

Expect to See Snakes as the Weather Warms

Report pine snake or rattlesnake sightings to the NC Wildlife Commission

The warm weather means more snakes will start to show up along trails, in the woods, crossing roads and in our yards. Wildlife Diversity biologists at the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission request that if you see a snake, do not be alarmed, do not kill it, give it plenty of room, and if you see a pine snake or rattlesnake, report it. "Snakes play crucial roles within ecosystems and help control the rodent, slug and insect populations," said Jeff Hall, reptile conservation biologist with the Wildlife Commission. "There are many ways to coexist with snakes, which is important because of 38 of North Carolina's native snake species, ten are listed endangered, threatened or of special concern."

Of the six native venomous snake species, three are rattlesnakes – the timber, the pigmy and the Eastern diamondback. Each one is in decline, due mainly to persecution by humans and habitat destruction, and protected by the North Carolina Endangered Species Act.

One example of a native threatened, nonvenomous snake species is the Northern pine snake. Agency biologists want to know more about the distribution of the pine snake and request the public report any sightings.

It ranges between 4 and 5 feet long, but can get as large as 7 ½ feet and has a white or tan background color with dark brown or black markings that begin as solid coloring or messy blotches near the head before gradually becoming distinct saddle-like blotches toward the tail. Pine snakes prefer open areas within pine-oak forests with well-drained, sandy soil. They are mostly found in the Sandhills and the southern Coastal Plain, although there are confirmed reports of pine snakes in Cherokee and Swain counties.



Northern Pine Snake

Recording and documenting the pine snake will be a huge help, because it's difficult to conserve a species when we don't know all the places it occurs," stated Mike Martin, wildlife technician with the Wildlife Commission. "We are partnering with several organizations and agencies to conduct surveys in the areas where pine snakes have either been seen or areas with potentially good habitat."



Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

Sightings of these snakes in the wild can be reported in one of two ways, via a mobile app or by email. The agency partners with the HerpMapper mobile app to track amphibian and reptile species. Download the app to your mobile device or tablet and enter information about your sighting. If reporting by email send a photo (required), the date and time the snake was observed and location (GPS coordinates preferred) to pinesnake@ncwildlife.org for Northern pine snakes and to rattlesnake@ncwildlife.org for rattlesnakes.

Most snakes will leave people alone if they aren't bothered and are provided an escape route. Effective habits for safely co-existing with snakes include watching for snakes and giving them a wide berth. If you see a snake in your yard and would prefer it to reside elsewhere, you can safely encourage it to leave by gently spraying it with a garden hose. To make your yard less hospitable for snakes clean up clutter such as stick and rock piles, keep your lawn mowed, close gaps and holes in your siding and foundation, and seal openings under doors, windows and around waterpipes.

Keep in mind that some species have similar patterns to Northern pine snakes, especially juvenile rat snakes and racers. For help with identifying snake species visit HerpsofNC.org.

Questions about human-wildlife interactions can be directed to the agency's NC Wildlife Helpline, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., at 866-318-2401 or by email, HWI@ncwildlife.org.

NCDOT Encourages Prioritizing Drone Safety

The N.C. Department of Transportation wants to remind drone operators that there is only one right way to fly a drone: Safely. Without proper training and adherence to safe flying guidelines, unmanned aircraft systems can be dangerous.

NCDOT utilizes drones for multiple tasks ranging from bridge condition assessments to emergency response surveys, which improve not only operational efficiency, but also safety for our staff. "Drones are innovative tools that can keep our teams safe when performing mission-critical tasks, from surveying disaster scenes to inspecting project sites and hard-to-reach infrastructure, if operators follow basic safety protocols when using them," said Becca Gallas, interim director of the NCDOT Division of Aviation.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), more than 15,000 recreational drones and more than 9,500 commercial drones are registered in North Carolina. Both numbers are growing. It is imperative that every operator considers safety first, not only for National Drone Safety Day, but each time their aircraft takes to the skies. Every owner of a drone is encouraged to:

- Register their drone at FAADroneZone-access.faa.gov
 - Join an FAA community-based organization
 - Know where you can and can't fly using resources, such as the FAA B4UFLY app and be familiar with the state and federal laws governing drones
 - Have a safety plan, inspect your drone and evaluate weather conditions prior to flying
 - Take the recreational unmanned aircraft systems test
- Additionally, NCDOT's Division of Aviation offers the following guidelines to help pilots ensure they're flying safely and legally:
- Always fly no more than 400 feet above ground level.
 - Always keep the drone within your visual line of sight.
 - Respect people's privacy.
 - Avoid flying over events or crowds; never fly directly over people.
 - Never fly near or above prisons or airports.
 - Don't fly at night without proper training and equipment.

TIGER PAINT PARTY

\$30

FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2023 ~ 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM

- INSTRUCTED PAINT SESSION -
- FOOD & DRINKS -
- KARAOKE - GAMES - RAFFLE -

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