

# CALIFORNIA RATTLESNAKES - SOME GENERAL INFORMATION

California Department of Fish and Game

Wildlife Branch, Nongame Wildlife Program (6/13/2012)



## General information:

Rattlesnakes are California's only venomous snakes. Taxonomy fluctuates, but we have approximately 46 native snake species, of which seven are rattlesnakes: Western diamondback, sidewinder, speckled, Western, red diamond, Mojave 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 gopher and garter snakes can resemble that of rattlesnakes)

## 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://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74119.html>

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/news/issues/snake.html>

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

<http://icwdm.org/wildlife/rattlesnake.asp> (out of state but some good info)

Although you may legally kill or remove rattlesnakes, 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 – gopher snakes eat rodents, and the beautiful kingsnake actually kills and eats 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>

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