

## R2 Sensitive Species List Recommendation

### **Blackneck Garter Snake (*Thamnophis cyrtopsis*)**

By Gary Patton

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**Recommendation:** Not R2 SS, but consider for Other Emphasis Species Lists (??)

**Rationale:** This is a southwestern species that is apparently secure in the heart of its range – Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, southward into Mexico. At the northern periphery of the species range in southern Utah and Colorado, the species is ranked as imperiled. Hammerson (1999) describes the species as truly rare in Colorado. Its primary occupied range in Colorado and R2 is southeastern Colorado, where it can be found on the Comanche NG. There it is most often found along permanent or intermittent drainages, particularly in rocky canyons with oak or pinyon-juniper covered slopes. While the species does also occur in extreme western and southwestern Colorado, based on current information, it is assumed that the species does *not* occur on NFS lands there.

Although rare and spottily distributed in Colorado, this appears to be more a function of its peripheral status than due to human alteration of habitat or other anthropomorphic factors. Although it is likely that some habitat loss has occurred in the Arkansas River valley, overall the species primary habitat is not generally suitable to widespread conversion. Still, Mackessy considers its primary stream corridor habitats to be highly vulnerable to alterations (hydrologic modification, grazing, pollution) that could negatively impact this rare and localized species. Threats to the species on R2 lands does not appear, at this time, to warrant sensitive species status[or does it?]. However, we do recommend the Comanche NG work to ensure the integrity of riparian habitats for the welfare of this and other species associate with that habitat type.

Note: In addition to the evaluator's references, also referred to biodiversity documentation at Natureserve.com,; distribution data from the Colorado Herpetological Society; Hammerson 1999; and Collins and Collins (1991) *Reptiles and Amphibians of the Cimarron National Grasslands, Morton County, Kansas*.