



Snake killer fined, banned from park

Janis Leering, The Mirror

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The Midland man charged with killing an Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake at a national park has made a deal to pay \$3,000 for his crime.

Last August, the 32 year old was charged by the park warden with poaching in a national park, after he beat the snake to death while camping with his family on July 1.

The man, whose name was not released, was facing a maximum fine of \$250,000 or five years in jail if he went to court.

"(The \$3,000) was not a fine, we entered into a diversion plan," said Hugh Bremner, manager of resource conservation with Georgian Bay Islands National Park. The deal also bans the man from being at the park for one year, and it was made between the crown attorney and the defence lawyer.

The money is going to the Eastern Massasauga Recovery Team, to help with conservation and public education about the snakes. Bremner said it's a national team that will use the money for research or education pieces, and it will likely be spent locally, because the Eastern Georgian Bay area is where the main population of the massasauga is found.

While the case didn't go to court, Bremner said he is happy with the outcome of the situation.

"Our whole intent was to set an example and make sure the public becomes aware this species is protected."

People may vilify the snake, said Bremner, but they are endangered species. He wanted to make sure campers know this type of behaviour isn't accepted at the park.

The snake that was killed over the July long weekend was a female, one that had been tagged, or microchipped by staff in 1995. An autopsy was done, which showed bones were broken and organs were 'pulverized', and that resulted in the charges being laid.

Earlier reports said the man started hitting the snake because he was concerned for his children who were playing nearby, but Bremner didn't want to make any comments on that.

"We have not gone to court, and that evidence was never brought forward, it's just speculation. However, we would not entertain that as a justification. "

This is the first time a snake was killed within the park, but Bremner admitted that massasaugas are often killed, either by a car or by a person.

"We know that these things are probably killed on a regular basis, and nobody knows about it. But with the new Species at Risk Act, it puts greater protection on the species, and the fines are substantial."