

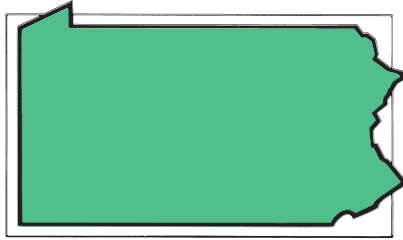


**Range.** The northern water snake can be found from Maine, across Quebec, reaching down to Colorado in the west. It extends south to North Carolina. All of the state's 67 counties are host to the northern water snake.

**Habitat.** Scattered statewide, it is possible to encounter one of these aquatic-loving animals when hiking near a stream or lake, or fishing or boating. It prefers quiet water. Still, the northern water snake is found in fast-moving streams as well as lakes, ponds, bogs and swamps and rivers or slower streams. Submerging, it swims underwater seeking protection among the pondweeds and other aquatic plants. When basking, it likes to drape itself over the branches of a nearby shrub or gather the warmth from a sun-baked rock near the water's edge. It may seek relief from the hottest days of summer by becoming at least partially nocturnal.

**Reproduction.** As springtime temperatures warm the air, the northern water snake stirs from its winter home in pursuit of its mate. Mating could occur as early as April or as late as June. The northern water snake gives birth to living young. An average litter of 25 young water snakes is produced during the period of August to October. Measuring six to 12 inches at birth, they are a brighter color than the parents.

**Food.** The northern water snake hunts most of its food in the water. On occasion it leaves the water to search for frogs among the grasses and other vegetation at the water's edge. Salamanders, crayfish and other crustaceans, minnows and slow-swimming, usually sick or disabled fish add variety to the menu of the water snake. Even small mammals have been known to fall prey to this water snake. Rounding out the predator-prey relationship, young northern water snakes are in turn eaten by the larger sport fish.



## Rough Green Snake

*Opheodrys aestivus*  
**Endangered Species**

**General characteristics.** It is easy to understand why this snake carries the nickname "vine snake," considering its color, slight build and penchant for climbing through brush. The rough green snake is a graceful animal, liquid-like in its movements from one tree branch to another. It is mild-tempered and not easily aroused when confronted. At 22 to 32 inches, it is the largest of the state's two green snakes.

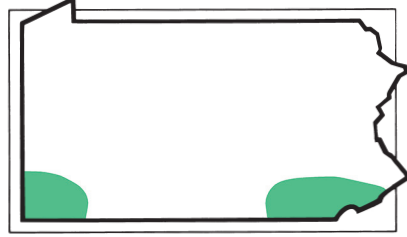
**Identification.** The rough green snake has a slender body with a long, tapering tail. Its body is a consistent light or pale green throughout except for a white to yellowish-green belly. Its color is uniform throughout, and it has





no markings. The divided anal plate is evident, and the scales are sharply keeled, hence its name, the rough green snake.

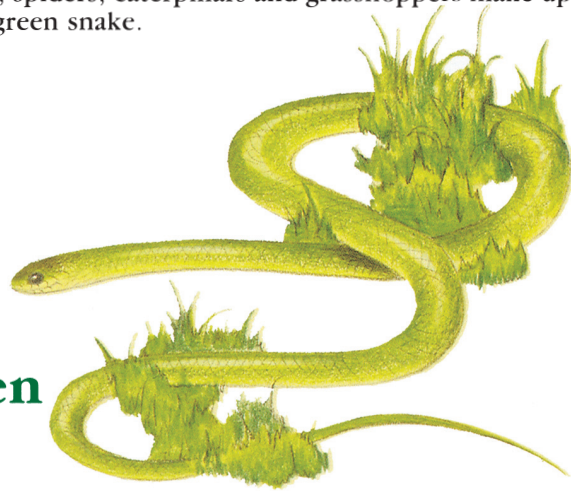
**Range.** The rough green snake is found only in two small areas of the state, in each of the southern corners. It extends south to the Florida Keys and west to Kansas and Texas. From here, its range continues into a portion of Mexico. In Pennsylvania, it's a threatened species.



**Habitat.** It is arboreal because it spends most of its time in brush, trees and vines such as greenbriers. It especially likes dense growth near a stream or lake. It is an excellent climber and it blends well with its background, its green color easily melting into the surrounding foliage. But the rough green snake is also a good swimmer and does not hesitate to glide quickly and silently into the water if disturbed.

**Reproduction.** The rough green snake locates a suitable mate in spring or fall. It is oviparous, which means that it lays eggs rather than gives birth directly to live young, as do some other snakes. The eggs are deposited in June through August, usually in a depression beneath a well-placed stone or rock. Three to 12 eggs are laid. They are hard and shaped like a capsule about 1½ inches long. They hatch in five to 12 weeks, revealing young grayish-green snakes seven to just under nine inches in length.

**Food.** The rough green snake forages for food as it moves gracefully through the inner branches of a basket willow or other small tree or shrub. But it seeks prey on the ground as well, moving slowly through the grasses in search of a meal. Crickets, spiders, caterpillars and grasshoppers make up the main diet of the rough green snake.



## Eastern Smooth Green Snake

*Opheodrys vernalis vernalis*

**General characteristics.** Commonly known as the “green grass snake,” the eastern smooth green snake spends most of its time on the ground. It is the terrestrial cousin of the arboreal rough green snake and is slightly smaller. Adult sizes range from 14 to 20 inches. It is said to be the most gentle of all North American snakes.

**Identification.** The eastern smooth green snake is small and streamlined in appearance with the body ending in a long, tapered tail. Its body is a bright