

Common Name: Western hognose snake	Scientific Name: <i>Heterodon nasicus</i>
Class: Reptilia Order: Squamata Family: Colubridae	Feeding Type: Carnivore Statistics: Length: 15-30 inches Weight: 60-150g

DESCRIPTION: The western hognose snake is colored cream, black, light brown, and dark brown. It is predominantly dark brown on its dorsal (top) side, with large, dark brown patches within a light brown and cream speckled background. The ventral side is mainly black with a cream stripe down each side. The hognose snake gets its name from its upturned nose.

RANGE: The western hognose snake is indigenous to the western United States, and is found in the western two-thirds of Kansas.

HABITAT: Grasslands or sand prairie

ADAPTATIONS: The western hognose tends to use its upturned nose to dig up frogs and reptile eggs. The hognose snake detects its prey mainly by smelling or tasting the air with its tongue. A snake has a Jacobson's organ located at the roof of its mouth, which deciphers air particles for the sense of smell in snakes.

A snake has a unique adaptation to help it eat prey up to three times the size of its head. The top and bottom parts of the jaw unhinge, and the lower jaw separates in half, enabling the snake to maneuver large prey into its mouth and down its throat, and at the same time breathe while eating.

Being a smaller snake, the hognose has developed various mechanisms for defense. First, it will try to escape by crawling away. Next, it may try to hide its head, like the African ball pythons. It may also hiss while taking a defensive posture with its head up and neck flattened, and if it needs to, it will strike; however, the hognose snake strikes with its mouth closed. If none of these strategies work, it may violently twist its body as if it were in pain, regurgitate recently eaten food, and then roll over on its back with its mouth open to play dead; it can play dead for up to five minutes.

REPRODUCTION/GROWTH: Mating season begins in May for hognose snakes, with the eggs usually laid in July. The female will lay five to 20 eggs, every other year, in a nest a few inches below the ground. No parental care is provided by the western hognose snake.

LONGEVITY: Up to 20 years

PREY/PREDATOR: Prey to larger animals, but not much is known about predators of hognose snakes
Predator to frogs, small rodents, and small birds

DIET: WILD: Mainly frogs and eggs, but small rodents and small birds when they can catch one
SZ: Pinkies, or baby mice

STATUS: The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks considers the western hognose as a species in need of conservation. The main cause for the decline in the numbers of hognose snakes in the wild is habitat loss.

SPECIAL NOTES: Both western and eastern hognose snakes have an enlarged tooth on each side of the upper jaw and in the back of the mouth. It is thought that these teeth are used to puncture a frog when it swells up. A frog will usually swell its body up with air when captured to make it more difficult to eat.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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