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# Parry Sound North Star

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Wednesday, June 17, 1998

Issue No. 24



**PARRY SOUND  
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## Future depends on decision by restructuring commission **\$7.6 million for Belvedere Heights**

By Eleanor Colonello  
North Star staff

**PARRY SOUND** - Belvedere Heights Home for the Aged has been identified by the Ministry of Health as one of 102 long-term care facilities most in need of capital funding for upgrading or replacing.

According to MPP Ernie Eves's office

\$7.6 million has been earmarked by the MOH for upgrading or redevelopment of the home, but a final decision on whether the money will be spent there still hinges on recommendations that could be made by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. The provincial panel made an invited visit here last month and is considering a possible consolidation of the home and the West

Parry Sound Health Centre in separate facilities at a new site on Bowes Street.

According to Belvedere Heights administrator Reg Crawford, the home had been identified as a "category D" facility, meaning it was on the list for mandatory replacement because it did not meet any of the current guideline standards.

Continued on page 3



### Searching for rattlers

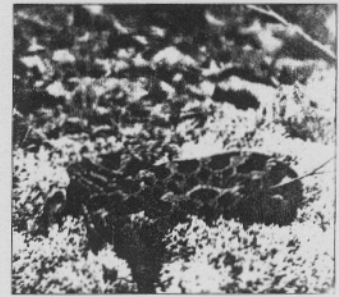
Chris Parent, along with a group of curious adventurers, uses a radio device to locate a tagged Massasauga Rattlesnake in Killbear Park during the Management of Human-Rattlesnake Interactions Conference June 11.

The conference included a field trip into the heart of Killbear Park in search of rattlesnakes, which - surprisingly, due to the less-than-perfect weather conditions - yielded five snakes in 20 minutes of searching.

Using a radio-tagging system to locate one of the snakes, nicknamed 'Buttercup', Parent led a fascinated group of snake-lovers along one of Killbear's main trails and into the heart of Massasauga country.

Many were surprised at how small and harmless-looking the snakes actually were - the average length of a Massasauga at Killbear is about half a metre.

For full story, see page 15.

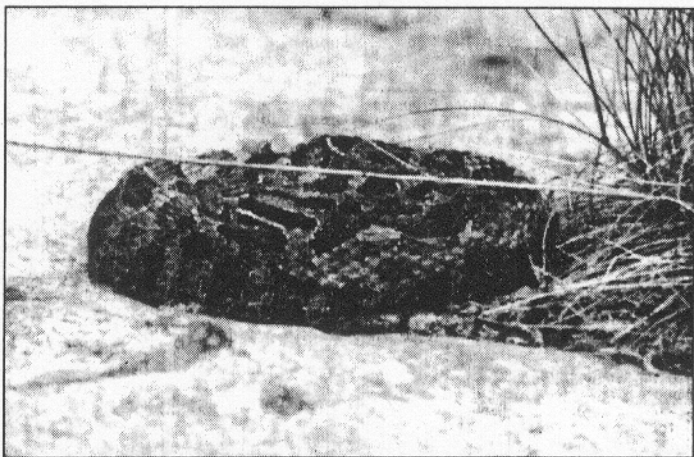


# Conference aims to educate

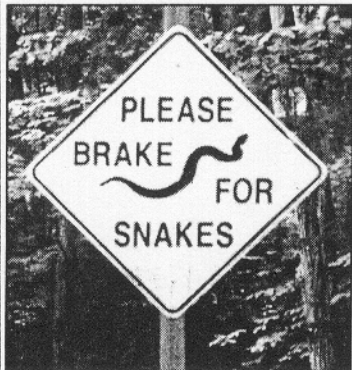
By Jim Donnelly  
North Star Staff

CARLING - Massasauga rattlesnakes, generally, are feared and misunderstood creatures. Ontario's lone poisonous snake and the inspiration of many a terrifying nightmare, the reptiles are more often than not perceived by the public as bloodthirsty monsters rather than benign animals.

The Management of Human-Rattlesnake Interactions Conference, however, held June 11 at Killbear Provincial Park, was aimed to change this method of thinking and help



One of the five Massasauga Rattlesnakes spotted in Killbear during the recent Management of Human-Rattlesnake Interactions Conference.



Signs at the entrance of Killbear remind motorists to watch for slithery creatures.

depict the snake in a new light. Attended by staff members of various agencies and parks from all four parts of the province (and one from the U.S.), the conference consisted of seminars on Massasauga safety, effects of human disturbance on and legislation to protect the snakes, maintenance of captive rattlesnakes, and Massasauga population genetics.

"The conference was designed to provide people to whom the public turn to about the snakes with cutting-edge information on managing human-rattlesnake interaction," said conference organizer Chris Parent. "These people include staff from the MNR, Provincial Parks, Metro Toronto Zoo, Science North, Niagara Conservation Authority, and Ojibway Nature Centre."

The conference also included a field trip into the heart of Killbear Park in search of

rattlesnakes, which - surprisingly, due to the less-than-perfect weather conditions - yielded five snakes in 20 minutes of searching. Using a radio-tagging system to locate one of the snakes, nicknamed 'Buttercup', Parent led a fascinated group of snake-lovers along one of Killbear's main trails and into the heart of Massasauga country. It wasn't long before group members began spotting curled-up snakes basking on the rocks just off the trail. Many were surprised at how small and harmless-looking the snakes actually were - the average length of a Massasauga at Killbear is about half a metre.

The Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake is a threatened species and as such is receiving both government and public support. It's reputation as an aggressive killer has

continued on page 17

# Rattlesnake conference aimed to protect threatened species

continued from page 15  
contributed heavily to its dwindling numbers, and as a result Parent points out that the key to helping the snake's chances is public education.

**'Great deal of cooperation' needed**

"It's going to take a great deal of cooperation on a very broad level, but with the success of this conference we feel we're winning the public-relations battle," said Parent. "I'm very impressed so far with the level of cooperation

we've received."

**Must be protected**

The conference's message goes hand-in-hand with the Park's other efforts to study and protect the Massasauga rattlesnake, which includes radio-tagging and observation in captivity.