

Safety in the Foothills

Rattlesnakes



The Northern Pacific rattlesnake is usually not aggressive, but will strike when it feels threatened, or scared. Rattlesnakes use their rattles, sometimes called buttons, at the end of their tail to give a warning. That's why they're called "rattlesnakes." If you should see or hear a rattlesnake, the best thing to do is leave it alone and it will leave you alone. Rattlesnakes have fangs that inject venom, which immediately stuns or kills its prey. They feed on rodents, small birds, reptiles, and are in turn eaten by other predators. Most humans are bitten by rattlesnakes on the hands, feet, and ankles. If you are ever bitten by a rattlesnake, remember to stay calm, remain as still as possible, and call 911.

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The Northern Pacific rattlesnake is usually not aggressive, but will strike when it feels threatened, frightened, or provoked. Rattlesnakes use their rattles, sometimes called buttons, at the end of their tail to give a warning. That's why they're called "rattlesnakes." Given room to retreat, a rattlesnake will usually leave peacefully and quietly. Rattlesnakes have fangs that inject venom, which immediately stuns or kills its prey. They feed on rodents, small birds, reptiles, and are in turn eaten by other predators. Rattlesnakes are primarily seen during the spring and summer months. Most rattlesnakes bites occur when people are walking or climbing. The majority of snakebites are on the hands, feet, and ankles. If you are bitten by a rattlesnake, remember to stay calm, remain still, and call 911 immediately. One more thing, did you know rattlesnakes can swim? Remember that the next time you reach for a stick or a twig that is floating in the water.

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REMEMBER:

- ☞ Rattlesnakes may not rattle before striking defensively. Try not to surprise them!
- ☞ Never go barefoot or wear sandals when walking through wild areas. Wear hiking boots.
- ☞ Stay on well-used trails and wear over-the-ankle boots and loose-fitting long pants.
- ☞ Avoid tall grass, weeds and heavy underbrush where snakes may hide during the day.
- ☞ Do not step or put your hands where you cannot see!
- ☞ Step ON logs and rocks, never OVER them, and be very careful when climbing rocks. Check out stumps or logs before sitting down!
- ☞ Never grab "sticks" or "branches" in lakes and rivers. Rattlesnakes can swim!!
- ☞ Be careful around buildings, snakes like to crawl along the edges where they are protected on one side.
- ☞ Never hike alone. Always have someone with you who can assist in an emergency.
- ☞ Do not handle a freshly killed snake, it can still inject venom.



Rattlesnake Warning



KNOW YOUR SNAKES

While in the Regional Parks, you may encounter two common snakes - the western rattlesnake and the gopher snake. Here are some recognizable characteristics.

Rattlesnake - triangular head, larger than neck; thick, dull non-glossy body; tail is blunt with one or more rattles.
Gopher Snake - head slightly larger than neck; slender glossy body; pointed tail.

Snakes are important members of the natural community. If disturbed or threatened they will defend themselves. Give them distance and respect.

You may hear the rattlesnake before you see it. A rapid vibration of its tail makes a buzz. This is how the snake warns you when it feels threatened by your presence. A Gopher snake makes a similar sound by hissing and rapidly moving its tail in dry grass.

All snakes can bite. The rattlesnake is the most poisonous native snake in the area. Rattlesnake bites require immediate medical attention and may result in permanent tissue damage. The danger of death is often exaggerated.

For more information call the East Bay Regional Park District at 510 635-0135 or contact your local park staff.

Gopher Snake Rattlesnake

CAUTION

THERE MAY BE RATTLESNAKES IN THIS AREA. RATTLESNAKES ARE ACTIVE AT NIGHT DURING THE SUMMER. THEY WILL SEEK OUT SHADY PLACES DURING THE DAY. CHILDREN SHOULD BE WARNED NOT TO GO NEAR ANY SNAKE. REASONABLE WATCHFULNESS SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO AVOID SNAKEBIT.

RATTLESNAKES

Rattlesnakes may be found in this area. They are important members of the natural community, as they help keep rodent and other small animal populations under control. Rattlesnakes are not aggressive but will strike to defend themselves if disturbed. Please give them distance and respect. Stay on designated trails. Be alert where you place your hands and feet.

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