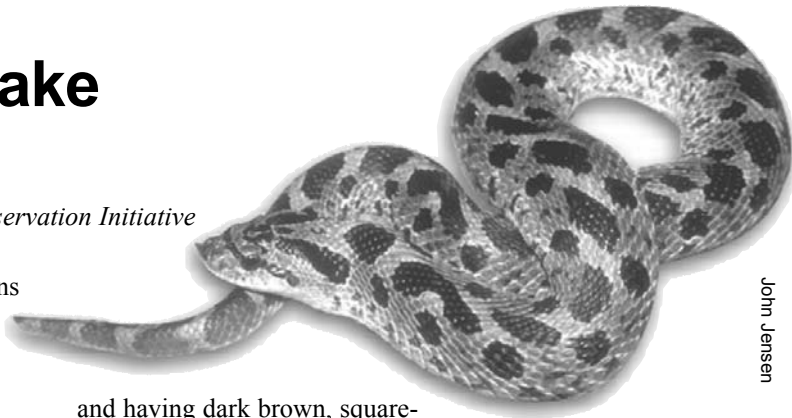


# Upland Snake Species Profile:

## Southern Hognose Snake

### *Heterodon simus*

TRACEY TUBERVILLE *Co-chair, GTC Upland Snake Conservation Initiative*



John Jensen

**Range:** Southeastern Coastal Plain and (historically) portions of the Ridge and Valley physiographic province, from North Carolina to Mississippi.

**Conservation Status:** Listed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a Category 2 (C2) species in 1991, meaning insufficient information was available to determine if listing as endangered or threatened was warranted. The species currently receives no federal protection due to the elimination of the C2 category in 1996. However, USFWS still considers the southern hognose snake a "species of concern."

The Natural Heritage Program global rank was G3G4 ("globally secure") prior to 1999, when it was revised to G2 ("globally imperiled"). The state ranks for each state in which the species occurs are listed below.

State	State rank	State Legal Protection
NC	S3 <i>vulnerable</i>	None
SC	S? <i>status unknown</i>	None
GA	S2 <i>imperiled</i>	None
FL	S2 <i>imperiled</i>	None
AL	SH <i>historical</i>	Protected
MS	SH <i>historical</i>	Endangered

The southern hognose snake has apparently declined throughout large portions of its range, and may be extirpated from Mississippi and Alabama. The maps below indicate counties from which the species has been documented and counties from which it has been documented within the last 20 years (based on data presented in Tuberville et al. 2000).

**Description:** The southern hognose snake is a small, stout-bodied snake, reaching a maximum size of 61cm (24 inches)

and having dark brown, square-shaped blotches on the back and sides, a beige to light gray background color, and a cream colored belly. The southern hognose snake's most distinctive physical feature is its sharply upturned snout. This species is often confused with eastern hognose snakes and pigmy rattlesnakes, both of which can occur with the southern hognose snake.

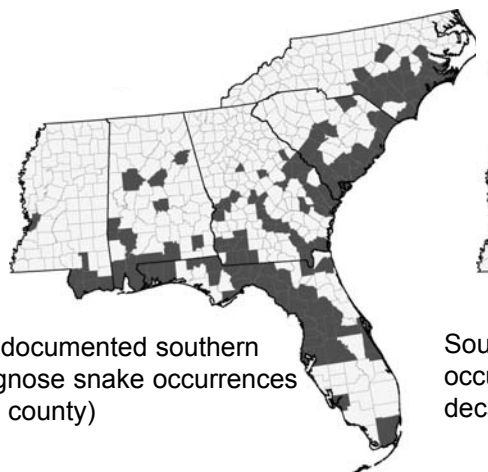
**Natural History:** Very little is known about this secretive, infrequently encountered animal. This strictly diurnal snake is extremely fossorial, spending most of its time in underground burrows. Most captures have been reported during May-June (adults) and September-October (primarily hatchlings). Southern hognose snakes feed almost exclusively on toads. Natural nests have never been found, but in captivity, females have laid clutches of 6-14 eggs.

The southern hognose snake, like its more common relative the eastern hognose snake, is sometimes called the "puff adder", because it will flare its throat and hiss at its "attackers" when feeling threatened. Another defensive behavior this species may display is rolling over on its back, with its tongue hanging out playing "possum."

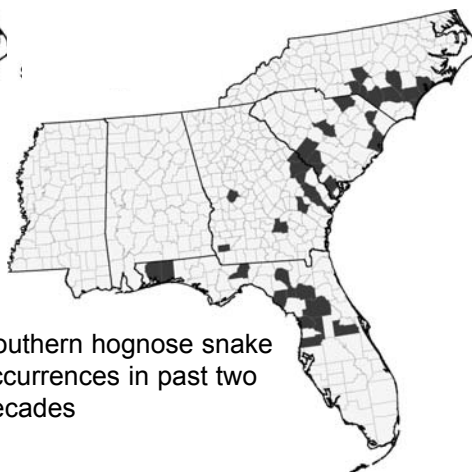
#### Relevant Articles:

Edgren, R.A. 1955. The natural history of the hog-nosed snakes, genus *Heterodon*: a review. *Herpetologica* 11:105-117.

Tuberville, T.D., J.R. Bodie, J.B. Jensen, L. LaClaire, J.W. Gibbons. 2000. Apparent decline of the southern hog-nosed snake, *Heterodon simus*. *J. Elisha Mitchell Sci. Soc.* 116:19-40.



All documented southern hognose snake occurrences (by county)



Southern hognose snake occurrences in past two decades

For more information, contact:



**GOPHER TORTOISE COUNCIL**  
 c/o Florida Museum of Natural History  
 P. O. Box 117800  
 Gainesville, FL 32611-7800  
[www.gophertortoisecouncil.org](http://www.gophertortoisecouncil.org)