

WISCONSIN GARTERSNAKE IDENTIFICATION

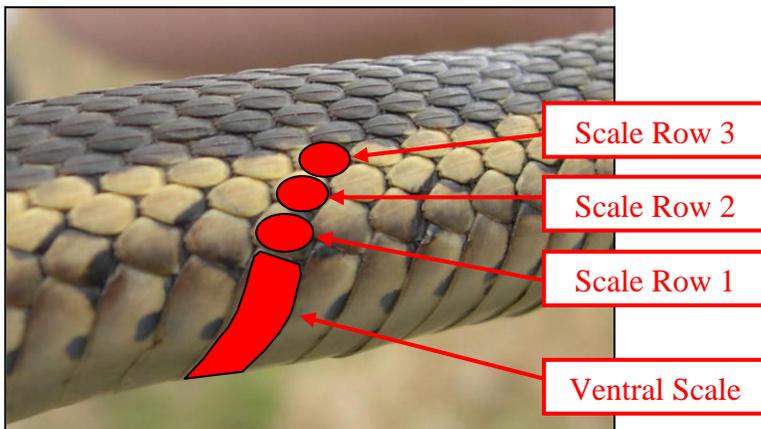
Wisconsin is home to five gartersnake species (common gartersnake, Butler's gartersnake, plains gartersnake, eastern ribbonsnake, western ribbonsnake). This document provides tips for differentiating the five species.

Wisconsin gartersnakes are most often 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.

Please note that eastern and western ribbonsnakes are endangered species in Wisconsin, making it illegal to possess them without an Endangered and Threatened Species Permit from the Department of Natural Resource's Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation. These species may not be removed from the point of observation or possessed.

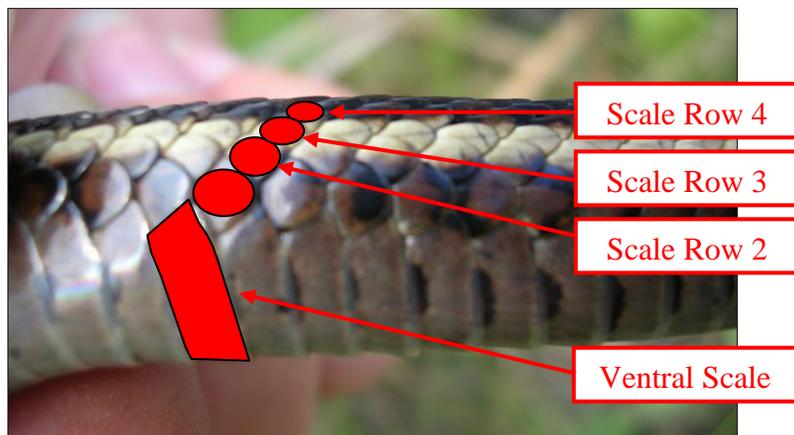
COMMON GARTERSNAKE (*Thamnophis sirtalis*)

The lateral stripe on the common gartersnake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) 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.



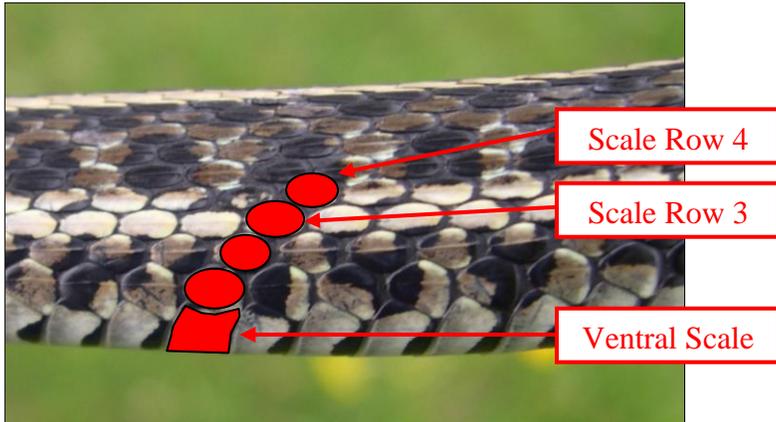
BUTLER'S GARTERSNAKE (*Thamnophis butleri*) - Special Concern

The lateral stripe on the Butler's gartersnake (*Thamnophis butleri*) involves the 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.



PLAINS GARTERSNAKE (*Thamnophis radix*) - Special Concern

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



EASTERN RIBBONSNAKE (*Thamnophis sauritus*) - Endangered

The lateral stripe on the eastern ribbonsnake (*Thamnophis sauritus*) only involves scale rows 3 and 4. Eastern ribbonsnakes are distinguished from other gartersnakes by their relatively long, slender bodies, long tail and 7 unmarked, white supralabial scales (scales on the upper jaw between eye and mouth).



Supralabial Scales



WESTERN RIBBONSNAKE (*Thamnophis proximus*) - Endangered

The lateral stripe on the western ribbonsnake (*Thamnophis proximus*) only involves scale rows 3 and 4. Western ribbonsnakes are distinguished from other gartersnakes by their relatively long, slender bodies, long tail (>1/4 the body length) and 8 unmarked, white supralabial scales (scales on the upper jaw between eye and mouth).



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PUB-NH-742 2014