

**California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System**  
**California Department of Fish and Wildlife**  
**California Interagency Wildlife Task Group**

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RED DIAMOND RATTLESNAKE

*Crotalus ruber*

Family: VIPERIDAE  
R073

Order: SQUAMATA

Class: REPTILIA

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#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The red diamond rattlesnake is distributed along coastal San Diego Co. to the eastern slopes of the mountains and north through western Riverside Co. into southernmost San Bernardino Co. Occurs from sea level to 900 m (3000 ft) in chaparral, woodland, and arid desert habitats in rocky areas and dense vegetation. Young snakes are common on the desert side but rare on the coast side of the mountains. This snake is active from mid-spring to mid-fall (Tevis 1943, Stebbins 1954, Klauber 1972).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** This snake feeds on rabbits, rodents, lizards, birds and other snakes (Stebbins 1954, Klauber 1972). Prey capture results from waiting for prey and active searching of ground, rocky areas and off the ground in bushes.

**Cover:** This snake occurs in rocky areas and in dense vegetation. It retreats into rodent burrows, into cracks in rocks or under surface cover objects (Stebbins 1954, Klauber 1972).

**Reproduction:** Young are live-born and thus require a quiet and safe place for birth, probably in burrows or under substantial cover objects such as large rocks (Stebbins 1954, Klauber 1972).

**Water:** Water is probably not required.

**Pattern:** This snake occurs in a wide variety of arid and semiarid habitats that provide dense vegetation or rocky cover.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** This snake is active from spring to fall, but the period of greatest activity is from March to June. Early in the year it is active during the day but as daytime temperatures increase it becomes active later in the evening. Eventually it is fully nocturnal (Stebbins 1954, Klauber 1972).

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** No information.

**Home Range:** Nothing is known. A report of a home range 8 m in diameter is obviously wrong (Tevis 1943).

**Territory:** No data.

**Reproduction:** Copulation occurs in March and April, with egg development requiring approximately 4 months. The young are born from mid-August to October. Litters average 8

young and range from 5-13 (Stebbins 1954, Klauber 1972).

Niche: This snake is probably preyed upon by kingsnakes, roadrunners, and possibly owls. Its close relative *Crotalus viridis* is sympatric with it in coastal areas, and they may compete.

#### REFERENCES

- Klauber, L. M. 1972. Rattlesnakes: their habits, life histories, and influence on mankind. 2nd ed. Univ. California Press, Berkeley. 1533pp.
- Stebbins, R. C. 1954. Amphibians and reptiles of western North America. McGraw-Hill, New York. 536pp.
- Tevis, L., Jr. 1943. Field notes on a red rattlesnake in lower California. *Copeia* 1943:242-245.

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Life history accounts for species in the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) System were originally published in: Zeiner, D.C., W.F.Laudenslayer, Jr., K.E. Mayer, and M. White, eds. 1988-1990. California's Wildlife. Vol. I-III. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California. Updates are noted in accounts that have been added or edited since original publication.