

Start Something >

LEARN HOW

bigbrothersbigsisters.org



ADVERTISEMENT

Groups join forces to save Vermont rattlesnakes

9:18 AM, Apr. 6, 2011 | 49 Comments



Timber rattlesnakes, although rare, can be found in southern Vermont. / Courtesy of J. Merrow

FAIR HAVEN — Scientists appealed for public help Tuesday on behalf of an unlikely species: the venomous timber rattlesnakes of western Rutland County.

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, the Nature Conservancy and the Orianna Society, a national reptile conservation group, announced a two-year study of the endangered snakes to determine how many remain in Vermont, the extent of their habitat and the travel corridors they use to forage, mate and reproduce.

Twitter

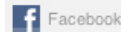
Facebook

Share

Email

Print

AAA



Written by **Candace Page, Free Press Staff**

Writer

FILED UNDER

News Local News

“Rattlesnakes are a treasure. They are a beautiful animal,” wildlife biologist Kiley Briggs told an audience of about 60 people who gathered Tuesday night in Fair Haven for a meeting about the snakes, and the study. “It would be an absolute tragedy to lose these animals.”

Vermont herpetologist Jim Andrews, another partner in the study, said Vermont represents the extreme northern end of the rattlesnakes’ range. Until 1971, the state paid a bounty for people to kill the snakes. In an extreme turnabout of attitude, 16 years later Vermont added timber rattlers to the state endangered-species list and made it illegal to kill or harass them.

Although the snakes might once have been found as far north as Milton in the Champlain Valley, they now are confined to a warm pocket of Rutland County where rocky ledges provide denning and basking sites.

The rattlers have a dangerous reputation, and many people fear them, but such fears are overblown, Andrews said.



Mortgage Rates Hit 3.13%
If you owe under \$729k, you probably qualify for the Govt Refi Program.



Hinesburg: Dermatologists Hate Her
Local Mom Exposes an Anti-Aging Miracle. Her \$5 Trick ERASES Wrinkles!



New Policy in Vermont
Drivers with no DUIs may be eligible for \$9 per week car insurance.

ADVERTISEMENT

TOP STORIES

- [Live blogging the Latonia Congress murder trial - 24 minutes ago](#)
- [Victim and accused affected by alleged Burlington bullying incident](#)
- [Vermont joins wildlife groups in effort to preserve crossings](#)
- [Judge throw s out evidence in South Burlington drug case](#)
- [Burlington International Airport loses runway lights](#)
- [Lake Champlain level set to recede again](#)
- [Vermont drivers feel the squeeze at gas pumps](#)
- [Texas mom arrested in death of boy found in Maine](#)
- [University of Vermont trustees consider tuition hike](#)

SEE ALL TOP STORIES

MOST POPULAR

- [Victim and accused affected by alleged Burlington bullying incident](#)
- [Judge throw s out evidence in South Burlington drug case](#)
- [Texas mom arrested in death of boy found in Maine](#)
- [Colchester police seek woman who reported motorcycle crash](#)
- [Vermont joins wildlife groups in effort to preserve crossings](#)

"They are a docile snake," he said. "They are not aggressive as long as you don't mess with them."

Briggs will spend the spring searching for rattlers. A veterinarian will implant radio transmitters the size of cigarette butts in up to six male snakes so Briggs can track them across the landscape. Briggs will tape transmitters to other snakes, collect public reports of sightings and do field surveys to search for new populations.

Timber rattlesnakes congregate in underground dens for the winter, and several of those sites are known. But less is known about where the snakes range during the summer. Identifying their routes and the key habitats where they lie in wait for small mammals will allow targeted conservation efforts.

The Nature Conservancy has sent letters to about 200 Rutland County landowners, seeking permission to follow snakes across their land.

In the past, some landowners saw the snakes as dangerous pests to be killed if they are spotted. A new program offers free "rattlesnake removal" to any landowner uncomfortable with the presence of the creatures.

The scientists thought they might face hostile questions from worried residents, but that did not happen. Instead, the audience asked for more details about the rattlesnakes' habits and biology.

Paul Jardine of Fair Haven said after the two-hour meeting that a number of the snakes lived on property where he used to live.

"I'd come home and find two of them in the driveway," he said. "I just left them alone. Watching a rattlesnake is kind of like watching grass grow."

Until last fall, there had not been a rattlesnake bite in Vermont in 50 years. A Rutland County case last year involved someone who improperly handled a snake, Andrews said.

He added that many of the reported rattlesnake sightings in Vermont are misidentifications. Most often, people mistake milksnakes for rattlers, he said, because the non-venomous milksnake often will coil and shake its tail as if it were a rattlesnake.

Although rattlesnakes are not aggressive, he said no one should try to handle one. Sightings can be reported to The Nature Conservancy's West Haven office at 265-8645.

Contact Candace Page at 660-1865 or cpage@burlingtonfreepress.com. Get news updates from the Free Press via Facebook at www.facebook.com/bfpnews.



Causeway damaged by high water



MMU vs. SB girls lacrosse



University of Vermont's Naked Bike Ride

MOST COMMENTED

Opinions on 2013 air show fly in different circles	90
Victim and accused affected by alleged Burlington bullying incident	69
Sen. Leahy seeks restoration of Vermont/Montreal train service	50
Congress testifies about night of slaying	38
Woman accused of firing gun in dispute over marijuana deal in Burlington	34

>

ADVERTISEMENT

Ads by Pulse 360

GET LISTED HERE

Hinesburg: Mom is Hated by Dermatologists
Clever Mom Reveals \$4 Trick to a Wrinkle Free Face - Shocking Results!
ConsumerLifeOnline.com

Vermont Refinance at 2.65%
\$160,000 Mortgage \$659/mo. No SSN req. Get a Free quote! (3.0% apr)
Lendgo.com/mortgage

Vermont Refinance at 3.17% APR
\$200,000 mortgage only \$842/mo. No SSN required. Free quotes!
www.RefinanceHorizon.com

[View Comments \(49\)](#) | [Share your thoughts »](#)

YOU MIGHT ALSO BE INTERESTED IN

- [Williston supermarket robbed via roof vent](#)
- [Drivers asked to remove Lake Champlain plates](#)
- [Vermont joins wildlife groups in effort to preserve crossings](#)
- [Lake rises again in long lasting flood](#)

MORE LOCAL NEWS HEADLINES

- [Victim and accused affected by alleged Burlington bullying incident](#)
- [Vermont joins wildlife groups in effort to preserve crossings](#)
- [Judge throws out evidence in South Burlington drug case](#)

ARCHIVES

View the last seven days

- [Yesterday, May. 18](#)
- [Tuesday, May. 17](#)
- [Monday, May. 16](#)
- [Sunday, May. 15](#)
- [Saturday, May. 14](#)
- [Friday, May. 13](#)
- [Thursday, May. 12](#)

See our paid archives for news older than a week.

THINGS TO DO

[MORE Events](#) | [Submit an Event](#)

[SEE ALL EVENTS](#)

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER & FACEBOOK

Get headlines from the Burlington Free Press via Facebook and Twitter.

MOST POPULAR

- [Victim and accused affected by alleged Burlington bullying incident](#)
- [Judge throws out evidence in South Burlington drug case](#)
- [Texas mom arrested in death of boy found in Maine](#)
- [Colchester police seek woman who reported motorcycle crash](#)
- [Vermont joins wildlife groups in effort to preserve crossings](#)
- [Burlington International Airport loses runway lights](#)
- [Vermont drivers feel the squeeze at gas](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

[Site Map](#) | [Back to Top](#)

NEWS

- [Latest Headlines](#)
- [Local News](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Schools](#)
- [Crime & Courts](#)
- [Vermont](#)
- [New England / New York](#)
- [Nation / World](#)
- [Hometown](#)
- [Data Universe](#)

OBITUARIES

- [Recent Obituaries](#)
- [Submit an Obituary](#)

SPORTS

- [High School Sports](#)
- [College Sports](#)
- [UVM Sports](#)
- [Varsity Insider Blog](#)
- [On Campus Blog](#)
- [All-State Teams](#)
- [Outdoors](#)
- [@bfp_sports](#)

GREEN

- [Green Mountain](#)
- [I Believe Essays](#)
- [Localvore](#)
- [Joel Banner Baird: Baird's Eye View Blog](#)
- [Candy Page: Tree At My Window Blog](#)
- [Green Mountain Awards](#)

BUSINESS

- [Business Monday](#)
- [Movers & Shapers](#)
- [Sunday Jobs](#)
- [Biz Beat Blog](#)

OPINION

- [Voice of the Free Press](#)
- [My Turn](#)
- [Letters to the Editor](#)
- [Comment & Debate](#)
- [Editorial Cartoons](#)
- [Staff Blogs](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Write to Us](#)

ARTS

- [ARTSbtv](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Movies](#)
- [Theater](#)
- [Brent Hallenbeck: Brent's Notebook Blog](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Events Calendar](#)
- [Horoscopes](#)
- [Celebrations](#)

FOOD

- [Savorvore](#)
- [Recipes](#)
- [Localvore columns](#)
- [Sally Pollak: Farm Fed Blog](#)

HELP

- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Submission Forms](#)
- [Subscriber Services](#)

FOLLOW US

- [Twitter](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [RSS](#)
- [E-mail Alerts](#)
- [Text Alerts](#)

GANNETT

Copy right © 2011 www.burlingtonfreepress.com. All rights reserv ed.

Users of this site agree to the [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Notice/Your California Privacy Rights](#), and [Ad Choices](#)