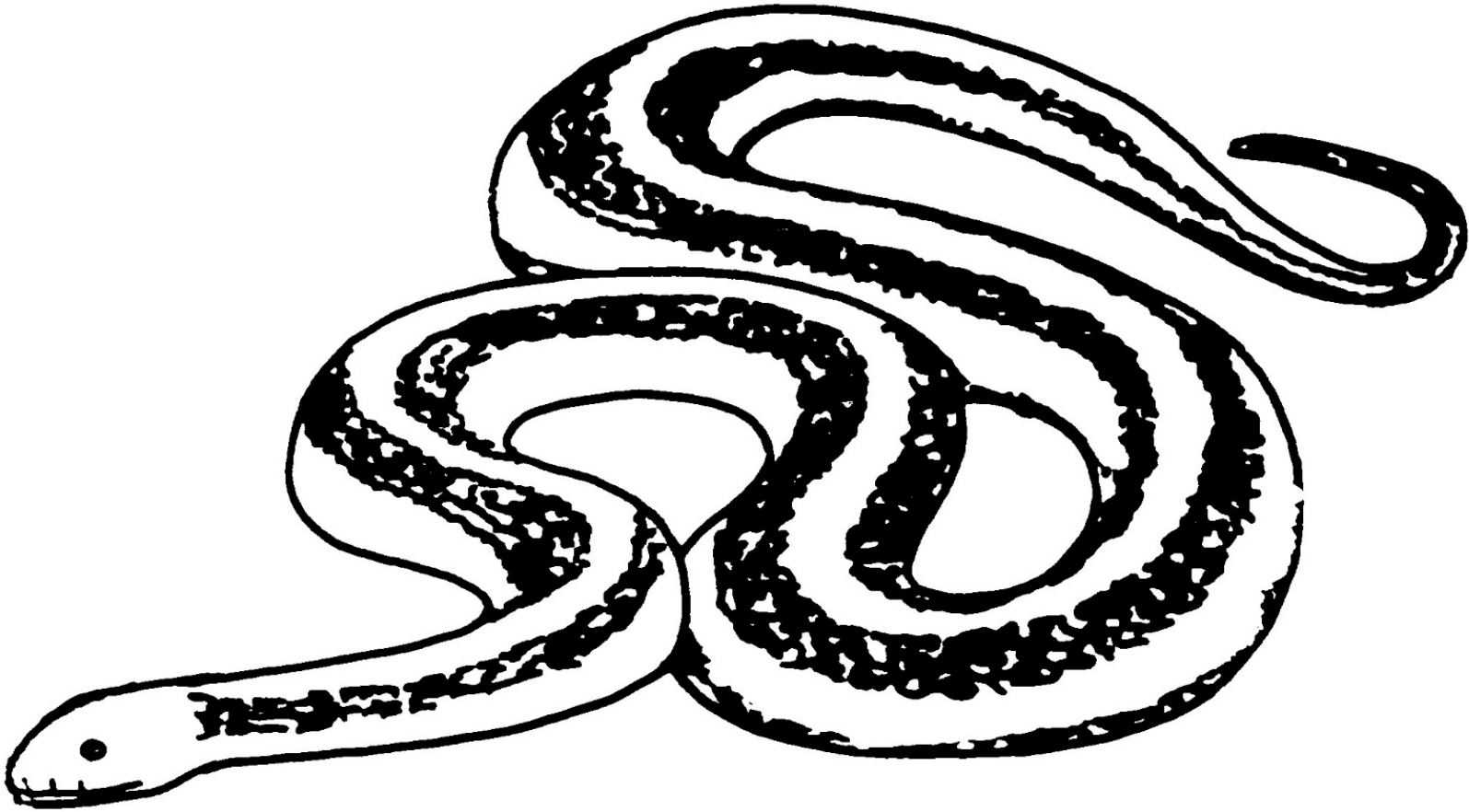




PA's Amphibian and Reptile Coloring Series

Eastern Gartersnake



All About Me: Good day! I am an Eastern Gartersnake. We are one of the most widely distributed and familiar snakes in North America. We reach lengths of 18 to 26 inches. We are dark green to black for our base color. We have stripes, normally three, that trail down our backs and sides which can be shades of yellow, brown, or green and are usually well-defined. A double row of spots commonly appears between our stripes. Our bellies vary from shades of green to yellow and includes two rows of indistinct black spots. We travel and hunt during the daylight hours, so we are active over a longer period of the day than other snakes. We can tolerate colder temperatures than other snakes; we leave our dens first in the spring, and we are the last to hibernate in the fall. We have musk glands to defend ourselves from potential attackers. We discharge a stinky odor from these musk glands that often repels predators. We are often seen near water. We also like wet meadows, marshes, and damp woodlands. We are a frequent visitor to farms and parks, and even urban areas. Young gartersnakes start out eating earthworms until their first hibernation. Even as adults, we eat earthworms, and we begin to eat other things such as amphibians, insects, small mice, and occasionally birds. We have been found in all of PA's 67 counties!