

Reptiles of Cass and Clay Counties

Snakes



Plains Garter Snake (*Thamnophis radix*)

Description: Typically 1 to 2 feet long; brown, greenish, or black; three long, light-colored stripes that are yellow, orange, or off-white

Habitat: Open spaces such as farm fields, yards, and parks; mainly active during the day

Food: Frogs, insects, worms, fish, rodents, and eggs; doesn't kill things before eating them, but will sometimes eat things that are already dead



Common Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*)

Description: Up to 3 feet in length; black with yellow lengthwise stripes on their back and sides

Habitat: Forests, fields, and prairies; often found near water

Food: Frogs, small mammals, earthworms, and insects



Plains Hog-nosed Snake (*Heterodon nasicus*)

Description: Dark blotches on the back extending from the back of the head on to the tail; large amount of black coloration on the underside, with contrasting patches of white, yellow and orange; snout is upturned

Habitat: Arid areas; farmlands, and floodplains

Food: Mainly toads, but also lizards and reptile eggs, and to a lesser extent frogs, salamanders, snakes, birds, and mammals



Redbelly Snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*)

Description: About the size of a large nightcrawler; brown or reddish-brown with a single lighter stripe, or can be gray with four dark stripes; red belly

Habitat: Woodlands and forest edges often near water

Food: Insects, earthworms, and slugs



Smooth Green Snake (*Opheodrys vernalis*)

Description: Bright green coloration with a yellow or off-white underside, but some are light brown instead of green; smooth scales

Habitat: Open areas with grass and shrubs

Food: Mostly insects and spiders

Turtles

Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*)



Description: Shell is colored from green to brown to black; young turtles have crests on the top of their shell, which gradually disappear with age; underside of the shell is greatly reduced; long tails with a series of raised scales along the top; large head with long neck; more aggressive when on land than in water

Habitat: Aquatic habitats; prefer slower moving bodies of water

Food: Insects, fish, clams, crayfish, snails, worms, frogs, tadpoles, salamanders, snakes, turtles, birds, various small mammals, and aquatic plants; will also eat dead animals; have to feed under water because they need the water pressure to swallow

Painted Turtle (*Chrysems picta*)



Description: Low, smooth shell that is black or olive with red markings along or under the margins; underside of shell is yellow or orange with central dark blotch; head is yellow striped; neck and limbs are red or yellow striped

Habitat: Prefer shallow, weedy waters with a mud bottom

Food: Aquatic plants and seeds, insects, snails, tadpoles, carrion, and more

Lizards

Northern Prairie Skink (*Plestiodon septentrionalis*)



Description: Long tail; shiny; tan or brown on the back, dark brown almost black on the sides, with alternating dark and light stripes; three wide pale stripes that don't reach the head; chin and throat are yellowish or pale yellow; belly is gray to tan and unmarked; short legs

Habitat: Stream banks, mixed grass prairies, openings in pine barrens

Food: Grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, caterpillars, and other insects; spiders, snails, and other small arthropods

Sources:

<http://herpnet.net/northdakota-herpetology/>
http://dnr.state.mn.us/reptiles_amphibians/index.html

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