**Segment for Week of 26 July, 2021**

**The Pine Snake**

This is Theresa Pittman bringing you information on Shore friendly living and gardening from the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Let’s talk about a subject that might make the majority of WESR listeners cringe. Don’t change the channel but instead listen and learn a little more about the pine snake. You might be familiar with such snakes as the garter snake, eastern black rat snake, and northern black racer, but I bet you’ve never heard tales of the pine snake. For this segment, I will speak about the pine snake’s suspected presence on the Shore.

The pine snake is a large sandy colored snake with black blotches scattered in a pattern along the body. Superficially, it can resemble a Timber rattlesnake to the untrained eye. They are in decline throughout their range and generally hard to find even in areas with known breeding populations, so finding one in the wild is kind of a big deal.

This species will likely very soon be listed as locally extinct in the state of Virginia, and only one specimen has ever been collected on the Delmarva peninsula. The collected individual was found in a residential area in Kent County, Maryland in the early 2000s and is assumed to be an escaped pet. Unverified sightings of this species have been reported from Sussex County, Delaware and Wicomico and Worchester Counties, Maryland. These are more believable as they occurred in the snake’s preferred habitat – mixed pine-oak hardwood forests. However, without proper documentation their presence in these locations is only hear-say.

The pine snake’s range is spotty the further north you travel from Florida, and they are very secretive in nature. It is speculated that some breeding populations might exist on the peninsula but have been overlooked due to the pine snake being active only during the warmer months and more than half that time they are in underground burrows. However, no evidence besides the correct habitat being present and unverified sightings exists to support this speculation.

The Pine snake has not been seen in Virginia for over 30 years.

For more information or answers to other gardening questions, call your local Accomack or Northampton County Extension Office. Here on the Shore call either 678-7946 or 787-1361.