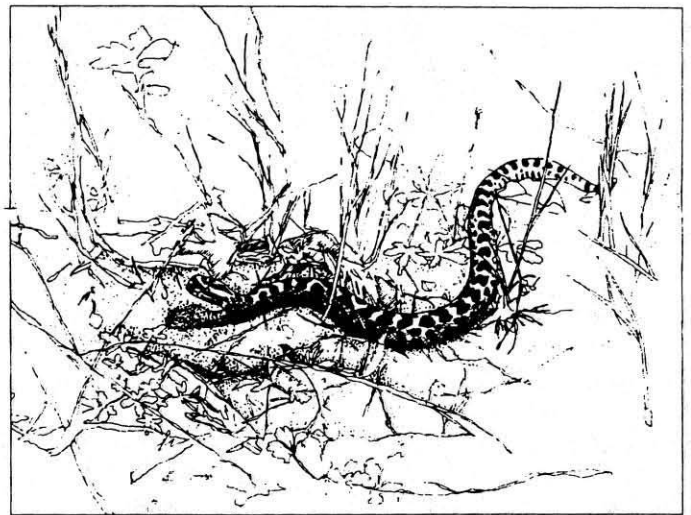


down into water from only one to 15 feet deep. As we visited on a long weekend, there were several other boats at the site, some scuba divers, and a few bothersome "water lice" (PWC).

Certainly the most exciting incident for me on the trip was coming across a Massasauga rattlesnake while collecting firewood along the shoreline early Sunday morning. When I passed a bush on the trail on the inland side, I had heard the distinctive dry rustling sound of a snake sliding over dried leaves and grass. I stopped and looked into the bush but wasn't able to spot what had made the sound. On the return towards the campsite, I skirted the same bush on the water-side path which was more open, mostly rock sloping into the water. Fortunately, before getting too close, I spotted the rattlesnake that I had evidently roused earlier, sitting coiled in the middle of the rock pathway. I observed it for a while before reversing and returning to camp by the inland side path to haul a few others out of their sleeping bags to come have a look. It was quite exciting to spot a such (in)famous fauna only 100 feet from our campsite. Needless to say, I was unnerved enough to be much more careful about where I walked and what I wore on my feet the rest of the time we were at that site. As the newsprint park guide suggests, I reported the location of the sighting to contribute to the database being compiled. Indeed, several park staff have been trained in safe capture, DNA sampling, and relocation for the purposes of studying the Massasauga.

The guide asks that park users who spot a rattlesnake call it in to the park or to Calhoun Lodge. Depending on time and staff availability, they will endeavour to come on site and take a sample. Alas, being somewhat purists, we did not have a cell phone with us. Oh, and the park staff are happy to report that there have been no bites in the park and that taking care and following basic precautions will keep it that way.



Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake

The Massasauga Provincial Park includes one of the remaining ranges of the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, the only venomous snake in Ontario. This snake is distinct from all others by its triangle-shaped head and of course, the small rattle at the tip of its' tail. Rattlesnakes are generally shy and tend not to strike unless provoked. When you hear the distinctive buzzing sound of a rattlesnake, stop moving, determine the snake's whereabouts, and then move away slowly. This species is considered to be threatened under the Endangered Species Act criteria in Ontario.

(Copied from MPP map)