

# CALIFORNIA RATTLESNAKES - SOME GENERAL INFORMATION

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Wildlife Branch, Nongame Wildlife Program (7/11/16)



## General information:

Rattlesnakes are California's only venomous snakes that can be harmful to humans. Taxonomy fluctuates, but we have approximately 40 native snake species, of which 7 are rattlesnakes: western diamondback, sidewinder, speckled, western, red diamond, Mohave, and Panamint.

To distinguish rattlesnakes from harmless native snakes, remember rattlesnakes have a distinct, triangular-shaped head, and usually have rattles at the end of their tail. They do not always rattle before striking. If you see a rattlesnake, back away and avoid the animal – it strikes humans only in self – defense.

<http://www.californiaherps.com/info/findsnakes.html>

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/genplantsanimals.html>

## Commonly encountered California snakes:

<http://www.californiaherps.com/identification/snakesid/common.html>

(Note that the color pattern of several species can resemble that of rattlesnakes. Most commonly mistaken are gophersnakes, who also mimic rattlesnake behavior to trick would-be predators.)

## Living with rattlesnakes:

If you live in snake habitat you will likely encounter snakes. You can lessen your chances of rattlesnakes residing on your property by taking the precautions identified in the sources below.

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74119.html>

<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/News/Snake>

<http://www.californiaherps.com/info/rattlesnakeinfo.html>

<http://icwdm.org/wildlife/Rattlesnake.aspx> (out-of-state but some good info)

Although you may legally kill most species of rattlesnakes in California to protect life and property, try to make your environment less hospitable to them instead, or the problem will likely continue. Remember, all native snakes are part of the ecosystem and are beneficial. For instance, many snake species, including gophersnakes, consume rodents and other pests, and some like kingsnakes actually kill and eat rattlesnakes.

**Rattlesnake bites:**

Most any snake may bite when threatened, but rattlesnake bites require urgent medical attention. Call 911 or contact the California Poison Control System. (Pharmacists, physicians, nurses, and poison information providers answer the calls to 1-800-222-1222 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Language interpreters are always available. The California Poison Control System is managed by the University of California San Francisco, School of Pharmacy, Department of Clinical Pharmacy. CPCS is a certified member of the American Association of Poison Control Centers.)

<http://www.calpoison.org/>

[http://www.calpoison.org/about/Snake\\_bites\\_09-final.pdf](http://www.calpoison.org/about/Snake_bites_09-final.pdf)

**Snake photos (permission required for use of most photos):**

<http://www.californiaherps.com/snakes/snakespics.html>

<http://calphotos.berkeley.edu/fauna/>