

# Campus Species Highlight

## Northern Rubber Boa (*Charina Bottae*)

The Northern Rubber Boa is a fascinating and often overlooked reptile native to the southern interior of British Columbia, extending into parts of the Pacific Northwest, including Washington, Oregon, and northern California. Though inconspicuous and secretive, these snakes are an important part of our local ecosystem.

### General Overview:

The Northern Rubber Boa is a medium-sized snake, typically appearing in greyish-brown shades with smooth, rubbery skin. Its short, blunt tail resembles its round head, a unique adaptation thought to help deter predators. These shy, non-venomous snakes pose no threat to humans and are instead beneficial to their environment. As constrictors, they primarily feed on small mammals, birds, and lizards. Despite their lifespan exceeding 20 years, they have slow reproductive rates—males mature at 3-4 years, while females take up to 5 years and only give birth to 2-8 young every 3 to 4 years. This limited reproduction, combined with their long lifespans, results in naturally small population sizes.



Photo taken by Dr. Bob Lalonde

Species at Risk Act (SARA). In British Columbia, they are considered Apparently Secure (S4) but are on the provincial Yellow List. Habitat loss and their slow reproduction rates make them vulnerable, particularly in urban and rural areas where they often go unnoticed.

### Ecological Importance

Although often overshadowed by more charismatic wildlife, reptiles like the Northern Rubber Boa play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance. They help control pest populations and serve as prey for other animals. Protecting these snakes is essential for preserving the biodiversity of our region, especially as urban expansion and habitat degradation continue to threaten their existence. By raising awareness and reducing our impact, particularly on sensitive areas like UBCO's woodland habitats, we can help safeguard these important, yet often misunderstood, members of our ecosystem.

[Read the Full Report Here](#)

### Habitat

Rubber Boas have been identified on campus and prefer cool, moist environments like Ponderosa pine woodlands, which are prevalent on the UBC Okanagan campus. They tend to remain within small home ranges and are known to hibernate in the same areas year after year. Due to human activities and disturbances on campus, it's crucial to minimize impact on their habitat to ensure their survival.

### Conservation Status

The Rubber Boa is currently listed as a species of Special Concern by both the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and the

