

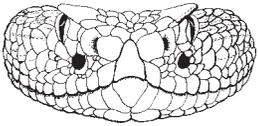


## For Goodness Snakes!



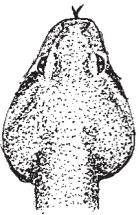
Visitors to Saguaro National Park are often surprised at the diversity of wildlife found in the Sonoran Desert. This includes a number of venomous reptiles that are potentially dangerous if not treated with respect. To ensure a safe visit, please take a few minutes to learn about the rattlesnakes found here and how you can avoid being bitten.

### General Information



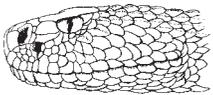
Six different species of rattlesnakes call Saguaro National Park their home. Some, like the Arizona black are rarely seen. Others, like the western diamondback, are fairly common. Rattlesnakes are found at all elevations in the park, from the desert scrub community to the ponderosa pine forests of the Rincon Mountains.

Baby rattlesnakes are not born with a rattle. About two weeks after birth, they shed their skin for the first time and gain a single section of rattle, called a button. After several months of growth, the young snakes may have enough rattle segments to make the characteristic buzzing sound most of us are familiar with.



While different in appearance, rattlesnakes share several common characteristics to aid in identifying them. These features include a triangular shaped head, elliptical pupils, heat sensing pits for detecting prey, and a rattle at the end of the tail.

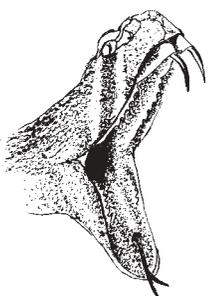
However, don't count on getting a warning every time you encounter a rattlesnake. Even if a snake feels threatened by your presence, it may not rattle. Snakes generally want to be left alone and prefer to stay hidden and avoid confrontation.



Rattlesnakes are the only snakes in the world that possess a rattle. This appendage is made up of loosely jointed segments of skin. Each time the snake sheds, a new segment is added. The number of segments in a rattle string does not indicate age, rather how many times the snake has shed. However, the older segments become brittle and occasionally break off.



### Rattlesnake Bite



A rattlesnake will generally bite for one of two reasons: to inject venom into its prey, or in self defense. According to the Arizona Poison Control Center, most rattlesnake bites to humans are "illegitimate". In other words, the snake bit someone because it felt threatened by their actions. However, some rattlesnake bites are "legitimate". That is, the victim did not intentionally provoke the snake into biting. In about 25 percent of all rattlesnake bite cases, the snake does not inject venom.

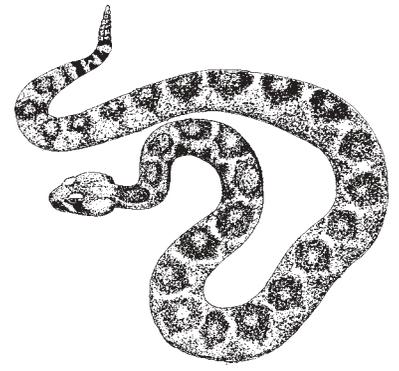
To reduce your chances of being bitten by a snake, follow these simple guidelines. Do not harass or attempt to kill snakes. If you see a snake, stay at least 10 feet away from it. Do not put your hands or feet where your eyes have not been. Wear boots and loose fitting pants while hiking and carry a flashlight after dark.

If you are bitten by a snake, call 911 immediately. Do NOT attempt to treat a snake bite yourself.

**Rattlesnakes of  
Saguaro National Park**

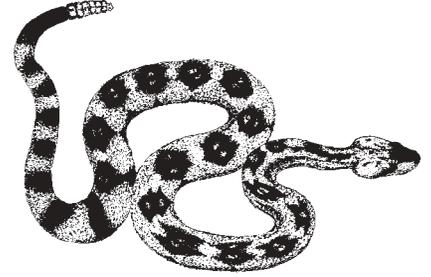
**Western Diamondback Rattlesnake**

Diamond pattern lengthwise on back. Black and white bands on tail about the same width. The largest and most commonly seen species in the park, may grow to 7 feet.



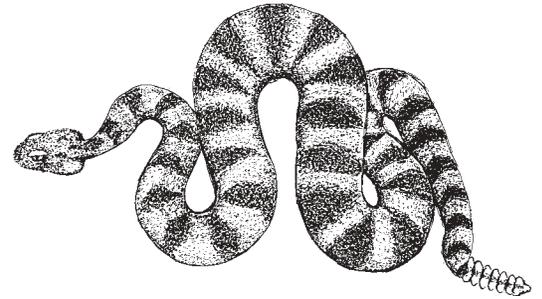
**Northern Black-tailed Rattlesnake**

Tail completely black, rear portion of body often darker in coloration. Pattern of dark “cigar-wrapper” bands around body. Dark mask-like patch covering the eyes.



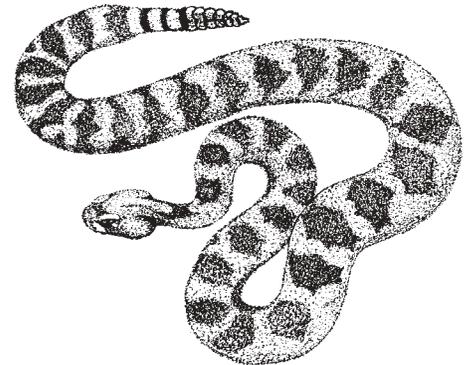
**Tiger Rattlesnake**

Pattern of distinct bands around body. Tail rings almost indistinct with large rattle string. Small head, length seldom over 3 feet. Body coloration often a pale pink.



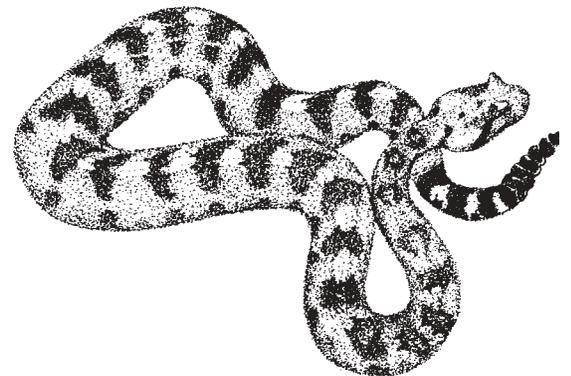
**Mohave Rattlesnake**

Similar pattern to the western diamondback; however, the white bands on the tail are about twice as wide as the black bands. Body often a pale green color.



**Sidewinder Rattlesnake**

Adults rarely over 2 feet in length. Body coloration light, sandy brown. Raised scale over each eye appears as a “horn”. Named for its distinctive method of locomotion.



**Arizona Black Rattlesnake**

Body often deep gray to jet black with thin bands of cream or yellow. Least commonly seen species of rattlesnake in the park as it generally lives above 4,500 feet in elevation.

