

# Rough Green Snake (*Opheodrys aestivus*)

## Pennsylvania Endangered Reptile

State Rank: S1 (critically imperiled) Global Rank: G5 (secure)

### Identification

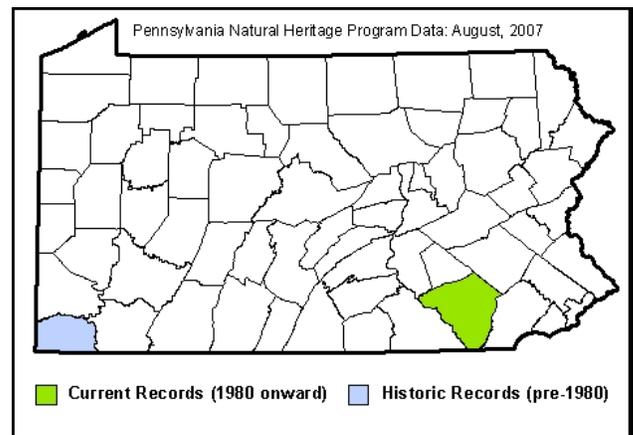
This is one of two green snakes found in Pennsylvania. Unlike the more widely-distributed smooth green snake, this species has keeled upper body scales and reaches a maximum size of almost 46 inches (26 inches for the smooth green snake). The tail is quite long and tapered relative to the rest of the body.

### Biology-Natural History

Mating takes place in spring, but there are published observations of increased male activity and one mating in September. Females deposit clutches of two to 14 (usually four to six) elongate soft-shelled eggs, which cling together, during June and July. They are deposited in rotten logs or stumps or natural tree cavities some distance above ground, or cavities beneath moss or flat rocks. More than one female may sometimes deposit eggs in the same place. There is one report that some Florida females may hold eggs over winter and deposit them the following spring. Eggs hatch during late August and September; the 7-inch hatchlings are a lighter green than the adults. Caterpillars, grasshoppers, crickets and spiders are primary food items, and are mostly taken from vegetation above ground. When threatened, this snake may react by opening its mouth revealing the dark lining, but very rarely will one bite.

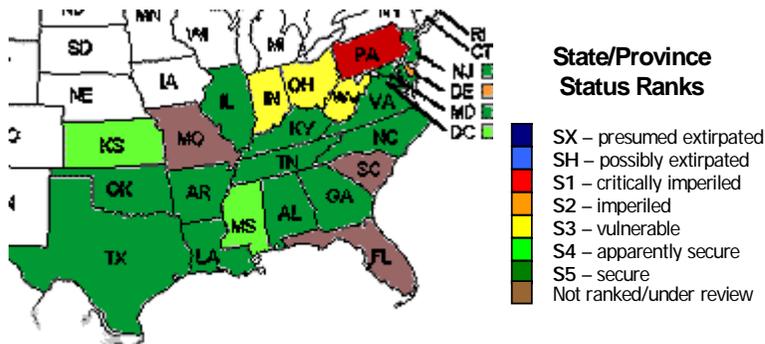


Photo Credit: Robert T. Zappalorti, Nature's Images



### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe (August 2007)



### Habitat

This snake prefers moist habitats such as wet meadows and the borders of lakes, marshes and woodland streams. It is frequently found in woody vegetation growing along or overhanging water, sometimes up to 20 feet above ground.

### Reasons for Being Endangered

This species is recorded in Pennsylvania only from southern Chester County and Greene County. While the Chester County population persists, there has been no confirmation of its historical occurrence in Greene

County. Earlier records indicating a more widespread distribution were probably based on misidentified smooth green snakes.

### Management Practices

Habitats required by this snake are also shared by an array of other animals and plants with valuable ecological functions to perform. Further search may reveal other occurrences of this uncommon species, particularly in the southern part of the commonwealth, on either side of the Ridge and Valley province. Wetland habitats continue to require protection.



Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program

### References:

- NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: August 21, 2007).

Fact Sheet adapted from: Felbaum, Mitchell, et al. Endangered and Threatened Species of Pennsylvania. Harrisburg, PA: Wild Resource Conservation Fund, 1995.

