



HUMAN-RATTLESNAKE CONFLICTS

Rattlesnakes account for approximately 40 calls to the Conservation Officer Service reporting line every year. Relocation is seldom a long-term solution for dealing with rattlesnakes. Snakes translocated a short distance often return to the area they were removed from and snakes translocated large distances may fail to find their way back to their overwintering dens and could then die of exposure.

Normally less than five people a year are bitten by rattlesnakes in BC, and rarely are bites fatal. Most snake bites are due to people deliberately trying to handle or harm rattlesnakes. Reduce your risk and give snakes lots of space. Snakes may bite if they feel threatened.

Off-leash dogs are at higher risk than leashed dogs to receive a snake bite. To keep rattlesnakes away, make your home unappealing to snakes and their prey.

The rattlesnake is a member of the viper family and although it is venomous, it is generally shy and non-aggressive. **Remember, this snake is protected and it is illegal to harm, kill or capture a snake in BC.**



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The BC Conservation Foundation is a not-for-profit, registered charity that has been working in BC since 1969.

www.bccf.com

To report wildlife in conflict contact the Conservation Officer Service at

1.877.952.7277

WildSafeBC is funded through the Province of British Columbia and in partnership with communities and organizations throughout BC.



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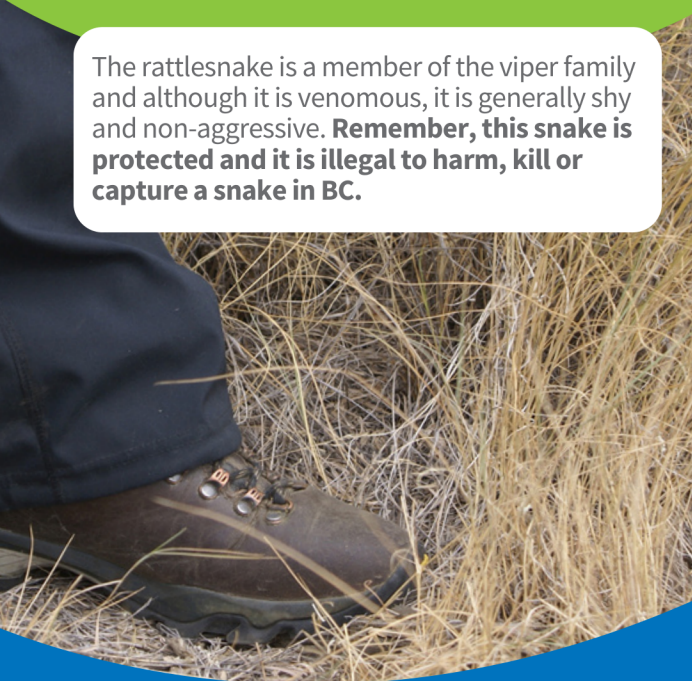
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photos by Emily Lomas, Frank Ritcey, & Tom Reichner

RATTLESNAKE



British Columbia Conservation Foundation





MANAGE YOUR ATTRACTANTS

There are many things you can do around your home so that you and your family don't attract snakes to your property.

- 1. Fill holes around your house and outbuildings** with boards, steel wool or caulking. If you think a mouse can fit, it's likely a snake can too!
- 2. Remove snake-enticing rock piles.** Piles of rocks, wood, or other materials provide convenient basking and retreat sites for snakes. Keep your yard free of cover objects.
- 3. Close in decks and stairs.** Use skirting so that snakes cannot access storage areas under decks and stairs where they feel safe.
- 4. Keep your yard rodent-free.** Spillage from bird feeders, pet food and poorly managed garbage and compost can attract rodents, which are the primary prey of rattlesnakes.
- 5. Remember that water features can attract snakes.** Raised bird baths are preferred to ground-level features.
- 6. Consider installing snake barrier fencing** around your home or parts of your yard.

! RATTLESNAKE SAFETY

To keep yourself safe while hiking or working in snake habitat, follow these simple tips:

- Wear long loose pants and high leather or rubber boots while hiking or working in tall grass or shrubs.
- Do not put your hands or feet into areas where you cannot see what's there. Avoid picking up objects that snakes might use for cover; use a pole or stick to overturn the object if absolutely necessary.
- To protect your pet, keep it on leash while walking in rattlesnake habitat.
- Stay on the trails and avoid talus slopes or rocky outcroppings - but remember that rattlesnakes can be found in a variety of places.
- If you encounter a rattlesnake, remain calm and slowly move away. Give the snake lots of space and do not agitate it. Rattlesnakes are generally quiet and non-aggressive.



Northern Pacific Rattlesnake
(*Crotalus oreganus*)

Great Basin Gopher Snake
(*Pituophis catenifer deserticola*)

Stout body with blunt tail ending in rattle

Slim body with tapered tail with no rattle

Triangular head with distinct neck

Sleek head

Dark cheeks

Black "mask" or band that stretches across the face

Vertical pupils

Round pupils

Light halo around darker blotches that transition to dark and light alternating bands near the tail

Tan body with dark-brown markings; alternating bands near tail are less distinctive

Photo credits: Andrew Nydam

The Northern Pacific Rattlesnake is the only rattlesnake found in BC and one of only three remaining rattlesnake species in Canada. These animals are extremely sensitive to human encroachment and experience the added pressure of road kill and direct persecution by humans. Gopher snakes are often misidentified as rattlesnakes. Both species are considered as threatened under Federal legislation and are Provincially Blue-listed.

Rattlesnakes can grow to just over one meter in length and can weigh up to about 900 g. They range in colour from olive-green to tan, with dark blotches along their backs. The blotches turn into alternating dark and light bands near their tail, which ends in a rattle.

Rattlesnake bites are very rare and rarely fatal. If you are bitten, ensure you:

1. Stay calm and remove yourself from the area of the snake. Move slowly or be carried.
2. Remove any constrictive clothing or jewellery.
3. Go to the nearest hospital. Phone ahead if possible. Preferably, have someone else drive you.
4. Mark swelling with lines and times every 10 minutes. This will help doctors assess the severity of the bite.
5. **Do not:** apply a tourniquet, make an incision, attempt to suck out the venom, kill the snake or bring it to the hospital. Snakes are protected by law and doctors do not need to identify a snake to treat snakebite in BC.

Northern Pacific Rattlesnake Distribution in BC



Map Source: COSEWIC 2015



SNAKE FACTS:

- A rattlesnake's rattle does not tell you how old a snake is. Snakes gain a new rattle segment each time they shed, but may shed more than once in a season. Older rattles also tend to break apart as they catch on vegetation.
- Do not expect all rattlesnakes to rattle at you. Their first response to disturbance is to hide.
- Rattlesnakes have heat-sensing pits under their nostrils, which they use like binocular vision to locate warm-blooded prey.
- Rattlesnakes are ovoviviparous, meaning they hold their eggs internally and then give birth to live young.
- Females mate every two to three years in late summer, but do not give birth until the following fall. Females do not travel or hunt during this time, which means they can go over a year without eating!
- Rattlesnakes in BC can move relatively great distances over a summer. They have been documented up to four kilometres away from their den sites.
- Learn more about BC's reptiles and amphibians at bcreptilesandamphibians.trubox.ca.



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