



Sharp-tailed Snake (*Contia tenuis*)

Sharp-tailed Snakes are secretive in nature and live underground or hide under logs and rocks. They eat small slugs.

Lives: In southwest Oregon from the Cascades to the coast, in a small area in the north Willamette Valley, and along the Columbia River near The Dalles. It is a Protected Species in Oregon.

Fun Fact: All Oregon's snakes have hinged jaws that can disengage so they can consume food that is wider than their bodies.



Western Rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus*)

The Western Rattlesnake is Oregon's only snake whose venom is poisonous to humans. It is distinguished from other Oregon snakes by its broad, triangular head that is much wider than its neck, vertical pupils and the rattles on the end of its tail. It is classified as a Sensitive Species in the Willamette Valley.

Lives: In southwest Oregon, the mid-to southern Willamette Valley, the Columbia Plateau, and south central and southeastern Oregon.

Fun Fact: Rattlesnakes are born with multiple sets of fangs that are shed and replaced about every two months.



Ring-necked Snake (*Diadophis punctatus*)

When alarmed, this snake hides its head and coils its tail upward, revealing its bright reddish to orange or yellow underside. It eats salamanders, frogs, small lizards and snakes.

Lives: In the drier parts of southwest Oregon, the Willamette Valley, the lower Deschutes River valley, along the Grande Ronde River and in Hells Canyon.

Fun Fact: It is named for its bright red-orange neckband.

What kids can do to help Snakes

- Leave snakes where you find them.
- Don't kill snakes—they are beneficial to our environment.
- Build a rock pile in a sunny spot for snakes.
- Learn about snakes so you can tell the difference between facts and myths.
- Never release non-native pet snakes into the wild.

Snakes as Pets

Some snake species are legal to have as pets in Oregon. Call your local ODFW office for more information.

Photos: Common Garter Snake, Al St. John; Western Terrestrial Garter Snake, Al St. John; Pacific Coast Aquatic Garter Snake, Simon Wray; Northwestern Garter Snake, Al St. John; Gopher Snake, Simon Wray; Night Snake, Al St. John; Common Kingsnake, Alan St. John; Racer, Alan St. John; Rubber Boa, Al St. John; California Mountain Kingsnake, Hodo Sondassi; USFWS; Western Ground Snake, Al St. John; Striped Whipsnake, Al St. John; Sharp-tailed Snake, Al St. John; Ring-necked snake, Simon Wray; Western Rattlesnake, Al St. John.

Oregon Conservation Strategy ODFW Living with Wildlife, Snakes



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Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Facts for Kids

Oregon has 15 species of snakes that slither about the state. People are often afraid of them because they know so little about them. This fact sheet is full of information about Oregon's native snakes that will help dispel myths and misunderstandings.

You will learn why snakes lie in the sun and which native snakes are poisonous to humans (hint, only one). You will also learn how snakes are an important part of our ecosystem and how to help them.

the OREGON
CONSERVATION
STRATEGY

Oregon's Sensational Snakes



Common Gartersnake
(*Thamnophis sirtalis*)

Common Gartersnakes are beneficial because they eat slugs, snails and other yard pests.

Lives: Throughout most of the state.

Fun Fact: All snakes are ectotherms. They control their body temperature by moving in and out of the sunlight.



Northwestern Gartersnake
(*Thamnophis ordinoides*)

This snake likes grassy-brushy areas and weedy sections of suburban backyards and city parks. They are most active on warm, sunny days.

Lives: West of the Cascade Mountains.

Fun Fact: Gartersnakes get their names from the stripes on their body, which resemble the design on garters once worn by men to hold up their socks.



Western Terrestrial Gartersnake
(*Thamnophis elegans*)

Despite its name, this snake spends a lot of time near the water. In the summer they are most often seen basking in the morning before the temperature gets too hot.

Lives: Throughout the state, except along most of the coast and the crest of Cascades.

Fun Fact: It makes its winter den in rocky areas—often with dozens or even hundreds of other snakes.



Gopher Snake (*Pituophis catenifer*)

The Gopher Snake is a constrictor. It tightly coils around its prey to suffocate it.

Lives: Throughout the state, except along most of the coast and the crest of Cascades.

Fun Fact: If threatened, a Gopher Snake vibrates the tip of its tail, flattens its head and hisses, resembling a rattlesnake.



Oregon Gartersnake
(*Thamnophis atratus*)

This snake stays close to water and eats mostly fish and amphibians.

Lives: In Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson and Josephine counties.

Fun Fact: To escape predators, it dives beneath the surface of the water and hides under rocks.



Northern Desert Nightsnake
(*Hypsiglena chlorophaea deserticola*)

This snake is rarely seen because it hunts and moves at night. It eats lizards, which it subdues with the help of mildly poisonous saliva. It is harmless to humans.

Lives: In Eastern Oregon.

Fun Fact: Nightsnakes, rattlesnakes and rubber boas have elliptical (vertical) pupils. Oregon's other native snakes have round pupils.



California Kingsnake
(*Lampropeltis californae*)

The California Kingsnake feeds on a variety of live prey, particularly lizards. It gets quite excited when disturbed and may vibrate its tail, hiss or strike. It is classified as a Protected and Sensitive Species in Oregon.

Lives: In southwest Oregon.

Fun Fact: These snakes are known to eat rattlesnakes and appear to be immune to their venom.



California Mountain Kingsnake
(*Lampropeltis zonata*)

The California Mountain Kingsnake eats other snakes, lizards, small mammals and the eggs and nestlings of birds. It is one of Oregon's most colorful snakes. It is classified as a Protected and Sensitive Species in Oregon.

Lives: In southwest Oregon.

Fun Fact: It kills its prey by wrapping around it and suffocating it.



Western Yellow-bellied Racer
(*Coluber constrictor Mormon*)

The Racer is extremely fast. It can hold its head and neck above the ground when hunting. It prefers warm, dry, open or brushy country and is often seen crossing roads.

Lives: Statewide except along the north coast and the crest of the Cascades.

Fun Fact: It is sometimes seen moving in grasslands with its head help up, looking for prey.



Western Groundsnake
(*Sonora semiannulata*)

This is one of Oregon's smallest snakes with adults averaging eight to 12 inches. It eats spiders, grasshoppers and insect larvae. It is a Protected Species in Oregon.

Lives: In a small area of southeast Oregon.

Fun Fact: These snakes are scarce and hard to catch so biologists don't know too much about them.



Northern Rubber Boa
(*Charina bottae*)

The Northern Rubber Boa eats small rodents, mostly mice and shrews, and is a good swimmer, burrower and climber. It measures 14 to 30 inches.

Lives: Statewide except along the coast north of Coos Bay, the Cascade crest, a section of the Columbia Gorge, and south Harney County.

Fun Fact: Northern Rubber Boas, Gartersnakes, and Western Rattlesnakes give birth to live young. The rest of Oregon's snake species lay eggs.



Striped Whipsnake
(*Coluber taeniatus*)

Striped Whipsnakes can grow to five feet in length. Like Western Yellow-bellied Racers, they sometimes hunt with head held above the ground, climbing into shrubs to pursue prey or evade predators.

Lives: In Eastern Oregon.

Fun Fact: All snakes have forked tongues that deposit air molecules on receptors in the mouth; thus, snakes "taste" the air, which helps them locate prey and sense their way in the dark.