

Plains Hog-nosed Snake - *Heterodon nasicus*

Abundance: Unknown

Status: NSSU

NatureServe: G5 S4

Population Status: Appears widely distributed, population numbers and threats are unknown.

Limiting Factor: Habitat - threats to habitat are unknown.

Comment: None.

Introduction

In Wyoming, Plains Hog-nosed Snakes are found in the eastern counties, mostly in the plains. They are a burrowing, diurnal species. If threatened, a Plains Hog-nosed Snake may spread its head and hiss loudly, and if harassed further, may roll on its back and play dead. They are not considered a dangerous species, but sometimes have a reputation for being harmful because of their defensive behavior (Baxter and Stone 1985). Plains Hog-nosed Snakes are active during the day, probably from April to October in Wyoming. They spend the night in temporary burrows constructed in loose soil. Hibernation occurs in burrows the snake digs itself or in abandoned mammal burrows (Ernst and Ernst 2003). Plains Hog-nosed Snakes preferentially feed on toads, but also eat lizards, small mammals, frogs, birds, salamanders, snakes, turtle eggs, and invertebrates (Baxter and Stone 1985, Ernst and Ernst 2003, Stebbins 2003). Females deposit 2 to 24 eggs in soft soil or sand from June to August (Ernst and Ernst 2003, Stebbins 2003). Hatchlings emerge after 50 or 60 days, usually in August or September (Baxter and Stone 1985, Ernst and Ernst 2003).

Habitat

Plains Hog-nosed Snakes prefer grasslands with sandy or gravelly areas where they can burrow, but can also inhabit open brushland and woodland, farmlands, canyon bottoms, scrub brush, and floodplains, (Baxter and Stone 1985, Ernst and Ernst 2003). They may show a preference for areas close to water (Baxter and Stone 1985).

Problems

- h Lack of basic information on the species presence, distribution, and ecology in Wyoming.
- h Increased oil and gas development will likely lead to habitat alteration or loss.
- h The threatening behavior of this snake and its resemblance to the rattlesnake may cause it to be killed needlessly by those thinking it to be harmful (Baxter and Stone 1985).

Conservation Actions

- h Survey and monitor population distribution, status, and habitat associations.
- h Develop management recommendations based on resulting data.

Monitoring/Research

Conduct baseline surveys to gain a better understanding of Plains Hog-nosed Snake distribution in Wyoming.

Recent Developments

Baseline reptile and amphibian surveys were conducted in southeast Wyoming in 2011 and 2012 (Snoberger and Walker 2013, 2014) and in northern Wyoming in 2013 and 2014. Several Plains Hog-nosed Snakes were documented during these surveys and detailed habitat data was collected at these locations (Snoberger and Walker 2013, 2014). Reptiles have received increased attention in Wyoming. Incidental observations are encouraged to be reported to the herpetology program.

References

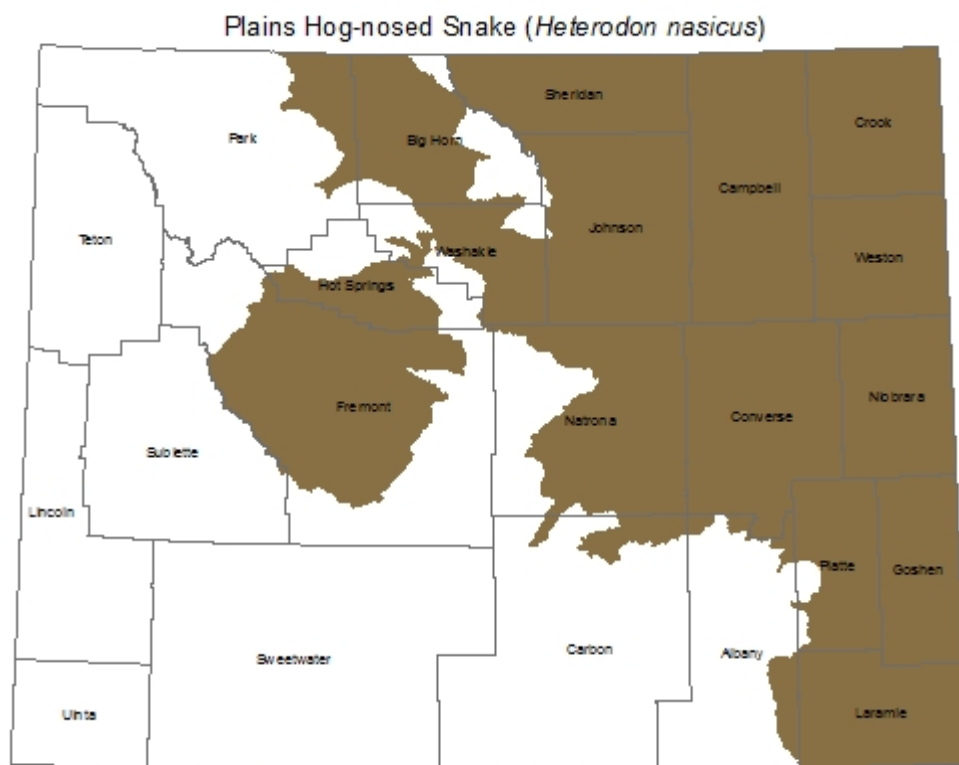
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SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: February 2016. Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Note that brown indicates the current known range of the species.