



## Smooth Green Snake (*Opheodrys vernalis*)

*Op-pee-oh-dris ver-nal-iss*



*Standard Green phase (top), Bronze/Tan/Brown phase (bottom)*

**Description:** 14 to 22 inches. The smooth green snake is a small, smooth scaled snake that is a uniformly colored bright green, although some specimens may be tan, light brown, buff colored, or even bronze in appearance. Juvenile and newly hatched smooth green snakes may be a darker olive in color. The belly and labial scales are a pale, unmarked yellow to white in color.

Scales: Smooth

Anal Plate: Divided

### **Taxonomy and Classification:**

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

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**Domain:** Eukaryota  
**Kingdom:** Animalia  
**Phylum:** Chordata/Vertebrata  
**Class:** Reptilia  
**Order:** Squamata  
**Suborder:** Serpentes  
**Infraorder:** Alethinophidia  
**Family:** Colubridae  
**Subfamily:** Colubrinae  
**Genus:** *Opheodrys*  
**Species:** *Opheodrys vernalis*\*

\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

**Similar/Confusing Species:** Racers (*Coluber constrictor*) of comparative size have traces of their juvenile blotching/mottling, and are not yet uniformly colored/patterned as are smooth green snakes. Tan or buff colored specimens may be mistaken for red bellied snakes (*Storeria occipitomaculata*) or DeKay's brown snakes (*Storeria dekayi*), but both *Storeria* species have semi-keeled scales, and have faint longitudinal stripes/patterning on the dorsum.

**Etymology:** Opheodrys- Ophis (serpent or reptile) drymos (wood, or forest). vernalis-of springtime.

**Subspecies:** None.

**Range & Habitat:** Ranges throughout most of the state, but most common in northern and central Wisconsin, becoming rare to uncommon in southern Wisconsin. Smooth green snakes occupy grassy areas along forest edges, oak savannahs, marshes, prairies, meadows, and pine barrens.

**Habits & Natural History:** The smooth green snake is a small, primarily terrestrial snake, although they can and will occasionally climb into shrubs, brush, and woodpiles. These small snakes are entirely harmless and inoffensive to humans, and are primarily insectivorous (feeding on soft bodied worms, insects, arachnids, and other invertebrates). This species is oviparous, laying eggs in burrows, or rotting logs in early summer.

**Phenology:** Smooth green snakes emerge from overwintering as early as mid to late April or May, and remain active throughout the year through late September or October (or even later into the year if warmer temperatures persist or otherwise permit).

**Conservation Status:** WI Common, with no special protections, but regulated by the WI DNR. IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this

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species, group of species, or this informational sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at [info@madisonherps.org](mailto:info@madisonherps.org)

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