

Snakes of the Preserve

Summer is the Perfect Opportunity to Spot Some of the Santa Lucia Preserve’s Superb Snakes



Northern Pacific Rattlesnake

The *only* venomous species in this region, western rattlesnakes are not naturally aggressive towards humans; in fact, they will often rattle to show they are more scared of you than you are of them! They will retreat if given space and typically only attack in self-defense. Look for a *diamond* shaped head, thick brown blotches and the rattle, shown below.



Pacific Gophersnake

Our most common snake is also the longest in California, and one of our most effective rodent predators. If scared, they often mimic rattlesnakes, and are removed from gardens as a result. Note the narrower head and greater number of smaller blotches compared to rattlesnakes, shown above.

California Kingsnake

The California kingsnake (above) is a snake snacker! It has an impressive ability to kill and eat other snakes, including venomous species such as rattlesnakes. This species displays a wide range of colors and patterns ranging from white and black to yellow and brown, shown above.



Diablo Range Garter Snake

The most aquatic snake species in mainland California, garter snakes often forage in water and retreat into ponds when frightened. These snakes are the only known predator of California newts as they have evolved a resistance to their toxic skin. Look for their long dorsal strip as shown in the pictures above.

Saving Snakes - What *you* can do to help! The Preserve is home to 14 snake species

- Avoid rodenticides! Snakes are one of our best natural controls on rodents and unwanted pests and are vulnerable to rat poison.
- Keep your fallen trees! Snakes use old logs and piles of wood for shelter from predators.



The **Monterey Ring-necked Snake** (above) is harmless and a colorful member of our redwood forests and stream sides.

Snake Snippet - Did you know?

- *Ophidiophobia*, fear of snakes, is the 2nd most common animal phobia behind spiders!
- Snake bites result in less than 5 fatalities in the United States per year.
- Snakes shed their skin. Scientists can then use the skins to verify the presence of a particular species without actually seeing the snake!