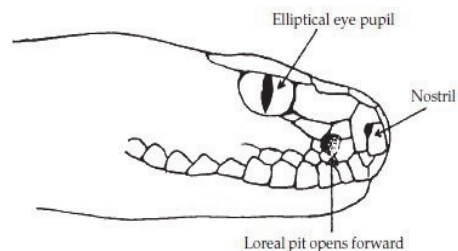


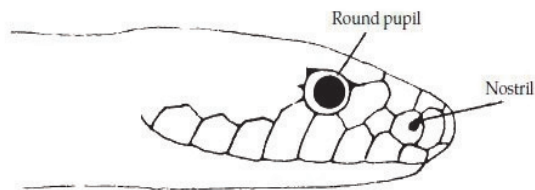
Some Southern California Reptiles



Snake photos courtesy of John Steiner



Rattlesnake head showing "cat-eye" elliptical pupil & location of large loreal pit, characteristic of pit vipers.



Nonpoisonous snakes have round eye pupil & no pit between the eye & the nostril.

Courtesy School of Agriculture U.C. Tennessee (nonpoisonous) & Department of Wildlife U.C. Davis (poisonous)



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North Central Shelter

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Harbor Shelter

957 N Gaffey Street

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East Valley Shelter

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West Valley Shelter

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South LA Shelter

1850 W 60th Street

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West LA Shelter

11361 W Pico Boulevard

Los Angeles, CA 90064

ENCOUNTERS WITH...

SNAKES AND LIZARDS



CALIFORNIA KING SNAKE

City of Los Angeles
Department of
Animal Services



Southern California Reptiles

Many types of snakes and lizards live in our backyards, empty fields, and natural areas surrounding our cities. The vast majority of these animals are harmless to humans. Most of them are a benefit to us because of their food habits.

Snake & Lizard Similarities

Both snakes & lizards are reptiles. The environment is what they rely on to regulate their body temperature by moving into the sun for warmth and the shade to cool off. Most hibernate in the winter months & emerge when the weather warms. As the days lengthen they become a common sight sunning on rocks, fences or on the warm asphalt of the road.

Although some lizards and snakes rear live young, most lay eggs. The offspring of both snakes and lizards are miniature replicas of the adult. The young are not cared for by the adults. They are self-sufficient and strike out on their own.



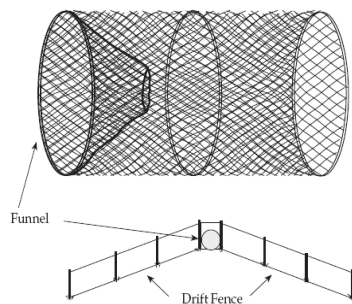
Gopher snake photo by John Steiner

Snake & Lizard Differences:

The most obvious difference is lizards have legs and snakes don't, although there are a few species of lizards that are legless.

Lizards have eyelids and ears, features that snakes lack. Snakes eyes are covered by a modified scale which is shed with its skin as it grows. Although it cannot 'hear', snakes can sense vibration and heat, and can 'taste' the air with their sensitive forked tongues.

A funnel of 1/4-inch hardware cloth attached to an inward-sloping drift fence of the same wire mesh can be useful for encouraging snakes to exit the yard.



Information courtesy Department of Wildlife Conservation
Biology University of California Davis

Most lizards are equipped with tails that break off when attacked. This wiggling tail draws the predators attention while the lizard escapes. The tail then grows back after some weeks. Snakes do not share this adaptation.

Are Snakes & Lizards Dangerous?

With a few exceptions snakes and lizards pose no danger to people or pets. Rattlesnakes are the exception and are common in Southern California.

These snakes are found in our foothills and occasionally wind up in backyards and patios of suburban neighborhoods. These snakes do carry a potent venom, and deliver the venom through hollow fangs. The bite will likely cause great pain, swelling and in some instances death.



Southern Pacific Rattlesnake
Photo by John Steiner



Fortunately, rattlesnakes are equipped with a rattle, a connected group of segments on the end of their tail. When they feel threatened they may warn intruders of their presence by shaking this rattle. Rattlesnakes don't chase people or pets. They live a secluded existence and avoid contact with humans. A rattlesnake strikes when it feels threatened and bites in self-defense.

Some snakes, like the common gopher snake, pretend to be rattlesnakes by vigorously shaking the end of their tails. Though they lack rattles the vibration of their tails makes a sound similar to that of a rattlesnake, thereby frightening off predators.

There are only two venomous lizards in the world, one of which, the Gila monster, lives in the deserts of the southwest. The other, the beaded lizard, can be found in Mexico and Guatemala.

Get to know your Snakes:

Snakes play an important role in the food web by eating disease carrying rodents and damaging insect pests.

Snakes and lizards are also an important food source for birds, mammals and other reptiles.

Residents who live in snake prone areas should learn to recognize common snakes. Many snakes & lizards are killed needlessly and indiscriminately by people out of fear. Some species of snakes are protected by law due to habitat loss and their dwindling numbers.

Living in Rattlesnake Country

If you live in or near the foothills there is a good chance that at some point you will encounter a rattlesnake. Many people are frightened of encountering a rattlesnake, and the fear is often worse than the actual event. There are precautions you can take to reduce chance encounters.

Clear brush and woodpiles from around your fence line and property. This reduces hiding places for rodents, animals that rattlesnakes prey upon.

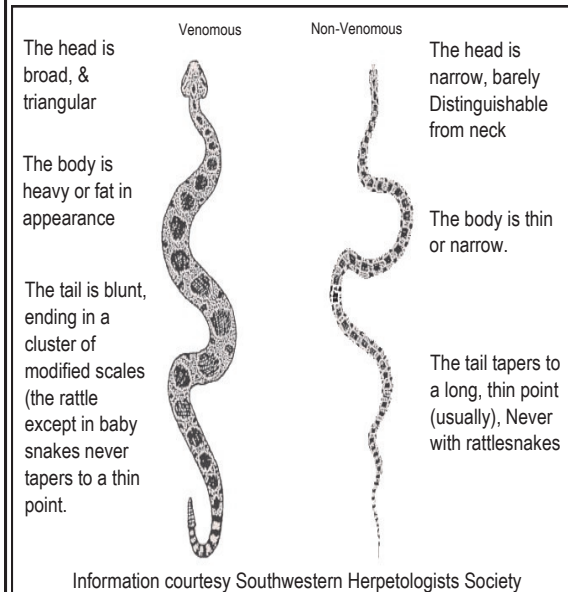
Reduce clutter and potted plants from patios. Rattlesnakes seek out shady cool spots to hide during the summer.

Talk to a fence company about installing snake fencing. Keep in mind that because snakes need only a small hole to get through, completely securing the fence is nearly impossible.

Train your dog to avoid rattlesnakes by enrolling the dog (s) in a snake avoidance class. Contact your local humane society or hunt clubs for more information.

Before allowing your children or pets into the yard, take a few minutes, and with a broomstick poke around behind flowerpots, patio furniture and other objects in the yard to make sure it is clear.

If you locate a rattlesnake contact your local animal control, and track the movements of the snake until help arrives. Do not attempt to catch or restrain the snake.



Information courtesy Southwestern Herpetologists Society