



**New Mexico
Wildlife Center**

Anything but Snakes

(from Snake Awareness, by Tom Wyant)

We have quite a variety of snakes in New Mexico. All of the venomous snakes are rattlesnakes: prairie, western diamondback, rock, Mohave, ridgenose and massasauga. Non-venomous snakes include the bull snake, seven species of garter snake, hognose snake, western coach whip snake, desert king snake, New Mexico milk snake, water snake and corn snake.

Snakes are predators and effective rodent control agents. Because they are cold-blooded, they do not harbor or transmit diseases from the rodents they eat. They do, by far, offer more benefits than dangers to humans. However, a rattlesnake warming itself on your brick portal may be disquieting and if you have young children or un-wise pets, the cohabitation may not be acceptable.

You can tell a venomous snake from a non-venomous snake most easily by head and tail shapes. The heads of rattlesnakes are triangular and their tails are blunt with rattles. Even baby rattlesnakes have blunt tails with a pre-rattle button. Young rattlesnakes may not have rattles and will give no warning. They tend to be more aggressive than adults. Non-venomous snakes have rounded heads and pointed tails.

Snakes den in the winter and emerge in spring. Generally, the bigger the snake the longer it lives. Some western diamondback rattlesnakes may live as long as 30 years. You cannot tell the age of rattlesnakes by the number of rattles. The rattles are added at each molt and the molt is determined by food sources, habitat and other factors and may molt as many as four times per year.

Snakes are attracted to areas where food is plentiful. Lots of seed under bird feeders will attract rodents. Rodents will attract snakes.

Rattlesnakes are alerted by vibration, movement or body heat. Adult rattlesnakes will generally rattle when alarmed and begin to coil.

If you see or hear a rattlesnake:

- Stop and stand still
- Locate the snake
- Slowly back away from the snake
- If the snake is on your property and you do not wish it to remain, please call The Wildlife Center so that we can send a volunteer to relocate the snake.

If you are bitten:

- Remain calm and move away from the snake
- Remove jewelry from the area around bite
- Keep area bitten immobilized and level with your heart
- GET TO A HOSPITAL