

and he has a genuine interest in the people and the countryside in his district. I am grateful for all his help.

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Manager/Secretary, Saskatchewan Forestry Association; by Vernon Harms, Curator, The W. P. Fraser Herbarium; and by Gary Kruger, Saskatchewan Soils Testing Laboratory.

<sup>1</sup>HOSIE, R. C. 1969. Native trees of Canada. Queen's Printer, Ottawa. 380 pp.

<sup>2</sup>LEE, C. A., S. ROWE and D. B. WILLIAMS. 1985. Saskatchewan trees of renown. Saskatchewan Forestry Association, Prince Albert. 36 pp.

## MIGRATING SNAKES

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An unusually large total of 11 garter snakes was seen while I was driving from farm to farm in the Norquay district during the afternoon of September 12, 1989, the first warm, sunny day in 3 weeks.

The snakes were on three 1.6- 4.8-km stretches of north-south roads: a paved highway 1.6 km west of town, a gravel road 1.6 km northeast and a dirt road 3.2 km southwest. The six live and road-killed snakes were all going or heading east. About 3 hours elapsed between first and last observations.

Given the weather pattern, the number of snakes and especially the consistent apparent direction of travel, the

surmise was that a migration was occurring across a front at least 8 km wide. (With that number of snakes, if movements had been merely local, including sunning on the road, one would expect direction to have been random.) Since the sightings were spread over 3 hours, probably many more than 11 snakes were present, some having already crossed, others not yet having reached a road when I happened by.

According to Wayne Lynch, garter snakes in Manitoba's Interlake region may migrate as much as 18 km from hibernacula and move back to winter quarters in the first half of September.<sup>2</sup> Bernie Gollop recalled an old report of a hibernaculum near Pelly, Saskatchewan,

which is 11.2 km east-southeast of Norquay and David Baron advised that records in the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History showed this hibernaculum to be about 4.8 km northwest of Pelly. The sightings ranged from 8 to 14.4 km from this point and were within 22° of due west of it. (If angularity had been much greater, some snakes would have been spotted on east-west roads, but none was.) A fall migration was probably in progress and the garter snakes were likely headed for the Pelly hibernaculum.

By the third sighting I was paying particular attention to status, location and direction. It had reminded me of a similar group of observations 2 years previous: three live and two road-killed garter snakes along some 6.4 km of Highway #35 between Wadena and Elfros, all moving or pointing east. (That the direction was the same for all snakes in each of the Norquay and Wadena groups was significant; that it happened to be east both times was likely coincidental.) As at Norquay, the day was warm, following a lengthy spell of cool, damp weather. With the Norquay experience behind me, I now believe the 1987 observations were possibly of another hibernaculum-bound movement.

Recalled too by the Norquay event was the Arelee area woman who in 1988 remarked on the number of snakes around her farm that year. A question

arises — has the 1980s drought had bearing on local garter snake populations? The possibility that numbers increase during a drought was raised by George Hearn, a Rosetown area farmer when commenting on conditions during the 1930s:

“I don't know if the dry weather had anything to do with garter snakes or not, but I remember that during one of these years, there was a outbreak of garter snakes. They would come around the house and, if they got a chance, would sneak in and sometimes get in under the cookstove, which would just about send my mother into orbit. They were so close that on a calm day, if you stood still and listened near the buckbrush, you could hear them crawling through the grass and branches.”<sup>1</sup>

The Museum maintains a record on flora and fauna. One item of primary interest is snake hibernacula phenomena. Anyone with information is invited to report details to the Life Science Unit, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Wascana Park, Regina, S4P 3T7.

<sup>1</sup>CURTIS, J. L. 1988. Camberley and Cleland school districts. Camberley and Cleland school district Book Committee. 174 pp.

<sup>2</sup>LYNCH, WAYNE. 1983. How Manitoba garter snakes survive our winter. *Canadian Geographic* 103(2):26-29.