

What do you know about Garter Snakes?

- They are widely distributed in western Canada.
- You can find all of these common Garter Snakes in the Fraser River estuary.
- Each species can vary in colour and size.
- The females are larger than the males.
- They eat slugs, worms, fish (with the exception of the Northwestern species), frogs, nestling birds, and small mammals.
- The Western Terrestrial is one species of Garter Snake that sometimes coils its body around its prey while biting (constriction).
- The young are born alive July through September.
- In Fall, they cool and lower their metabolic rate, then enter the hibernaculum for winter, emerging in Spring.
- Snakes keep growing throughout their lives!
- The saliva is mildly poisonous!

Please respect and protect our Boundary Bay Garter Snakes. They are a vital part of the Fraser River Estuary ecosystem!

Garter Snakes in Boundary Bay

Have you seen these Garter Snakes around Delta?



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Beach Grove Hibernaculum

Boundary Bay is a very special habitat for numerous animals and plants. The Beach Grove dyke is the location of one of the largest winter congregations (hibernacula) of Garter Snakes in the region.

The Beach Grove Hibernaculum was identified as predominantly Western Terrestrial Garter Snakes in 2015, when they were temporarily removed to a safe location to allow engineering work on the dyke. This appears to still be the case, although Northwestern and Common Garter Snakes have also been identified.

Please observe the snakes in their natural habitat: do not handle them.

All snakes in British Columbia are protected by law under the BC Wildlife Act. **It is an offence under the Act to harass them or to attempt to capture or possess them without a licence or permit.**

It is against the law to play with the snakes or remove them from their natural habitat.



Garter Snakes in Boundary Bay

All three local Garter Snake species, which can be difficult to distinguish, have been seen at the hibernaculum:



Common Garter
(*Thamnophis sirtalis*)

Black with yellow stripes and often red bands



Western Terrestrial
(*Thamnophis elegans*)

Grey or brown with prominent dark blotches



Northwestern
(*Thamnophis ordinoides*)

Variety of colours and patterns, usually with 3 narrow stripes