

Your neighbour needs your help!



Jakob Dulisse



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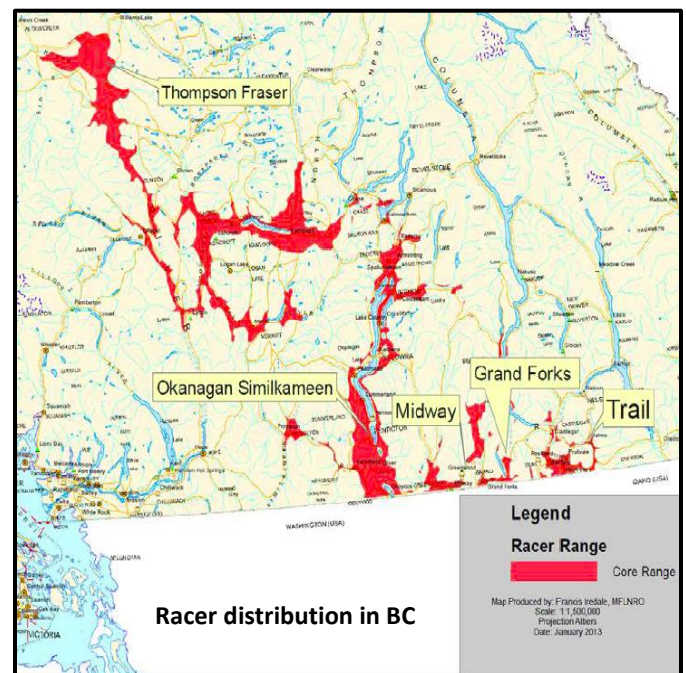
The North American Racer (*Coluber constrictor mormon*) is vulnerable (blue-listed) in BC and a species of special concern in Canada. This unique reptile resides only in the hot and dry interior regions of BC and it is under increasing pressure from human development.

Adult Racers are long, slender snakes with large scales, striking olive-grey colouring and large black eyes. They can grow up to 2 metres long and true to their name, they move very quickly, especially on hot days. Young Racers look very different than their parents and have a barring pattern that helps keep them camouflaged. Racers emerge from their winter dens in spring to mate, they lay their eggs in July, and the young racers hatch in the fall.

Racers are **non-venomous** and harmless to humans. They are excellent hunters and feed on grasshoppers, crickets, other small vertebrates and even other reptiles. These snakes live in grasslands, shrub land, and sparsely treed areas and they require winter dens, a summer foraging range and suitable nesting sites to persist. In the West Kootenay, they are only found in the Columbia River Valley south of Trail and the Pend d'Oreille Valley.

5 reasons to protect Racers and other snakes:

1. Snakes are a critical link in the food web.
2. Free pest control (they eat insects and small rodents).
3. Snakes are an important food source for other animals (birds of prey, coyotes, cougars).
4. Snake skin sheds are used by other animals for food, nesting material and scent masking.
5. They have a right to exist, even if you don't think they are cute.



How we can protect *Racers* on our land

Racer habitat is unique and uncommon in BC. Knowing that Racers and other reptiles live on or near your property might make you see your land differently. You can play an important part in reptile conservation. Here are some suggestions:



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PROVIDE HIDING PLACES

Snakes need shelter from predators and weather. Natural thickets, shrubs, leaf litter and rock piles are what Racers like to occupy. You can even build rock and brush piles in sunny locations to create potential habitat and connect suitable patches (rather than isolated islands).

PLANT MANAGEMENT

Invasive plant species such as spotted knapweed and white clover can shade important native habitat. Remove them! If you are a gardener, consider local native plants used by Racers such as Oregon Grape, Snowbrush Choke Cherry, and native grasses (contact the *Central Kootenay Invasive Species Society* for advice).

CONTROL PETS and LIVESTOCK

Yes, Fluffy loves her freedom but it is important to be aware that she may have a direct impact on wild animals, such as birds and snakes. Keep cats and dogs indoors or on leashes as much as possible. If pockets of reptile-friendly habitat exist on your land, consider fencing these off from roaming cattle.

PRESERVE WARM SITES

Reptiles are cold-blooded and rely on the sun to absorb energy. If you have a sunny, south-facing rocky slope on your property avoid disturbing the rocks and logs in these areas. Better yet, connect isolated rocky patches with brushy habitat to provide cover.

REDUCE PESTICIDE USE

Racers and other snakes consume animals that feed on vegetation. Therefore, chemical pesticides, insecticides and rat poison can be hazardous to Racers and other local reptiles.

LANDSCAPING

Before mowing or manicuring your property, do a quick scan for snakes by stirring tall grassy areas with a stick to alert Racers to your presence. If moving rocks, be mindful that reptiles may be hiding beneath them and can be easily crushed, especially on a cooler day when they are slower to escape. Avoid burying exposed rock piles as this might trap overwintering Racers underground.

COVER OBJECTS

Flat metal or wood objects are often used for shelter by local reptiles, such as Western Skinks, Northern Alligator Lizards and Northern Rubber Boas. If you are curious, you can look under such cover objects to discover who is hiding out under there.

Snakes are uninterested in humans and rarely strike unless they are being handled or cornered. It is best to avoid handling snakes for their safety and yours!



Respecting reptiles as a community

PROTECT SENSITIVE AREAS AND PARKS

Parks and other sensitive areas should be respected as they are often the only areas where wildlife can exist. Whenever possible, these areas should be avoided and not disturbed.

KEEP DOGS ON A LEASH

Dogs may damage sensitive habitat and disturb snakes when off leash. Keeping pets on a trail helps to reduce disturbance and risk to snakes and other sensitive critters.

SUPPORT LOCAL CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Contact local organizations to see if they can offer any advice or resources. Start a local reptile restoration group.

BE AN ENGAGED CITIZEN

Be aware of meetings that involve land-use planning in your community. Find out if your worksite has an impact on snake habitat. Contact your local government representatives to let them know you are concerned.

REPORT REPTILE SIGHTINGS

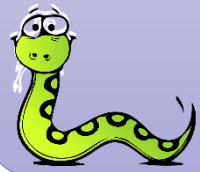
Reptile sightings help to confirm hotspots for management follow-up. If you'd like to report sightings of dead or live reptiles, please email: SPI-Mail@gov.bc.ca or local herpetologist Jakob Dulisse at jdulisse@netidea.com. Please include the date, detailed location, species and number of individuals you've identified. Send a picture to confirm the ID, if you can get one!

WATCH FOR AND AVOID REPTILES

When cycling, horseback riding, dirt biking or driving, keep an eye out for snakes on trails and road surfaces (especially at dawn and dusk). If safe, move to avoid them.



Anna Lamb-Yorski



Threatened Racers will sometimes vibrate their tails against dry leaves to mimick rattlesnakes



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SPREAD THE WORD

Talk to neighbours, friends and family!

Many people have never seen a Racer because they avoid people and stay out of sight.

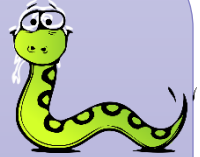
Let's try to keep it that way by protecting the habitat they hide in!

Want to learn more? Get involved and informed.



Anna Lamb-Yorski

Request a Reptiles at Risk Presentation for your community group or neighbourhood.



This is a good opportunity to talk to local reptile experts about what you can do to protect Racer habitat on your property!

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

FWCP (Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program) Columbia Region Office

250-365-4591

crystal.klym@bchydro.com

CKISS (Central Kootenay Invasive Species Society)

1-844-352-1160

info@ckiss.ca

The Reptiles of British Columbia

www.bcreptiles.ca

Jakob Dulisse, R.P. Bio (Reptile Specialist)

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Kootenay Conservation Program

250-352-2260

manager@kootenayconservation.ca

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