Eastern Hognose Snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*)

**State Rank Status:** Endangered.

**Distribution:** Southern NH along the Merrimack River, Concord to Massachusetts border.

**Description:** A thick-bodied snake measuring 20-35 inches. Has a characteristic upturned snout and keeled dorsal scales. Light and dark blotches vary in color from brown to red and orange. There is also a dark phase in which the body is almost uniform in and grayish-black color.

**Commonly Confused Species:** Garter snake; Timber rattlesnake

**Habitat:** Requires sandy, gravelly soils such as open fields, river valleys, pine forests, and upland hillsides. Feeds predominately on toads; therefore needs breeding habitat (e.g., wetlands, vernal pools) for amphibians.

**Life History:** During summer lays eggs a few inches underground or under woody debris. Hibernates in mammal burrows, under woody debris, or under trash piles. Has a dramatic defense display including hissing, mock striking, and playing dead.

**Conservation Threats:** Loss of habitat from rapidly developing southern New Hampshire; mortality on roadways, loss of amphibian populations; people killing individual snakes because of fear (hognose snakes are not dangerous to humans or pets!!...unless you are a toad).

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*Dark hognose snake with no obvious pattern.*
*Photo by Mike Marchand.*

*Hognose snakes often flatten and spread out their heads like a cobra. If this doesn’t work, they often flip over and play dead.*
*Photo by Mike Marchand.*