

Michigan Mystery Animal Challenge

Benzie Central High School & Academy After School



Read the clues below and try to determine the identity of this Mystery Animal. The answer is on the back of this paper. No peeking until you have arrived at a solid answer!

This unique Michigan animal ~

- 1. Is a reptile.*
- 2. Feeds mainly upon toads.*
- 3. Has a turned-up snout, useful for rooting around for toads.*
- 3. Is known to bluff attack would-be predators with lots of hissing, lunging, flattening their head & body.*
- 4. Will play dead if the bluff doesn't work, rolling over on its back & sticking out its tongue until the threat is over.*



Turn the paper over to learn the answer ~>

And the correct answer is the **Eastern Hognose Snake!**



I've noticed some people call this species the "Puff Adder" which makes me cringe a little, because the real Puff Adder is a highly venomous snake that lives in Africa. The hognose snake on the other hand is a harmless Michigan species that is fun to encounter and observe in nature. Below is a photograph of an **Eastern Hognose Snake** that I encountered with students in the woods behind Benzie Central High school. It did a lot of bluffing trying to get us to leave the area. I tickled it gently with a stick, it rolled over and played dead!



Challenge: When temperatures warm as Spring advances, keep an eye open for snakes in your area. All snakes are important members of the ecosystem and should be left unharmed. Please photograph any snakes you encounter and become a citizen-scientist. If you send me the photograph and note the location of the snake (or any reptile for that matter) to kevin.kinnan@ecoseeds.org, I will be more than happy to share your discovery with a scientific state-wide data project that is utilized by wildlife biologists to monitor native populations of our native herps (reptiles and amphibians). Every photographic record really helps reptiles and scientists both!

