

**October 31, 2023**

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## **SUMMIT METRO PARKS JOINS MIAMI UNIVERSITY GREEN SNAKE STUDY**

Summit Metro Parks is proud to announce its participation in a Miami University study focused on understanding the genetic variation of green snake populations in Ohio. The study will allow researchers to estimate population size, heterozygosity (the condition where an individual has different versions of a particular gene, or alleles, at a specific location in their DNA), lineage and connectivity of green snake populations. Green snake populations have declined in recent years due to habitat loss and pesticide use.

Green snakes' vibrant green hue and unique appearance set them apart from their reptilian counterparts. While most observations come from Northeast Ohio, these serpentine residents remain one of the most perplexing and least understood snakes in our state. Their health in this region offers crucial insights into the overall well-being of green snake populations across Ohio.

To date, Summit Metro Parks has collected five green snake samples, with a goal of obtaining ten. Samples from three other snake species (common garter snakes, red-bellied snakes and Dekay's brown snake) have also been collected, allowing researchers to compare genetic diversity among various local species.

This research transcends the study of a single species. As green snake populations become more isolated, genetic diversity may dwindle, adding another layer of concern to a species already threatened by habitat degradation and loss. Understanding their unique habitat preferences can offer clues to their protection.

Because green snakes are most active and conspicuous during spring and fall when their color blends seamlessly with the lush surroundings, this is when park biologists and

trained volunteers conduct their search. They check coverboards in locations throughout the Metro Parks and conservation areas daily.

The green snake study is led by Jason Bracken, who is working under Dr. Tereza Jezkova's Global Change Biology Lab at Miami University with support from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Summit Metro Parks has conducted snake surveys for over a decade, frequently collaborating with universities to gather essential data within the Metro Parks to contribute to critical conservation information and education efforts. For additional photos and information, please visit [bit.ly/SMPsnakes](https://bit.ly/SMPsnakes) (case sensitive).



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In 2023, Summit Metro Parks is celebrating the benefits of native plants through Wild Back Yards. The park district manages more than 15,000 acres throughout 16 parks, three nature centers and over 150 miles of trails, including 22 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Annual attendance is approximately 5.5 million visits. Find us online at [summitmetroparks.org](https://summitmetroparks.org).



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