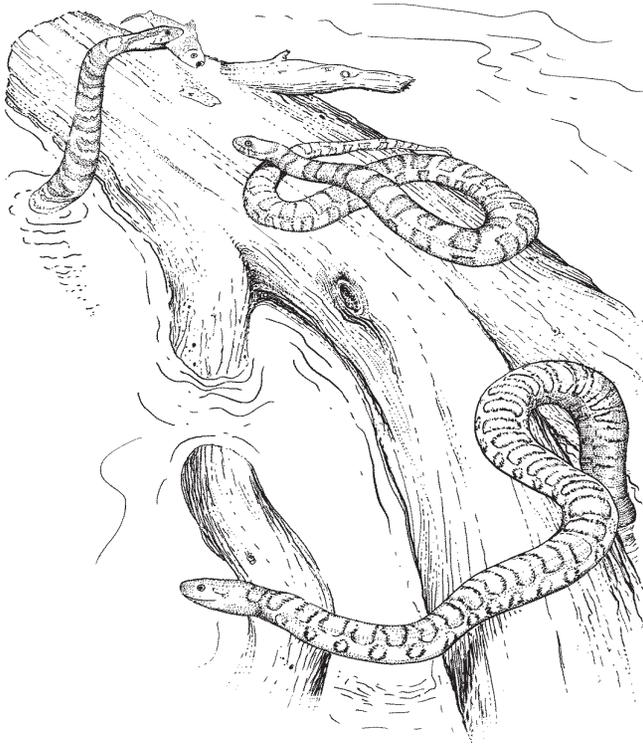


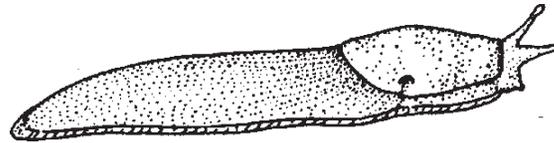
REPTILES

Needle-like Teeth

...and a spike-shaped scales help the sharp-tailed snake grapple with its favorite meal: banana slugs. They may also prey on snails, making them excellent neighbors for gardeners.



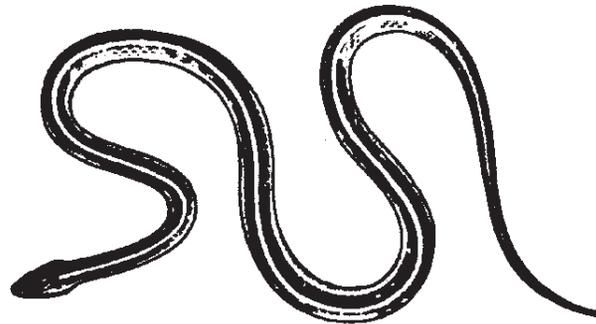
Reptiles can be specialized predators or cunning elusive prey. Which ones can you find along the paths and trails of Oregon Caves.



banana slug

Resistance to Toxins

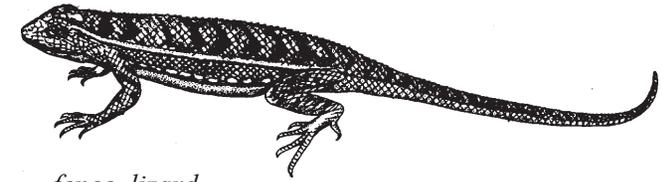
The valley garter snake is one of the few predators of the rough-skinned newt. The newt secretes a neurotoxin from its skin that can be fatal to other predators, but the valley garter has a natural resistance to the poison.



garter snake



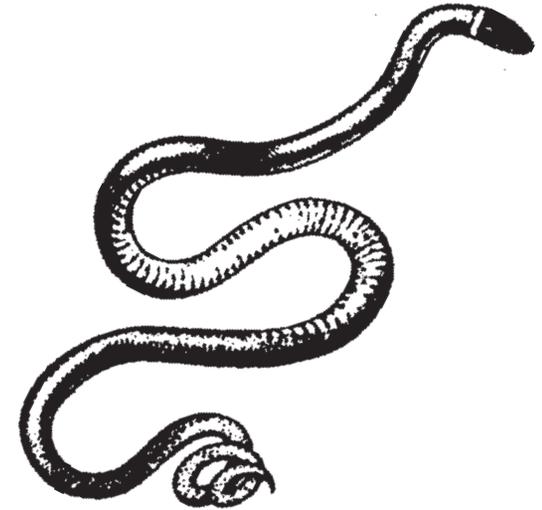
tick



fence lizard

Resistance to Disease

In areas with high number of western fence lizards, incidents of Lyme disease fall below the average found elsewhere. Although fence lizards can play host to other parasites such as deer ticks, the lizard has a natural defense against Lyme disease.



Ringneck Snakes

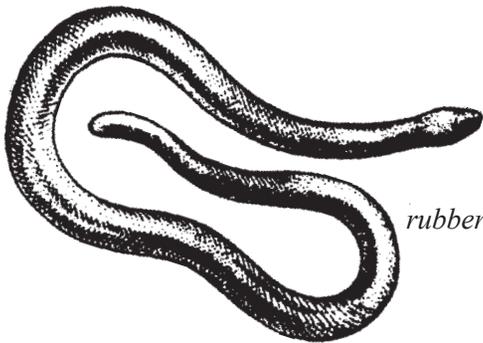
...when cornered by predators or humans first raise their tails, then coil forward to make themselves appear more menacing. If the threat doesn't leave, the snake feigns death and excretes foul-smelling saliva from the corners of its mouth.

Deceptive Tails

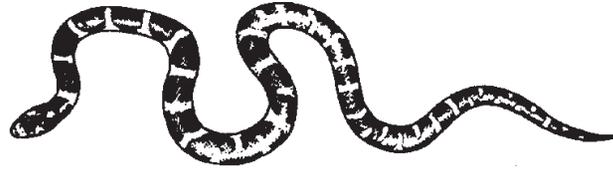
The western skink, a lizard, isn't called the blue blur for nothing. It is a fast and elusive runner that takes refuge in rocky crannies. The skink, if caught, can drop its blue tail and leave it thrashing to distract a predator while making its getaway. The rubber boa, a snake, uses its tail of fused bone to make false strikes, distracting a distraught mother mouse while at the same time devouring her young.



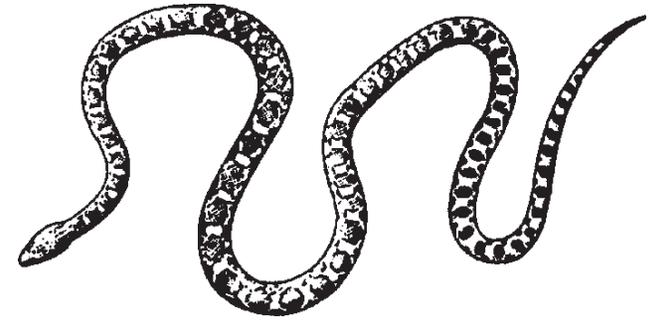
wester skink



rubber boa



king snake



gopher snake

Mimicry

Some animals imitate other species to aid in their personal defense. The mountain king snake has coloration very similar to the poisonous coral snake—his first line of defense is deception. The Pacific gopher snake puffs up, hisses, and rattles her tail, mimicking the warning of rattlesnakes. Incidentally, gopher snakes have been known to attack and eat rattlesnakes.

Human Impacts

While some reptile populations in Oregon are still healthy, many of these species are considered endangered or of special concern. Since many reptiles are specifically adapted to only one type of environment or food source, damage to these resources decreases the chances of species survival. Let's tread lightly where reptiles roam and remember to take only pictures, leave only footprints, and preserve the habitat that supports reptiles.