

HOW TO CREATE A SNAKE NESTING STRUCTURE

The Carolinian Region of southern Ontario is home to 23 native reptile species, including 7 turtles, 15 snakes, and one lizard. Unfortunately, these reptiles are under pressure from centuries of settlement, agriculture, development and urbanization. Creating safe habitat away from these threats is one way we can help conserve reptile populations.



Snake Breeding Biology

Snakes reproduce by internal fertilization and either give birth to live young or lay eggs, depending on the species. Female live-bearing snakes will find a sheltered location to give birth before abandoning the young to fend for themselves. Egg-laying females look to deposit their eggs in organic matter such as rotting logs, leaf litter or mulch piles. Not only are these locations sheltered, but as materials decay they provide heat which incubates the eggs allowing for development of young. Depending on the species, the female will either guard the eggs or leave them alone. Some females will nest at the same site each year, and some nest sites are used by multiple females.



Building a Snake Nesting Structure



Artificial nest structures are designed to mimic natural nesting sites while at the same time providing protection from nest predators such as skunks and raccoons. While a large compost pile may be used by snakes, constructing a large wooden frame box with heavy gauge wire openings is preferable. The box dimensions should be at least 1.5m on all sides with wire mesh openings of 5 to 7cm. The wire mesh keeps out predators but lets snakes pass through freely. The box should be

filled with organic materials such as leaves, woodchips, composted manure, peat moss, hay and/or straw. Try different combinations of materials to maintain optimal temperature (28-30°C). Boxes will need to be topped up periodically with new organic material since settling occurs during decomposition. A removable side or roof is very useful for this purpose.



Long Point Basin Land Trust protects important natural habitats in the central Carolinian Region in southern Ontario. It promotes conservation through outreach, research, habitat restoration, and species at risk recovery projects. For more information about this charitable conservation organization, please visit our website or sign up for our newsletter (print or e-news). Please report reptile sightings from the Long Point Basin to: longpointlandtrust.ca

Long Point Basin Land Trust
P.O. Box 468
Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0
Email: nature@longpointlandtrust.ca
Web: longpointlandtrust.ca
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