



Snake Identification and Mitigation

There are over 30 different species of snakes coexisting with us in Colorado. Of those 30 species there are only 2 species of snakes that are venomous according to the Colorado Division of Wildlife. This informational brochure is meant to help you distinguish between a venomous rattlesnake and a very common imposter called a Bullsnake.

In order to prevent unwanted guests in or around your residence, please consider the following tips:

- Eliminate cool, damp areas where snakes hide. Remove brush and rock piles, keep shrubbery away from foundations, and cut tall grass.
- Control insect and rodent populations (the snakes' primary food source) to force them to seek areas with a larger food supply. Put grains in tightly sealed containers and clean up residual pet food and debris.
- In rattlesnake-infested areas, construct a snakeproof fence around the backyard or play area. Use 36-inch high galvanized hardware cloth with a 1/4-inch mesh and bury it 6 inches deep, slanted outward at a 30-degree angle. Make certain the gate fits tightly and swings into the play area. Keep all vegetation away from the fence to prevent snakes from climbing over it.
- To prevent snakes from entering basements and crawl spaces, seal all openings 1/4 inch or larger with mortar, caulking compound, expanding foam, or 1/8-inch hardware cloth. Check for holes or cracks around doors, windows, water pipes, electrical lines, etc.

BULLSNAKE or GOPHER SNAKE

IDENTIFICATION:

- ⦿ Neck is the same width as the head, and has round pupils;
- ⦿ Upper side yellowish or cream with numerous dark or black blotches; scales on upper back keeled.
- ⦿ They can grow much longer than rattlesnakes reaching up to 100 inches, but rarely more than 71 inches.
- ⦿ They are rattlesnake imposters because they will also coil up and shake their tail, while making a rattle sound.



LIFE FACTS:

- ⦿ They are distributed throughout most of Colorado at elevations below about 8,500 feet, mostly below 7,000 feet and are very common.
- ⦿ They occupy a variety of habitats and most activity takes place on the ground or in burrows, but these capable climbers sometimes ascend high into trees.



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- ⦿ Diet consists primarily of rodents and other small mammals or birds. This makes them a welcome addition to any property.
- ⦿ Bullsnakes are constrictors that kill their prey by simply squeezing them to death.

Western or Prairie Rattlesnake



IDENTIFICATION:

- ⦿ Horny rattle or button on end of tail;



- ⦿ When threatened with danger they will usually coil their body up and shake their tail, which creates a buzzing sound.
- ⦿ Head much broader than the neck;



- ⦿ Pit on each side of face between (but lower than) eye and nostril;
- ⦿ Upper side usually blotched; upper scales keeled (have a ridge down the center);
 - Pupil vertically elongated (like a cat's) in bright light.
- ⦿ They can reach up to 48 inches, but are rarely greater than 39 inches long.

LIFE FACTS:

- They are throughout most of Colorado, except the high mountains, reaching an upper elevational limit of 7,500–9,500 feet in different areas of the state.
- ⦿ They occupy virtually every terrestrial habitat and take shelter in crevices, woodpiles, brushy vegetation, or mammal burrows.
- ⦿ Typical food items include small mammals, lizards, occasional birds and spadefoot toads, and sometimes carrion. Prey are ambushed or obtained by active foraging.
- ⦿ Rattlesnakes subdue prey by striking them quickly with a venomous bite. The venom stuns or kills the prey immediately.

OTHER FACTS:



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- ⦿ Given an opportunity to escape, snakes will choose flight over fight.
- ⦿ There are more people killed by lightning and bee stings than by snakebites.
- Colorado State Statutes provide that “any person may kill rattlesnakes when necessary to protect life or property” [33-6-107(9), C.R.S.].
- ⦿ **PLEASE USE CAUTION AROUND ANY SNAKE YOU FIND.**