



A coiled rattlesnake is in a defensive stance, keep a safe distance. *Photo: California Herps*

Conservancy Advisory:

Rattlesnakes on The Preserve

June 2018

Many different kinds of snakes can be found on The Preserve, and are an important control for rodent populations. Only one species is venomous: the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake. Rattlesnakes can be distinguished from other snakes by their triangular-shaped head, diamond pattern, and unmistakable rattle. In general, rattlesnakes are not aggressive and will retreat if given the chance. If they feel threatened or provoked, rattlesnakes may strike. Rattlesnakes can only strike from a coiled position and have a strike distance of half their body length.

Around The Preserve, these snakes often warn us of their presence with loud rattles, typically providing plenty of time to avoid close contact. However, in heavy vegetation or when moving quickly along a trail, we cannot always count on hearing this warning; please stay safe by following the tips below.

SAFETY TIPS ON THE TRAIL

- Keep dogs on leash or close voice command.
- Use the center of the trail to see the path clearly.
- Use care in tall grass, rock outcrops, and brush.
- Wear over-the-ankle boots and loose pants.
- Do not try to handle or approach any snake.
- If encountered, give snakes plenty of space to retreat.
- Contact your veterinarian for information about snake avoidance training and venom vaccine.

SAFETY TIPS IN THE HOMELAND

- Keep pathways and outdoor seating areas free of tall grass to ensure clear visibility.
- Avoid placing birdseed near pathways and patios.
- Look first when reaching or stepping into areas that are not easily visible.
- Teach children to recognize rattlesnakes and avoid provoking or handling them.
- Call Security for humane removal and relocation.

Most bites occur when a rattlesnake is handled or touched: in fact, statistics indicate a majority of bites in the U.S. occur as a result of efforts to handle or kill rattlesnakes. With appropriate response, rattlesnake bites are not fatal. **If you or your pet are bitten:**

- Stay calm and remove constrictive clothing and jewelry.
- Seek immediate medical attention; contact the hospital or veterinarian enroute so they can prepare anti-venom. Community Hospital of Monterey Bay (CHOMP) is the closest hospital that carries anti-venom for people.

All snakes are important members of the food web and help people by managing rodent populations and other pests. Snakes are not naturally aggressive animals, please help us maintain a healthy ecology by allowing snakes to retreat to their natural habitat areas without harm.

If you would like to report a rattlesnake sighting or for more information, please contact Dr. Christy Wyckoff, Senior Wildlife Ecologist, 831-402-2001, cwyckoff@slconservancy.org