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# PHOTO NOTES

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## MATING BULLSNAKES



Mating bullsnakes (*Pituophis catenifer sayi*) are a rare site to encounter in Canada, where this subspecies is at the northern extent of its geographic range in North America. This mating pair was discovered on 15 May 2010 in the Val Marie PFRA pasture northwest of Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan. Little information is available on the habitat requirements of this snake, a subspecies of the gopher snake, and the size and extent of Canadian populations are completely unknown. Bullsnares are the largest snakes in western Canada, capable of reaching over 2 m in length. Mammals are the primary prey of this nonvenomous constrictor, which is capable of consuming prey as large as

rabbits and hares. Bullsnares are also accomplished burrowers with a pointed snout adapted for tunnelling in loose soil. A rare adaptation in snakes, which tend to use burrows constructed by other species, this behaviour is presumably important for creating refuge sites and excavating prey.<sup>1</sup>

1. Ernst CH, Ernst EM (2003) Snakes of the United States and Canada. Smithsonian Books, Washington, DC.

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*To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves.*  
- Mohandas K. Gandhi