

# California Rattlesnakes

There are 7 different species of rattlesnakes found in California. Two of these species consist of more than one subspecies, making a total of 10 different kinds of rattlesnakes found in the state. All have a blotched pattern on the back and a rattle on the end of the tail which the snake sometimes uses as a warning sound. (This rattle is sometimes missing on young snakes and may be broken off on adults, so don't **assume** that a snake with no rattle is not a rattlesnake.)

**Caution!** All rattlesnakes in California are venomous and potentially dangerous.

To identify a snake, look for a picture that is similar to the snake you want to identify, clicking on it to enlarge it if necessary. Read the brief descriptions of behavior and habitat, and if it fits your snake, click on the link to continue your search. All of these snakes can vary in appearance, so if you don't see one here that looks like the snake you want to identify, check the range maps to see which species occur in your area, then look at the pictures found on the page for each individual snake.

## California Rattlesnakes

1 [Crotalus atrox](#) Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake Baird and Girard, 1853    Crotalus cerastes Sidewinder Hallowell, 1854

2 [Crotalus cerastes cerastes](#) Mohave Desert Sidewinder **Hallowell, 1854**

3 [Crotalus cerastes laterorepens](#) Colorado Desert Sidewinder Klauber, 1944

4 [Crotalus mitchellii pyrrhus](#) Southwestern Speckled Rattlesnake **Cope, 1867**    Crotalus oreganus Western Rattlesnake Holbrook, 1840

5 [Crotalus oreganus helleri](#) Southern Pacific Rattlesnake Meek, 1905

6 [Crotalus oreganus lutosus](#) Great Basin Rattlesnake Klauber, 1930

7 [Crotalus oreganus oreganus](#) Northern Pacific Rattlesnake **Holbrook, 1840**

8 [Crotalus ruber](#) Red Diamond Rattlesnake **Cope, 1892**

9 [Crotalus scutulatus scutulatus](#) Northern Mohave Rattlesnake Kennicott, 1861

10 [Crotalus stephensi](#) Panamint Rattlesnake Klauber, 1930

## WESTERN DIAMONDBACK

Large rattlesnake, found in the southern deserts in the southeast corner of the state. This rattlesnake has black and white rings around the tail. The rings are about equal in width. Active day and night.

For tips on distinguishing this species from the similar Northern Mohave Rattlesnake, click on the link under the photo above.



## SIDEWINDERS

Small rattlesnakes with unique sideways locomotion. Found in open sandy areas in the southern deserts. Active at night and sometimes during the day. A small horn-like projection is visible above each eye.

Mojave Desert Sidewinder (red on range map)



Colorado Desert Sidewinder (green on range map)



### **SOUTHWESTERN SPECKLED RATTLESNAKE**

Large rattlesnake, found mainly in rocky areas in the southern deserts and south coast. Saddled pattern on adults appears slightly faded, not distinctly outlined, unlike other rattlesnakes in its range.

Color changes to match the rocks in its habitat. Active at night and day.

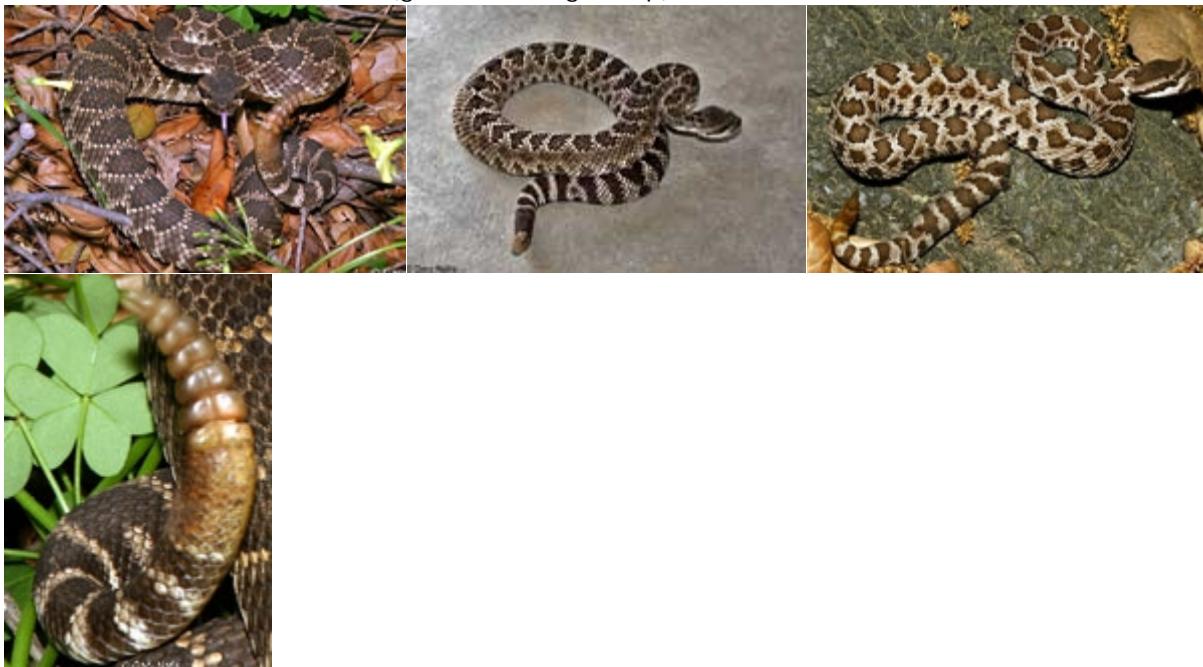


## **WESTERN RATTLESNAKES**

The most commonly seen rattlesnake in California, found throughout the state, except the southern deserts.

Active day and night. Often seen while hiking in undisturbed areas, or on roads at night. These rattlesnakes do not have black and white rings around the tail. They may have dark and light rings, but not black and white.

Southern Pacific Rattlesnake (green on range map)



Great Basin Rattlesnake (orange on range map)

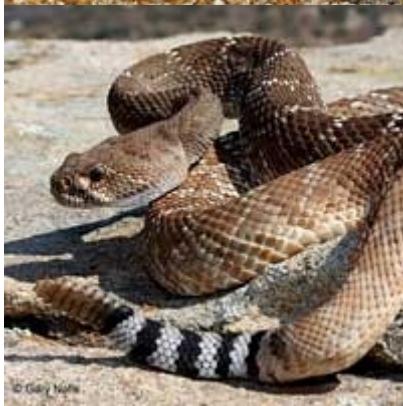


Northern Pacific Rattlesnake (red on range map)



### **RED DIAMOND RATTLESNAKE**

Large rattlesnake, found in the Colorado desert and south coastal region. Active day and night. Color is various shades of reddish brown.



## **NORTHERN MOJAVE RATTLESNAKE**

Large rattlesnake found in the Mohave Desert. Active at night, and sometimes during the day. This rattlesnake has black and white rings around the tail. The black bands are smaller than the white bands.

For tips on distinguishing this species from the similar Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake, click on the link under the photo above.



## **PANAMINT RATTLESNAKE**

Large rattlesnake, found mainly in rocky areas in the northern and eastern Mohave Desert. Saddled pattern on adults appears slightly faded, not distinctly outlined, unlike other rattlesnakes in its range.

Color changes to match the rocks in its habitat. Active at night and day.



CALIFORNIA RATTLESNAKE RANGE MAPS



WESTERN DIAMOND-BACKED  
SPECKLED  
SIDEWINDER  
SOUTHWESTERN



WESTERN RATTLESNAKE  
NORTHERN MOHAVE  
RED DIAMOND



PANAMINT RATTLESNAKE

## Identifier of California Rattlesnakes

*Crotalus atrox*

Body Pattern



south/east of California

*Crotalus mitchellii stephensi*



south/east of California

*Crotalus ruber*

reddish / brownish coloration



south coast of California

*Crotalus oreganus helleri*



south coast of California

*Crotalus oreganus oreganus*



north/middle coast of California

*Crotalus scutulatus*



south/east of California

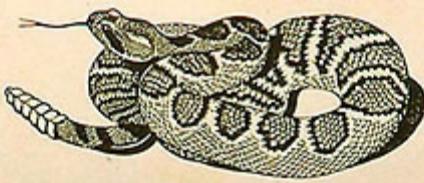
Tail Pattern      Head Scales

starts with  
black



white part little  
bit larger





## RATTLESNAKES

RATTLESNAKES MAY BE FOUND IN THIS AREA. THEY ARE IMPORTANT MEMBERS OF THE NATURAL COMMUNITY. THEY WILL NOT ATTACK, BUT IF DISTURBED OR CORNERED, THEY WILL DEFEND THEMSELVES. GIVE THEM DISTANCE AND RESPECT.

