

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

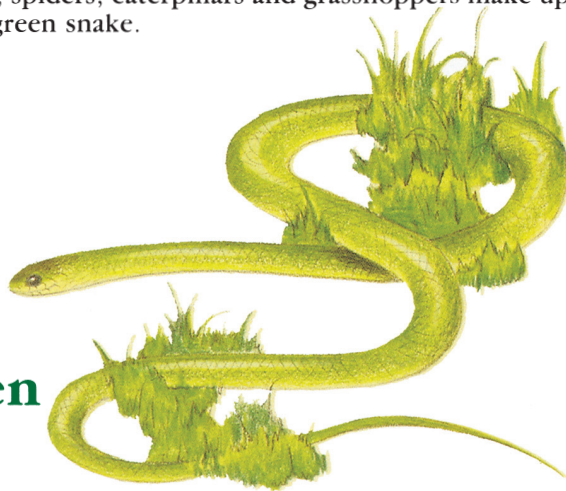
Range. The rough green snake is found only in two small areas of the state, in each of the southern corners. It extends south to the Florida Keys and west to Kansas and Texas. From here, its range continues into a portion of Mexico. In Pennsylvania, it's a threatened species.



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

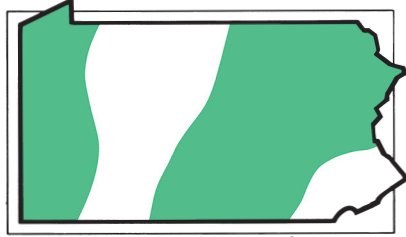
General characteristics. Commonly known as the “green grass snake,” the eastern smooth green snake spends most of its time on the ground. It is the terrestrial cousin of the arboreal rough green snake and is slightly smaller. Adult sizes range from 14 to 20 inches. It is said to be the most gentle of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



grass-green above with a plain white belly tinged with just a touch of pale yellow. The anal plate is divided and the smooth scales (keeled scales on the rough green snake) depict the name of the eastern smooth green snake.

Range. From Pennsylvania, the range of this snake extends south through parts of Virginia and West Virginia and north to Canada's Maritime Provinces. Minnesota marks its western boundary. Unlike the rough green snake, the eastern smooth green snake is distributed almost entirely statewide. The only exceptions may be the two small locations where the rough green snake resides.



Habitat. The eastern smooth green snake is largely terrestrial, spending more time on the ground than above it. It can be found in meadows, grassy marshlands, moist, grassy fields and even along the edges of forests. Hikers and others might encounter the eastern smooth green snake because it is most active during the day. A good eye may be necessary, however, because the color and build of the eastern smooth green snake provide excellent camouflage in its grassy domain.

Reproduction. Waiting for the sun to move a bit more northward, the eastern smooth green snake is one of the last to emerge from winter's hibernation. Mating occurs in spring to late summer. Three to about 10 eggs are laid in July to August under a sun-warmed stone, which helps them incubate. Thin-shelled and cylindrical, the eggs hatch in four to 23 days. The snakes that emerge are four to six inches long and dark olive-gray. It is not unusual to find several females sharing the same nesting area.

Food. The eastern smooth green snake is unusually insectivorous, feeding on a variety of insects and larvae. People should consider the eastern smooth green snake a good friend, given its partiality for insects.



Queen Snake

Regina septemvittata

General characteristics. Another of Pennsylvania's snakes categorized as "water" snakes, the queen snake in some local areas may be known as the "willow" snake or "leather" snake. It is very much an aquatic animal and an excellent swimmer. If disturbed by an intruder it does not hesitate to slip