



Photos by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Crotalus ruber (exsul)*

Common name: Red Diamond Rattlesnake

Size: 29-63 in (73-160 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A rattlesnake with tan, pink, or reddish dorsal color and prominent light-edged diamonds of darker hue; faint pepper marks over dorsal pattern; tail with conspicuous black and white rings; broad vertical eye stripe edged in lighter color.



Juveniles: Dark and light grey hues in pattern, changing to reddish with age.

Dimorphism: Male tail is more stout.

Similar species: *Crotalus viridis*: Lacks conspicuous black and white tail bands; juveniles have yellow-green tail.

Additional notes: A large species often associated with coastal sage scrub, rocky hillsides, and outcrops. Relatively docile, although some individuals may hiss loudly and/or rattle when annoyed. VENOMOUS; don't handle or use extreme caution. The name for this species may be changed to *exsul* in the future. This is a species in decline, with increasing interest in its behaviors and ranges, sightings should be verified and recorded.



Photos by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Crotalus mitchellii pyrrhus*

Common name: Southwestern Speckled Rattlesnake

Size: 21.6-39.4 in (55-100 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A rattlesnake with highly variable dorsal coloration- white to dark grey or shades of pink or orange; dark, diffused bands on back often split by lighter color; keeled scales; large head; salt-and-pepper speckles over entire dorsal pattern; tail with black and white bands, often incompletely encircling tail.



Juveniles: Similar to adults.

Dimorphism: None

Similar species: *Crotalus ruber*: Has distinct diamond pattern on dorsum; black and white tail bands completely encircle tail. *Crotalus viridis*: Has diamond pattern on dorsum; prominent eye stripe; lacks black and white tail bands.

Additional notes: An alert, nervous species most often associated with rocky hillsides and outcrops. VENOMOUS; don't handle or use extreme caution.



Photos by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Crotalus viridis helleri*

Common name: Southern Pacific Rattlesnake

Size: 22-40 in (55-102 cm)



Distinguishing characters: A rattlesnake with grey, olive, or brown ground color and light-edged, darker diamonds on dorsum; blotches on sides dark, angular and also light-edged; light stripe from corner of mouth to eye; low-contrast dark tail rings, with terminal ring poorly defined and twice as wide; venter light yellow or cream with faint blotching; high elevation populations can be very dark or black dorsally, with little or no pattern definition.



Juveniles: Similar to adults, but with bright yellow-green tail.

Dimorphism: Male has a more stout tail than the female.

Similar species: *Crotalus ruber*: Has conspicuous black and white banded tail; usually tannish or reddish dorsal coloration

Additional notes: A nervous species that will aggressively defend itself when annoyed. **VENOMOUS**; don't handle or use extreme caution. Occurs in all habitat types in the focal area.



Scientific name: *Crotalus atrox*

Common name: Western Diamondback Rattlesnake

Size: 3 – 4'

Distinguishing characters: The Western Diamondback Rattlesnake holds first place for the most serious bites and highest fatality rate from snakebites in North America (Conant and Collins, 1991). Species classification is dependent upon scale morphology and patterns. The Western Diamondback has lidless eyes that are protected by the outer skin. The Western Diamondback has alternating bands of black and white that are of equal width in the tail. Brown diamond shaped markings are found along the middle of the rattlers back. These distinguishable markings stand out against their lighter body color. The life span of five Western Diamondbacks at the San Diego Zoo has exceeded 15 yrs.

Juveniles:

Dimorphism:

Similar species: *Crotalus ruber*: Has conspicuous black and white banded tail; usually tannish or reddish dorsal coloration

Additional notes: VENOMOUS; don't handle or use extreme caution. Occurs in all habitat types in the focal area.



Photos by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Charina (Lichanura) trivirgata roseofusca*

Common name: Coastal Rosy Boa

Size: 22.4-35.4 in (57-90 cm)

Distinguishing characters: Heavy-bodied species with smooth, shiny scales; small eyes with vertically oval pupils; chin shields enlarged; lacks plate-like scales on top of head; bluish-grey ground color with three broad brown, orange, or reddish brown longitudinal stripes; same color mottling on interspaces; cream venter, spotted with grey; some individuals lack contrast between stripe and ground color, appearing unicolored, either reddish or silvery grey; subcaudal scales undivided.



Juveniles: Lighter ground color; contrasting dorsal pattern more distinct.

Dimorphism: Anal spurs well developed in the male; weak or absent in the female.

Additional notes: A gentle species that is easily handled; often rolls body into ball concealing head when handled or injured. Appears to be declining on coast, where it was once common. Difficult to detect, this species is often observed along roads in the late evening or early morning. Genus name for this species has recently been changed to *Charina*, although most people still use the name *Lichanura*.

*****Federal Species of Special Concern*****



Photos by Robert Goodman

Scientific name: *Charina bottae umbratica*

Common name: Southern Rubber Boa

Size: 11.8-17.3 in (30-44 cm)



Distinguishing characters: A heavy-bodied snake with smooth, shiny scales that look and feel like rubber; small eyes with vertically oval pupils; large plate-like scales on top of head; olive-green, buff, or tan dorsum with contrasting yellowish or cream venter; subcaudal scales undivided; tail blunt, with shield-like scale at tip.

Juveniles: Generally lighter; pink or tan dorsum and light yellow to pink venter.

Dimorphism: Anal spurs well developed in the male, small or absent in the female.

Similar species: *Lichanura trivirgata*. Lacks enlarged scales on top of head and has enlarged chin scales; also has three dorsal stripes and mottled venter.

Additional notes: Often rolls body into ball concealing head when handled or injured. A secretive species that is seldom observed in the open. Generally associated with rocky outcrops in coniferous forests.

*****California Protected Species*****



Photos by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Thamnophis hammondi*

Common name: Two-Striped Garter Snake

Size: 15.4-28.4 in (39-72 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A species that lacks a mid-dorsal stripe; olive, brown or brownish-grey dorsum; dull yellow, orange, or salmon venter; lengthwise rows of small, dark spots; yellow stripes on sides; throat pale; eyes brick color with round pupils; red tongue; dorsal scales keeled; usually black patches on neck behind head; occasional melanic individuals lacking side stripes.

Juveniles: Similar to adults.

Dimorphism: Female has extremely constricted tail immediately posterior of the base.

Similar species: *Masticophis lateralis*: Has smooth scales; black tongue.



Additional notes: This species excretes foul smelling musk when handled.

*****California Protected Species*****



Photo by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Thamnophis elegans elegans*

Common name: Mountain Garter Snake

Size: 15-24 in (39-61 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A slender species; black or dark grey-brown dorsum; yellow, orange, or white mid-dorsal and side stripes; pale yellowish or white venter; dorsal scales keeled; red tongue.

Juveniles: Similar to adults.

Dimorphism: Female has extremely constricted tail immediately posterior to vent.

Similar species: *Thamnophis hammondi*: Lacks mid-dorsal stripe. *Thamnophis sirtalis*: Has red lateral blotches; does not occur above 1,000 meters in our area. *Salvadora hexalepis*: Has enlarged thickened triangular rostral scale and black tongue. *Lampropeltis getula* (striped): Lacks keeled scales and red tongue.

Additional notes: A montane species. Some individuals lack continuous mid-dorsal stripe which can be limited to nape only. Excretes foul smelling musk when handled.



Photos by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Trimorphodon biscutatus vandenburghi*

Common name: California Lyre Snake

Size: 17.7-35.4 in (45-90 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A slender species with a laterally flattened body; broad head, slender neck; V-shaped marking on top of head resembling lyre; light brown or grey on dorsal side with brown blotches; blotches roughly hexagonal and bisected with a pale crossbar; cream or white venter with pale brown spots; smooth scales; large, protruding eyes with vertical pupils.

Juveniles: Similar to adults in pattern, but highly contrasting in dorsal color; hatchlings can appear nearly black and white.



Dimorphism: Female is larger than male with extremely constricted tail; male's tail thickened midway between anal scale and tip, and is longer than that of a female's.

Similar species: *Hypsiglena torquata*: Has dark blotches on neck; dark bar across head; head less distinct from neck; lacks V-shaped markings on top of head.

Additional notes: A nervous species that hisses and vibrates rattleless tail when annoyed. Nocturnal and secretive, in our area it is usually associated with rocky hillsides and outcrops.



Photos by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Pituophis melanoleucus annectens*

Common name: San Diego Gopher Snake

Size: 31.5-55.5 in (80-141 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A large species; yellow or cream dorsum becoming orange-tinted toward tail; black or brown dorsal blotches on body; widely spaced on tail; smaller blotches on sides; venter yellow or yellow-orange, pinkish toward tail; faint mottling on venter especially tail; dark line across head between orbit of eyes; orange or brick colored eyes with round pupils; dorsal scales keeled.



Juveniles: Similar to adults.

Dimorphism: None

Similar species: *Arizona elegans*: Has smooth scales; countersunk lower jaw; single anal plate.

Hypsiglena torquata: Has flat head; white labial scales; vertical pupils.

Additional notes: A large species that may hiss loudly, flatten head, vibrate tail, and strike when annoyed, appearing as a viper. Usually becomes calm when handled. Widespread in most habitat types. This species is an opportunist and generalist, it can be active any month of the year and any time day or night.



Photos by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Masticophis lateralis*

Common name: California Whipsnake or Striped Racer

Size: 22.4-49.2 in (57-125 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A slender species; black, or brownish on dorsum; lighter color toward tail; yellow or white dark-edged stripe down sides from back of head to vent; white, cream or pale yellow venter becoming salmon/pink at tail; large eyes with round pupils; smooth scales.

Juveniles: Similar to adults.

Dimorphism: None

Similar species: *Masticophis flagellum*: Lacks lateral striping. *Thamnophis hammondi*: Has keeled scales and red tongue.

Additional notes: An alert, fast moving, diurnal snake that is difficult to capture. May bite and excrete musk when handled.





Photo by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Masticophis flagellum piceus*

Common name: Red Coachwhip or Red Racer



Size: 24.4-54.3 in (62-138 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A species with highly variable dorsal coloration; tan, grey, red, or pink with bold black or brown crossbars or blotches on neck which may blend together; venter pink; slender body and tail; large eyes with round pupils; often described as a red snake with a black head.

Juveniles: Black, brown or tan transverse bands on lighter background; black neck markings absent in hatchlings and faint in juveniles less than 24 in (61 cm) in length.

Dimorphism: None

Similar species: *Masticophis lateralis*: Has distinct yellow lateral stripes.

Additional notes: A fast moving diurnal snake that is difficult to capture. Bites, excretes musk and twists body when handled. Large individuals should be handled with caution.



Photo by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Coluber constrictor mormon*

Common name: Western Yellow-Bellied Racer

Size: 14.2-29.5 in (36-75 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A slender snake with large eyes and round pupils; smooth scales and brown, olive or bluish on dorsum; white or pale yellow venter; tail long and slender.

Juveniles: Lighter background with brown crossbars or conjoined blotches across back; smaller blotches on sides.

Dimorphism: None

Similar species: *Arizona elegans*: Has countersunk lower jaw. *Pituophis melanoleucas*: Has keeled scales. *Hypsiglena torquata*: Has flat head and vertical pupils. These species can resemble juveniles of *Coluber constrictor*. Adult *Coluber constrictor* are fairly distinctive, but could be confused with *Thamnophis hammondi* (has keeled dorsal scales and yellow side stripes).

Additional notes: A fast moving species that is difficult to capture in the wild. May excrete musk and bite when handled. Prefers grasslands and riparian habitats.



Photos by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Diadophis punctatus*

Common name: Western Ringneck Snake

Size: 10.4-16.1 in (26-41 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A small, slender species with an olive, brownish, blue-grey or green dorsum and a conspicuous yellow or orange neck band; venter yellow-orange, becoming coral toward tail with conspicuous black spots often forming rows; dark head.

Juveniles: Similar to adults, but with darker dorsal coloration.

Dimorphism: Male has tubercles on scales above vent.



Additional notes: A gentle species that is easily handled; often coils tail into corkscrew shape displaying brilliant coral undersurface.

*****Subspecies *D.p.modestus* and *D.p. similes* are Federal Species of Special Concern*****



Photos by Chris Brown

Scientific name: *Lampropeltis getula californiae*

Common name: California Kingsnake

Size: 19.7-43.8 in (50-111 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A polymorphic species with various color and pattern phases consisting primarily of alternating bands of black or brown, and white or yellow (banded phase) or longitudinal stripes of these same colors (striped phase); some individuals exhibit partial patterns of both and can appear marbled, spotted, or blotched; scales smooth and glossy; snout light colored; single anal scale.



Juveniles: Similar to adults.

Dimorphism: None

Additional notes: Individuals may excrete musk, vibrate tail, and bite when handled. Widespread in many habitats.



Photos by Rob Lovich

Scientific name: *Lampropeltis zonata pulchra*

Common name: San Diego Mountain Kingsnake

Size: 20-40 in (51-102 cm)

Distinguishing characters: A colorful species with black, white and red crossbands encircling body and tail; smooth, glistening scales; snout and eyes generally black; southern populations often with red spotting on top of head; usually 37 or fewer sets of bands (triads), and most red bands connect across the dorsum.



Juveniles: Similar to adults.

Dimorphism: None

Similar species: *Lampropeltis getula*: Has light color on snout and no red markings. *Rhinocheilus lecontei*: Has body bands that do not encircle body, but form saddles; pointed snout, with countersunk lower jaw; undivided subcaudal scales on anterior portion of tail.

Additional notes: A montane species that can occur at lower elevations along wooded drainages in mountains. This subspecies occurs in the Santa Rosa Mountains within our area.

*****Also San Bernardino Mountain Kingsnake (*L.z. pavirubra*) found in our area; both subspecies are Federal Species of Special Concern*****