

## These are photos of a Bullsnake eating a rat.

I know. Yuck! Ich!

But I also know that some of you will find this interesting.

The correct name is Gopher Snake, but these snakes are more commonly called Bullsnake.



Taxonomically *Pituophis catenifer*.

Bullsnares live primarily in east-central Minnesota.

Much of their former range has been eliminated by farming practices and urban development.

They are listed as of "Special Concern" on DNR website.

That means they are not currently an endangered species but may become so as their habitat diminishes.

We have many on our farm.

No doubt because we do not till our pastures.

Nor do we use chemicals on our land.

It probably also helps that we have a fair population of gophers, particularly pocket gophers.

Aaron Jopp and I were working around one of the hog pastures when this snake showed up with a fresh-dead rat in his jaws.

We have rats, but not a lot.

I very seldom see a rat, but I know they are around.

Common rats are everywhere.

I was pleased to see this Gopher Snake expanding his diet to other rodents.

I am quite certain that rats are not endangered.

Bullsnares grow to six feet long or more.

This snake has a classic color and shade pattern.

As you see, the colors and hues change several times from head to tail-end.

There were actually two snakes in the area at the time.

I never considered that they would hunt in teams.

That would have value when capturing rodents in burrows.

Tom

**From the DNR WEBSITE**

Gopher Snake *Pituophis catenifer*- Special Concern

Description: 36 - 72 inches. Bullsnares are light, yellow or straw base color, with a row of dark blotches running down the back. The sides have smaller blotches, bars, or speckling. Blotches and other markings are usually very dark near the head and tail, but usually fade to a light brown or rust color in the middle portion of the body on adults. The belly is light colored with a series of dark squares scattered on it.



**Similar Species:** [Western Fox Snakes](#) may be mistaken for Bullsnares, but will have a darker overall appearance and a reddish-orange head as an adult.

**Comments:** Bullsnares have disappeared from much of their former range in Minnesota due to habitat loss because of urban development. Many populations are now restricted to protected lands. Please [report](#) observations.

**Special Concern:**

A status category describing a species that may become threatened or endangered because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.