

GARTERSNAKE IDENTIFICATION IN WISCONSIN

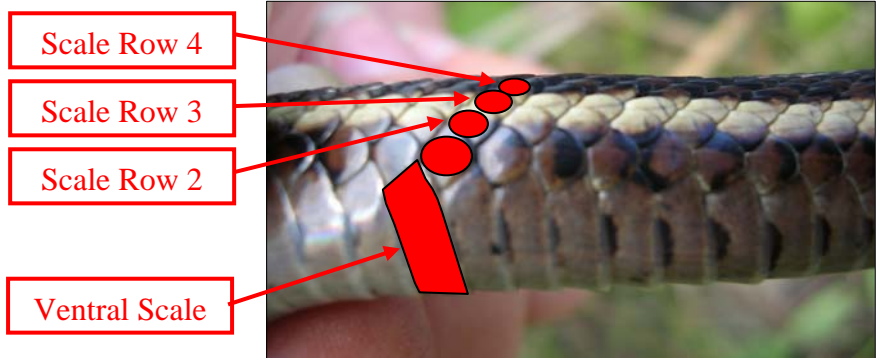
BUTLER'S GARTERSNAKE, COMMON GARTERSNAKE, PLAINS GARTERSNAKE

The ranges of three gartersnake species (*Butler's gartersnake, common gartersnake, plains gartersnake*) overlap significantly in southeastern Wisconsin. Gartersnakes need to be carefully examined to determine the species. Species are distinguished from one another by the location of their lateral (side) stripes. Lateral stripes involve a variety of combinations of scale rows. Scale rows are horizontal rows of scales found along the length of the snake and are numbered starting above the rectangular ventral scale (see close-up photos below). Scale rows are counted diagonally.

BUTLER'S GARTERSNAKE

The lateral stripe on the Butler's gartersnake involves upper part of scale row 2, all of scale row 3, and often part of scale row 4. The lateral stripe is typically broad and golden yellow.

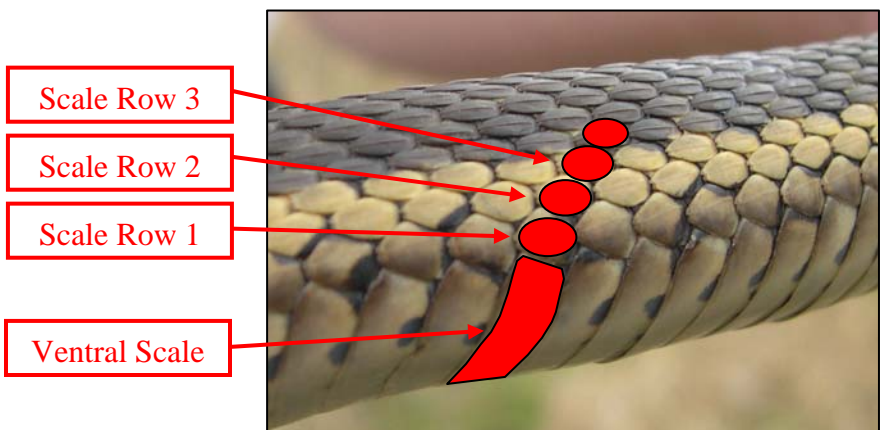
Wisconsin Range: Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, Waukesha Counties (also a small disjunct population in Fond du Lac and Sheboygan Counties)



COMMON GARTERSNAKE

The lateral stripe on the common gartersnake may involve the upper half of scale row 1 and always involves rows 2 and 3. The lateral stripe is of varying widths and shades of yellow.

Wisconsin Range: statewide



PLAINS GARTERSNAKE

The lateral stripe on the plains gartersnake only involves scale row 3 and part or all of scale row 4. The lateral stripe is typically narrow and pale yellow.

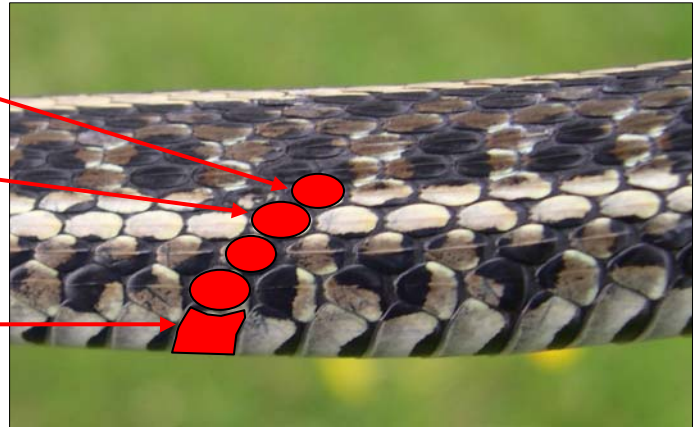
Wisconsin Range: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Dunn, Green, Green Lake, Iowa, Jefferson, Rock, and Walworth Counties (probable in Grant and Lafayette Counties)



Scale Row 4

Scale Row 3

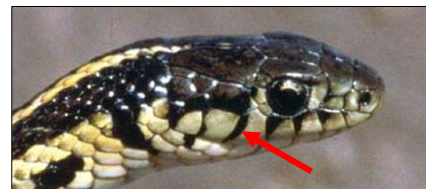
Ventral Scale



Additional photos to aid in identifying species:



Butler's gartersnakes (left) have a narrower head in proportion to their neck than the common gartersnakes (right).



Butler's gartersnakes (top) typically have unmarked labial scales below the eye, while plains gartersnakes (bottom) typically have labial scales bordered in black.



Butler's gartersnakes are a Threatened Species in Wisconsin, making it illegal to possess them without proper permits from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Snakes may not be removed from the point of observation or possessed.

