



**Reptiles & Amphibians**

Cabrillo National Monument is home to 12 species of herpetiles – 6 species of snakes, 5 species of lizards, and one amphibian, the Garden Slender Salamander.

Long-term monitoring of these species began in 1995 by Dr. Robert Fisher (SDSU, then USGS), as part of a larger scale study of herpetile species in Southern California. The NPS took over monitoring at Cabrillo in 2002 to continue assessments of possible decline in species' numbers. Because Point Loma peninsula is



island-like (surrounded on three sides by ocean, and to the north, cut off by development), and due to their limited home ranges, these animals are extremely susceptible to population decline and extirpation (no longer existing in a particular area where they historically were found). In fact, eight reptile species have already been extirpated from the peninsula: Coronado Island Skink, Red Diamond Rattlesnake, Western Yellow-bellied Racer, Coast Horned Lizard, Red Coachwhip, Two-striped Garter Snake, California Glossy Snake, and the Long-nosed Snake.

**Our Role**



The core mission of the National Park Service is to protect and preserve natural resources, processes, systems, and values of the parks they manage. Our philosophy is to protect, and restore when necessary, native ecosystems and let natural processes play out. Park Rangers and Volunteers document their observations of flora and fauna. Scientists conduct research to try to understand the status and trends of the species and systems they protect. This information is vital to advising park management and philosophy.



**Cabrillo National Monument Herpetology Guide**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Contact the [park](http://www.nps.gov/cabr) for more information: (<http://www.nps.gov/cabr>)



**Southern Pacific Rattlesnake**  
(*Crotalus oreganus helleri*)

**San Diego Gopher Snake**  
(*Pituophis catenifer annectens*)



A snake that can reach up to 9' long, the gopher snake is undoubtedly our largest snake. Its diet consists of small mammals, birds and their eggs, lizards, and invertebrates. Often this snake will mimic a rattlesnake as a defensive tactic, by its similar coloration, and by shaking its tail, hissing, and inflating its head.

This is the only rattlesnake species found at Cabrillo. They have a short, stout body with a large triangle-shaped head and a tail with segments that "rattle" when the snake shakes its tail. Rattlesnakes must rely on their cryptic coloration and remain quiet and still to avoid detection. If that doesn't work, a rattlesnake will then rattle its tail as a warning. The last line of defense is to flee or, if cornered, defend itself with a bite.



**San Diego Nightsnake** (*Hypsiglena ochrorhyncha klauberi*)

**California Kingsnake**  
(*Lampropeltis californiae*)



This species is found throughout much of the southwest and comes in a variety of color and pattern morphs including black or brown and white and yellow coming in both banded and striped varieties. This snake eats a wide variety of prey items that include rodents, snakes (including rattlesnakes), birds, lizards, and large invertebrates.

The Nightsnake is a small, rear-fanged snake. It uses these fangs to inject venom into prey but is harmless to most humans. It feeds on lizards and their eggs.

A small, thin snake that has a dull, gray to black back, and very bright yellow to orange underside. Like the Nightsnake, it is rear fanged and venomous (not harmful to humans). When threatened, this species coils its tail and exposes its bright underside.



**San Diego Ring-necked Snake**  
(*Diadophis punctatus similis*)

A long, thin snake that is mostly black with a single yellow stripe on each side. This snake relies on its large eyes and excellent vision to locate prey. One of its strategies is to climb into a shrub and elevate its head to survey the area for prey – and it's referred to as "peeping." And it's called a racer because this snake is very fast!



**California Striped Racer**  
(*Coluber lateralis lateralis*)

A common lizard that eats small invertebrates. This particular species might be a huge benefit to humans because of a suspected protein in its blood that kills the bacterium in ticks that causes Lyme disease.



**Great Basin Fence Lizard**  
(*Sceloporus occidentalis longipes*)

A common lizard that eats small invertebrates. Similar looking to the Great Basin Fence Lizard, adults are smaller, and have a gular fold.



**Western Side-blotched Lizard**  
(*Uta stansburiana elegans*)

**Garden Slender Salamander**  
(*Batrachoseps major major*)



This species of salamander does not breathe through a lung; rather they respire through their skin and mouth tissues. They must live in damp environments and they will only move about on land during wet weather – usually the winter months. Upon inspection, the garden slender salamander looks more like a small, slimy worm. It is about 2-3 inches long with very short limbs.

**S. California Legless Lizard**  
(*Anniella stebbinsi*)



Not a snake! It's a legless lizard because it has eyelids and can drop its tail to help it escape a predator. This species spends a lot of its time underground, so it can be difficult to find. It feeds on insects in larvae form, beetles, termites, and spiders.

**San Diego Alligator Lizard**  
(*Elgaria multicarinata webbii*)



A somewhat common and very large lizard with short limbs and a long tail. The alligator lizard can be mistaken for a snake at times because of its long tail and snake-like locomotion. This species will eat small invertebrates, small lizards and small mammals. It will sometimes feed on bird eggs and young birds.

**Belding's Orange-throated Whiptail**  
(*Aspidoscelis hyperythra beldingi*)



A species of special concern but does very well at Cabrillo National Monument. Because of habitat fragmentation and habitat loss, this species now only inhabits approximately 25% of its historic range. It eats small invertebrates and is common at the park. Look for a lizard with a bright orange throat and a long tail.