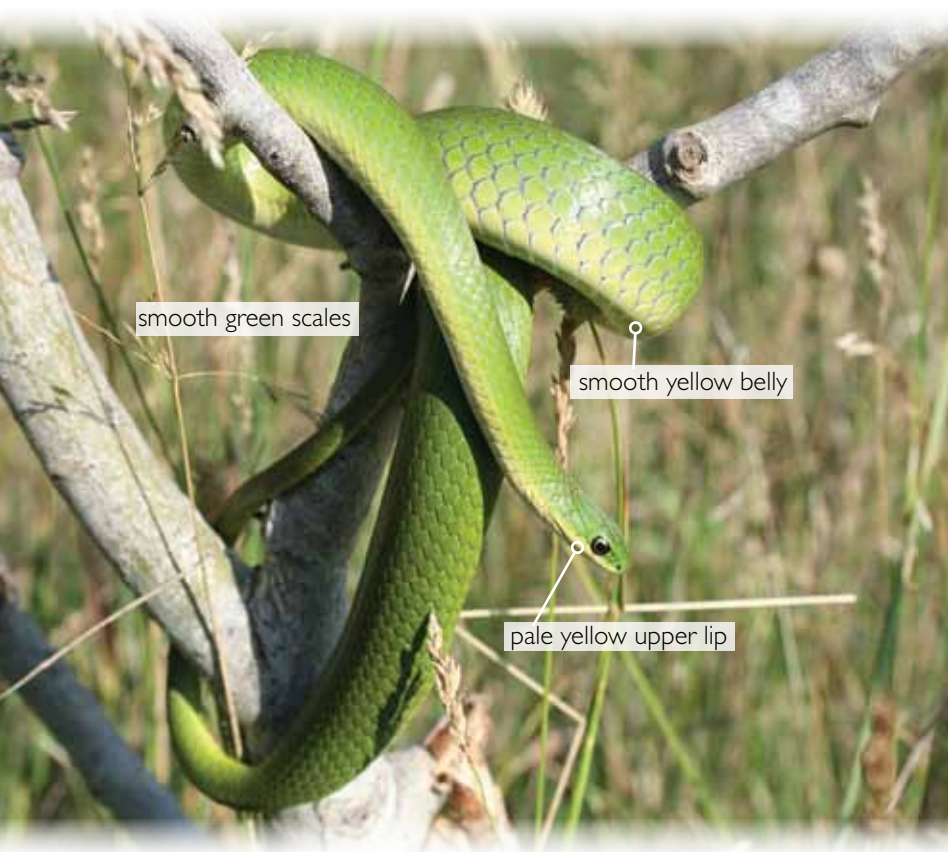
## \***Eastern Hog-nosed Snake**

*Heterodon platirhinos*

Thick body, wide neck. Alternating blotches down back and sides with light background of various colours: yellow, tan, olive, brown, gray, black or reddish-brown. White belly with dark patches. May be entirely black or dark gray. Found in sandy habitats, dunes and beaches along the Lake Erie shoreline. Size: 40 cm - > 1 m

ONTARIO STATUS
threatened
FORT ERIE STATUS
declining now very rare

\* report sightings



## \*Smooth Greensnake

*Opheodrys vernalis*

Upper body is a rich solid emerald green. White or pale yellow belly and upper lip. Young snakes are darker in colour. No lines. Will climb trees. Found in prairies, meadows, fields, wetland edges, forest clearings and open woodlands often under cover, such as logs, rocks and boards.  
Size: 30.5 - 51 cm



ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
likely extirpated

\* report sightings





## \***Eastern Foxsnake**

*Pantherophis gloydi*

Yellow underneath the head and red-brown on top. Dark bars in-between, behind and below the eyes. Yellowish-brown body. Dark blotches down the back. Row of alternating smaller blotches along each side. Belly is yellow with black checkering. Found in unforested habitats such as shorelines, prairies, savannahs, rock barrens and wetlands. Size: 85 cm - 1.7 metres

ONTARIO STATUS
endangered
FORT ERIE STATUS
no reported sightings

\* report sightings





Jason Folt



## \*Red-bellied Snake

*Storeria occipitomaculata*

Reddish or deep-orange belly scales. No ring behind the head. Found in forest edge habitat, fields and meadows with lots of ground cover, such as logs, rocks, scrap piles and building foundations.

Size: 20-25.5 cm

ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
very rare

\* report sightings

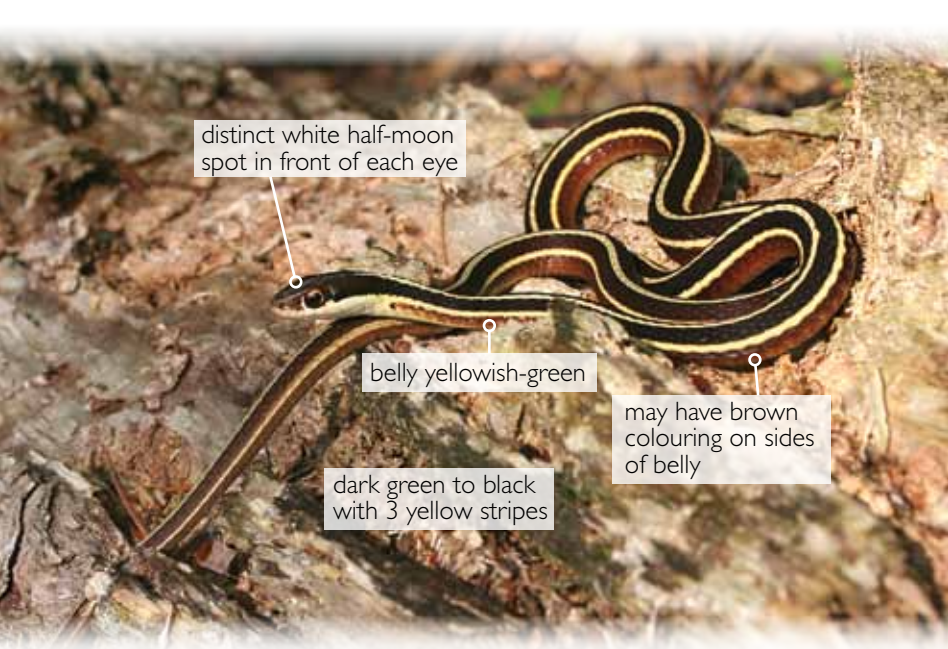


## Eastern Gartersnake

*Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*

ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
common

Black, green or brown with 3 yellow stripes on upper body. Yellow cheeks. First yellow line adjacent to belly scales does not enter the fourth row of scales. Found in wetlands, hedgerows, moist forests, ravines, urban areas and agricultural fields. Size: 44-66 cm



ONTARIO STATUS
special concern
FORT ERIE STATUS
very rare

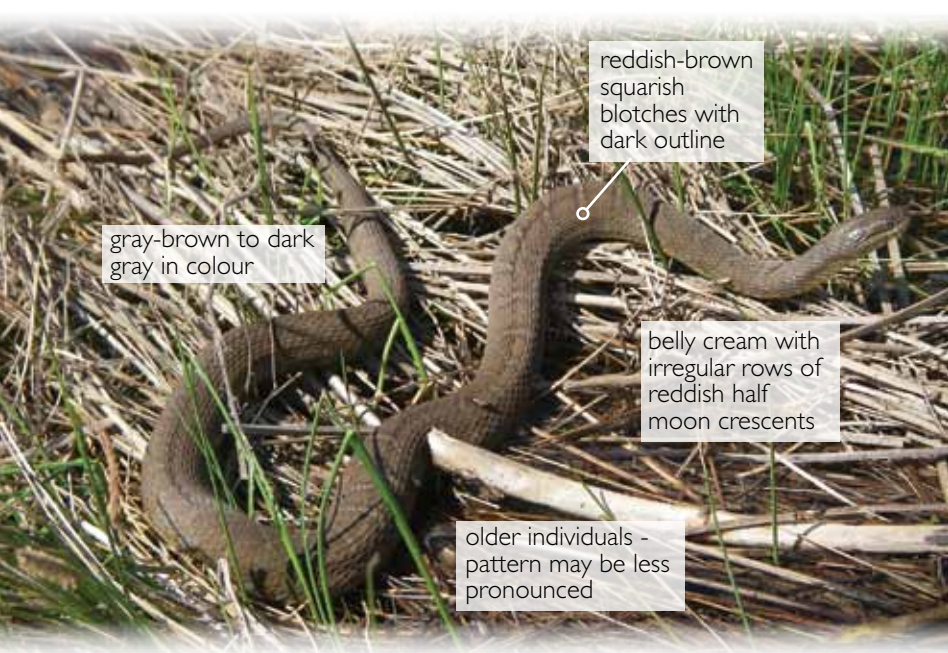
## \* **Eastern Ribbonsnake**

*Thamnophis sauritus septentrionalis*

Striped upper body. White spot in front of the eye, and white cheeks. First yellow line adjacent to belly scales enters the fourth row of scales. Found close to water, such as wetlands and the shorelines of forested lakes and rivers. Size: 44.5 - 56 cm

\* report sightings





Juvenile  
Northern  
Watersnake

Adopt-A-Pond Programme



## Northern Watersnake

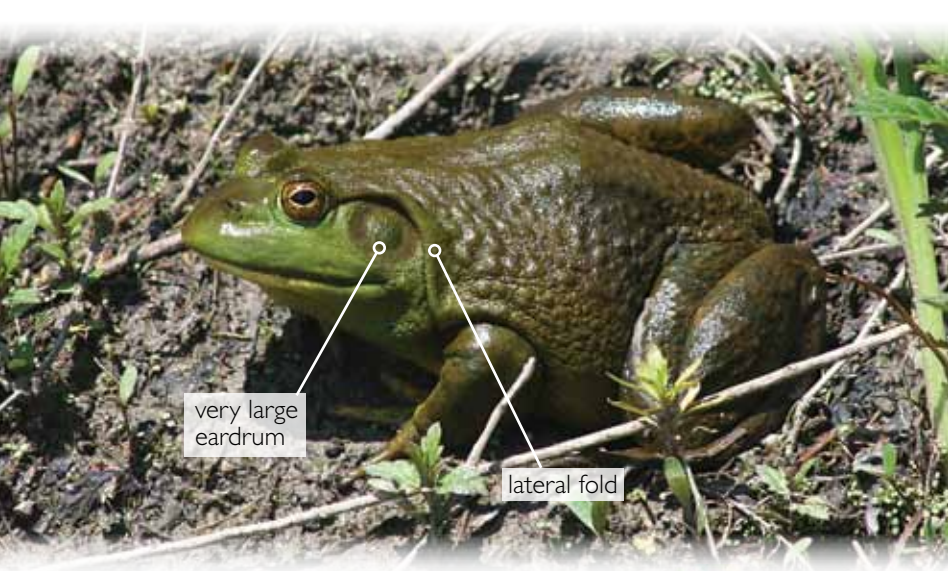
*Nerodia sipedon sipedon*

Various shades of brown. Rust-coloured blotches on belly scales. Appears black when wet. Found near or in permanent body of fresh water including lakes, rivers, wetlands, as well as under rocks or basking on rocks or logs.

Size: 61 - 106.5 cm

ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
declining now rare





ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
declining now rare

## \* **American Bullfrog** *Lithobates catesbeianus*

Skin is pale green to dark greenish brown. Belly is creamy white. Variable dark mottling on the back or underside. Adult males have pale to bright yellow chins in breeding season. Very large tympani (eardrums) always larger than the eyes. Lateral folds wrap downward around the tympani. During mating season from mid-June to late July listen for a deep and resonant 'jug-o-rum' coming from large permanent waterbodies. Look in smaller ponds and vegetation along a shoreline. Size: grows up to 17 cm





Nicole Richards

## American Toad *Anaxyrus americanus*

Large, squat toad with brown, reddish or olive skin. Dark blotches containing one to two spots or 'warts' of various colours. Belly is white with dark spots. Poison glands in the skin. During mating season, late March-June, listen for a trill up to 30 seconds long, preceded by a single, slightly lower introductory note coming from shorelines, streams, shallow ponds and ditches. Look in mown grass and gardens to heavily forested areas. Size: grows to about 11 cm



ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
common





To listen to the calls of frogs and toads visit  
<https://www.naturewatch.ca/english/frogwatch/on>



## \* **Fowler's Toad** *Anaxyrus fowleri*

Large yellow, green or brown toad with a light stripe down the middle of the back. Large dark blotches, each of which has three or more bumps (warts). White belly lacking dark spots. Poison glands in the skin. Calls begin in April but breeds from mid to late May into June. Listen for sound like a crying baby or a nasal 'waaa' for 2-5 seconds from rocky pools, creek outlets in sandy beach areas, sand bottom pools and ponds backwater marshes. Look in lakeshore habitats. Size: grows to about 5-8 cm. Females are larger than males.

ONTARIO STATUS
endangered
FORT ERIE STATUS
declining

\* report sightings



## \* **Gray Treefrog** *Hyla versicolor*

ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
rare

'Warty' green, brown or gray skin with blotches on the back. Large dark large suction-cup-like toe pads. White patch under eyes. Bright yellow-orange under thighs. During mating season at night in late spring into late summer listen for a short flute-like trill, from permanent water in or near forested habitats. It hides in tree holes, under bark, in rotten logs, and under leaves and tree roots. Size: grows to about 6 cm

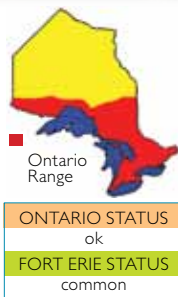




## Green Frog

*Lithobates clamitans*

Skin may be green, bronze, brown or even blue, or a combination of colours. Belly is white with darker lines or spots and occasionally has a yellow tinge. Hind legs have dark banding and there may be irregular spotting on the back. Typically is green on the upper lip. Males have a bright yellow throat. Large frog with large, distinct tympani (eardrums). Males: tympani are noticeably larger than the eye. Females: tympani are about the same size as the eyes. During mating season from late May to August listen for either a single 'Gunk', like the sound of a loose banjo string or a single call with several less vigorous repeats 'GUNK, gunk-gunk-gunk' coming from shallow, permanent waterbodies such as springs, swamps, brooks, ponds and lakes. Size: up to 10.8 cm



To listen to the calls of frogs and toads visit  
<https://www.naturewatch.ca/english/frogwatch/on>





## Northern Leopard Frog

*Lithobates pipiens*

Skin is green or brown with dark, rounded, light-edged random spots.

Prominent dorsolateral folds (folds of skin running down each side of the back). White belly that occasionally has a yellowish tinge. During mating season from mid to late spring listen for a low snore followed by several low grunts sometimes it sounding like a finger rubbed on a wet balloon coming from permanent ponds and wetlands. Size: adults are usually 5 - 9 cm

ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
common





## \* Pickerel Frog

*Lithobates palustris*

To listen to the calls of frogs and toads visit  
<https://www.naturewatch.ca/english/frogwatch/on>



Smooth, tan skin. Often has yellow or orange coloration in the groin area. Prominent bronze dorsolateral folds (folds of skin running down each side of the back). Two or, rarely, three parallel rows of dark, squarish spots run down the back between the dorsolateral folds. During mating season from mid to late spring, listen for a call is a low nasal snore somewhat like the mooing of a cow coming from ponds and streams with stable water temperatures, like springs and cold seepages. Look for it in damp fields and meadows. Size: can grow to almost 9 cm



ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
very rare

\* report sightings





Joyce Sankey



Joyce Sankey



## Western Chorus Frog

*Pseudacris triseriata*

ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
common

Skin is smooth and varies in colour from green-gray to brown. A dark stripe runs through the eye and a white stripe along the upper lip. 3 dark stripes down the back. In some, the stripes are broken into dots, dashes or small blotches. During mating season in March-April listen for a sound like running a fingernail along the teeth of a comb from shallow temporary pools in open fields, ditches and woodlands. Look for it in forest openings around woodland ponds, damp meadows, marshes, bottomland swamps, temporary ponds in open country, and urban areas. Size: up to 4 cm





ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
declining

## Spring Peeper

*Pseudacris crucifer*

Skin is tan or light brown in colour. Darker X-shaped marking on the back. During mating season calls are heard from March-May. Listen for a single, loud, high-pitched peep repeating over and over; coming from temporary woodland ponds. It is found in leaf litter of forested and shrubby upland habitats. Size: up to 3.7 cm





dark mask



Lynda Ruegg



ONTARIO STATUS
ok
FORT ERIE STATUS
declining

## Wood Frog

*Lithobates sylvaticus*

Skin may be reddish, tan or dark brown. A dark blotch on the chest near each front leg. Belly is white and may have dark mottling. Always has a dark mask under and behind the eyes. Some have a light line down the middle of the back. During mating season from March-April listen for a series of sharp quacks, almost like those of a duck coming from vernal forest pools. It hides in logs, humus and leaf litter or under logs and rocks in moist forests. Size: up to 8 cm in length.



## Terminology/Glossary

**Anal Scale** - Scale just in front of the cloacal opening of snakes which can either be single or divided

**Barbels** - Fleshy projections of skin growing under the mouth of turtle

**Carapace** - The hard upper shell of a turtle

**Cloacal Opening** - The opening to the cloaca, which serves as the collective opening for reproductive, intestinal and urinary tracts

**Eustachian tube openings** - Openings in the mouth that lead to tubes that connect to the middle ear to equalize air pressure

**External Nares** - Nostrils - Anterior openings for the entry or exit of air

**Glottis** - The opening from the mouth into the respiratory system

**Keeled Scales** - Snakes' scales that have a ridge down the center making them rough to the touch

**Labial Scales** - Scales that border the mouth opening of snakes, much like lips

**Longitudinal Keel** - A raised ridge along the center of a turtle's shell

**Maxillary Teeth** - Sharp teeth in the maxilla of a frog's mouth that function in holding captured prey

**Plastron** - Protective covering on the underside (ventral side) of a turtle, made up of plates called scutes

**Plastron Hinge** - A joint in the plastron of a turtle allowing it to close or bend to protect legs and/or head

**Scutes** - Thickened, bony plates on a turtle's shell

**Tympanic Membrane** - The eardrum - receives sound waves

**Vomerine Teeth** - Small projections in the top of a frog's mouth that function in holding captured prey

## REPORT SPECIES AT RISK SIGHTINGS TO

### **Bert Miller Nature Club**

[www.bertmillernatureclub.org](http://www.bertmillernatureclub.org)

Submit your sightings on line to Fort Erie's local nature club

## OTHER AGENCIES TO REPORT TO

### **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (Ontario Natural Heritage Information Centre)**

[http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species/index.html?](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species/index.html?CSB_icname=specialinitiatives)

CSB\_icname=specialinitiatives (COSSARO)

Click on the Species at Risk tab.

### **Government of Canada**

[www.cosewic.gc.ca](http://www.cosewic.gc.ca)

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC)

### **Ontario Nature**

[http://www.ontarionature.org/protect/species/herpetofaunal\\_atlas.php](http://www.ontarionature.org/protect/species/herpetofaunal_atlas.php)

Download Ontario Nature's new Apple iPhone and Google Android app is for anyone who wishes to contribute to the making of Ontario Nature's Reptile and Amphibian Atlas.

### **Toronto Zoo**

<http://www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/>

Opportunities to participate in a variety of citizen scientist programs.

### **Royal Ontario Museum**

[www.rom.on.ca](http://www.rom.on.ca)

## Acronyms

COSSARO: The Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario consists of people with expertise in scientific disciplines or Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge.

COSEWIC: The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada is a committee of experts that assesses and designates which wildlife species are in some danger of disappearing from Canada.

SAR: Species At Risk designation resulted from the Species at Risk Act (SARA). It is a federal law with three main goals:

- to prevent endangered or threatened species from becoming extinct or extirpated
- to help in the recovery of endangered, threatened and extirpated species; and
- to manage species of special concern to help prevent them from becoming endangered or threatened.

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/nature/eep-sar/itm1.aspx>



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Herpetology Species at Risk Specialist, Species at Risk Branch, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources  
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### Toronto Zoo Adopt-A-Pond

### Ontario Nature Reptile and Amphibian Atlas



Pat Grace



Lynda Ruegg





Help protect species at risk from disappearing  
by recording where you find them.

When you hike in Fort Erie, keep a record of the date and  
location of your sightings of turtles, snakes, frogs and toads.  
Checklists are inside.



Municipalities within the Town of Fort Erie

[www.bertmillernatureclub.org](http://www.bertmillernatureclub.org)

