

Appendix D

Species at Risk Site Report

Species at Risk Site Report: 7310 Tecumseh Rd. E.

Chris Hart, Biodiversity Coordinator, City of Windsor

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Summary

The Species at Risk screening report for 7310 Tecumseh Rd East, by WSP, indicated potential habitat for Eastern Foxsnake, but stated that with “its small size and high level of disturbance, the property would not support an isolated population of SAR snakes”. To assess for presence/absence of Foxsnake on site (Figure 1), 11 surveys were conducted between September 8 and October 12, 2023 (survey details in Table 1). Surveys did not span the entire active season, however we believe that this survey effort had high probability to uncover any presence of SAR snakes using the site. Survey procedures followed MNRF’s 2016 “Survey Protocol for Ontario’s Species at Risk Snakes.” There was no evidence of snakes found on the site.

Survey Protocol

Visual encounter surveys (VES) consisted of systematic visual inspection of the site, with focus on appropriate habitat features. This included checking under debris, and looking within the grassier areas along the periphery and in areas that could be used for basking/thermoregulation. The site is a dense woodlot with little to no understory growth, which offers limited natural habitat for Foxsnake except for small pockets along the west (Figure 1). Artificial cover objects (ACO) were used to improve likelihood of detecting snakes.

Evidence of unauthorized use of the site, along with the minimal suitable habitat available for SAR, prompted the decision to not place plywood cover boards on site. Instead, the plethora of existing cover objects were checked during each visit. These objects included discarded lumber (plywood, 2x6 and 2x4), pallets, sheet metal, shelving, concrete slabs, landscape fabric, tarps, and large signs (construction and retail). Other debris checked included hubcaps, buckets, lawn chairs, Styrofoam sheets and remnants of television sets. If not already in a suitable location, ACO were placed near potential habitat features, i.e., buried concrete slabs, understory growth and along the periphery (Figure 2). Surveys were conducted under appropriate weather conditions, with the majority completed in the morning.

Informal road surveys were conducted following inspection of the site. Given the site’s isolation from the agricultural fields and railway tracks to the northwest, a reasonable stretch of Catherine Street was checked for snakes, including remains, that may have attempted to cross to reach the site.

Results

No evidence of snakes were found during the surveys. The entire site is roughly half of a hectare in size, with only a section of potential SAR habitat present near the west boundary. On average, each survey lasted 40 minutes, which is well within the recommended effort for a site of this condition. Surveys were not conducted throughout the entire active season, but a majority were done at a time more likely to encounter snakes seeking hibernacula, which was the potential habitat feature indicated in the initial screening report. Several of these potential features, identified as concrete slabs, were mainly surface-level, and revealed no subterranean access when lifted. The larger, semi-buried slabs were surrounded by ACO (Figure 3), and produced no evidence of snake use. There was also no evidence of rodent use

(i.e., burrows, nests, scat) under any of the ACOs, or uncovered during VES. This suggests limited food availability on site. The adjacent field was mowed during the survey period, creating further isolation.

Conclusion

The existing habitat and lack of connectivity, along with the surveys completed, suggests that there is minimal probability that SAR snakes are using this site. To acknowledge the non-zero potential, we are in agreement with the initial recommendations of the SAR screening report that all on-site personnel should have SAR awareness training (including identification and encounter protocols), and that a qualified biologist should be on-site, or on-call when work is occurring. The information in this document should be used in the consultation with MECP regarding any further mitigation requirements, and/or the need for permitting or registration.

Table 1. Data from the Species at Risk snake surveys conducted at 7310 Tecumseh Rd E. Monitoring Methods: VES – Visual Inspection Survey, ACO – Artificial Cover Object. Last 48h: Precipitation in the last 48 hours. Next 24h: Precipitation expected in the next 24 hours.

| Date | Surveyors | Monitor Methods | Start | End | Temp °C | Cloud % | Wind (kph) | Wind Direction | Baro (kPa) | Humid % | Precipitation | Last 48h | Next 24h | Snake |
|-----------|---|-----------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|------------|----------------|------------|---------|---------------|----------|----------|-------|
| 08-Sep-23 | Tom Preney, Chris Hart, Karen Alexander | VES, ACO | 10:30 | 11:20 | 18 | 75 | 9 | NE | 101.8 | 79 | None | Yes | No | No |
| 15-Sep-23 | Chris Hart | VES, ACO | 8:51 | 9:32 | 11 | 0 | 4 | ENE | 102.4 | 92 | None | No | No | No |
| 20-Sep-23 | Chris Hart | VES, ACO | 9:04 | 9:40 | 16 | 80 | Calm | - | 102.1 | 91 | None | No | No | No |
| 22-Sep-23 | Chris Hart | VES, ACO | 7:55 | 8:30 | 17 | 25 | Calm | - | 102.5 | 95 | None | No | No | No |
| 25-Sep-23 | Chris Hart | VES, ACO | 8:02 | 8:39 | 17 | 100 | 22 | NE | 102 | 87 | None | No | Yes | No |
| 27-Sep-23 | Chris Hart | VES, ACO | 8:02 | 8:46 | 16 | 100 | 11 | ENE | 102.3 | 85 | None | Yes | Yes | No |
| 03-Oct-23 | Chris Hart | VES, ACO | 10:16 | 10:52 | 19 | 0 | 4 | SSE | 102.4 | 99 | None | No * | No | No |
| 04-Oct-23 | Chris Hart | VES, ACO | 8:03 | 8:38 | 18 | 0 | 9 | S | 102 | 90 | None | No | No | No |
| 06-Oct-23 | Chris Hart | VES, ACO | 7:58 | 8:39 | 15 | 0 | 15 | WSW | 101.2 | 95 | None | No | No | No |
| 11-Oct-23 | Chris Hart | VES, ACO | 17:05 | 17:57 | 13 | 25 | 15 | NE | 101 | 74 | None | Yes | No | No |
| 12-Oct-23 | Chris Hart | VES, ACO | 8:16 | 8:52 | 10 | 50 | 8 | N | 101.3 | 92 | None | No | No | No |

*Fog in early morning



Figure 1. The site (red), located at 7310 Tecumseh Rd. E., is bordered by busy roads to the north and east, and mown lawn to the west and south. Potential SAR habitat (green) is found near the west boundary.



Figure 2. Examples of existing Artificial Cover Objects (ACO) on site; A. Large, thin piece of plastic in the grassy periphery; B. Construction sign within the understory; C. Large, dense sheet of foam next to a loose tree stump and concrete slabs, with TV sets and tarps in the background; and D. Concrete block and metal sheet near the periphery.



Figure 3. Three Artificial Cover Objects (ACO; red X) adjacent the large, semi-buried concrete slabs.