

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

MOHAVE RATTLESNAKE

Crotalus scutulatus

Family: CROTALIDAE

Order: SQUAMATA

Class: REPTILIA

R077

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The Mohave rattlesnake is widely distributed throughout the Mojave and extreme northern Colorado deserts. It is found from 150 to 1500 m (500 to 5000 ft) in elevation in most desert habitats, especially desert scrub, desert wash, and Joshua tree, and is most common in association with creosote. It seems to prefer desert flats over hilly or canyon habitat. This species is active from April until September (Stebbins 1954, Klauber 1972).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: This snake feeds upon rodents (especially *Dipodomys*), lizards, other snakes, birds, bird eggs and some insects (Klauber 1972). It forages actively in the open and under bushes.

Cover: The Mohave rattlesnake takes cover in burrows, presumably rodent burrows, as well as under desert bushes (Woodin 1953, Klauber 1972).

Reproduction: This species uses burrows, presumably rodent burrows, for giving live birth to young (Woodin 1953).

Water: Probably not required.

Pattern: The Mohave rattlesnake occurs throughout the Mojave Desert in a variety of habitats but is most common in scrub communities, especially creosote. It seems to prefer desert flats or very gentle slopes with few rocks.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: This snake is primarily nocturnal, but occasionally is crepuscular. It is active from April until September. In hot years, it may become inactive in mid-summer and may, or may not, re-emerge in fall (Stebbins 1954, Klauber 1972).

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Probably does not migrate.

Home Range: No data.

Territory: No data.

Reproduction: Young are live-born in July and August. Litters range 2-11 and average 8 young (Klauber 1972).

Niche: This species is probably taken by kingsnakes, roadrunners, and other avian and mammalian predators.

General Comments: This is probably the most dangerous snake in North America. It is aggressive, fairly large-bodied, and has a complex venom composed of hemolytic and neurotoxic elements. It is responsible for several deaths each year, including in recent years a prominent snake toxin expert. This snake should be avoided.

REFERENCES

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- Stebbins, R. C. 1954. Amphibians and reptiles of western North America. McGraw-Hill, New York. 536pp.
- Woodin, W. H. 1953. Notes on some reptiles of the Huachuca area of southeastern Arizona. Bull. Chicago Acad. Sci. 9:285-296.

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