

Gopher Snake

(Scientific name: *Pituophis catenifer*; Family: Colubridae)

OTHER NAMES: Bull snake, Pine snake

DESCRIPTION: Range in color from cream-yellow to green-gray to tan, with large black, brown or reddish blotches on their back and smaller ones along their sides. Most have a dark line between the eyes and another along the angle of the jaw.



RANGE: Found throughout all 4 deserts of the American southwest and beyond, up to 8,000 feet.

HABITAT: Found in a wide variety of habitats including desert flats, coastal dunes and coniferous forests, but prefer grasslands and open brush areas.

BEHAVIOR: A slow moving snake which can get itself in to burrows, rocky crevices and even trees. Prey is killed by constriction and suffocation. They are mainly diurnal, but can become more nocturnal as summer heat increases.

DIET: Small rodents, young rabbits, lizards, birds, occasionally other snakes

LIFE HISTORY: Females will lay a clutch of eggs ranging from 2-24. Hatchlings emerge within 10 weeks and are large enough to eat small mice. Maturity is reached at 3-4 years old.

INTERESTING FACTS: In order to look like the venomous rattlesnake, the gopher snake will coil up, vibrate its tail (even though it lacks the rattle) and flatten its head to look more like the rattlesnake. It will hiss a warning in the hopes that this mimicry has fooled predators.

THREATS: Red-tailed hawks, kit foxes, coyotes.

Common Kingsnake

(Scientific Name: *Lampropeltis getula*; Family: Colubridae)

(California kingsnake: *Lampropeltis getula californiae*)

DESCRIPTION: They have smooth and shiny scales that can be ringed, striped, and/or spotted. These snakes usually get to be 2.5 to 4 feet long and can vary in colors from shades of black and brown with lighter colors of white and yellow.



RANGE: They are widespread across the west coast of North America at elevations of 1,600 feet in the Tehachapi Mountains to 7,000 feet in the southeastern Sierra Nevada Mountains.

HABITAT: Kingsnakes can live in woodland chaparral, grasslands, deserts, or marshes in California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and northwest Mexico.

BEHAVIOR: These snakes are diurnal but may also become nocturnal during periods of hot weather. When disturbed the Kingsnake will coil their bodies and hide their head; if provoked they'll bite and excrete musk and fecal contents from their cloaca.

NATURAL DIET: They can eat rodents, birds, and other reptiles or amphibians. Kingsnakes are non-venomous and kill their prey by means of constriction.

LIFE HISTORY: Kingsnake eggs are laid between May and August. Incubation then continues for 47-81 days. Hatchlings are usually around 12 inches and are left completely on their own after they've hatched.

INTERESTING FACTS: The California Kingsnakes name originated because they will often prey on all other snakes, including other Kingsnakes. The Kingsnake is immune to Rattlesnake venom allowing Rattlesnakes to be a victim of the kingsnakes wide appetite.

THREATS: Threats or predators consist of hawks, coyotes, other California Kingsnakes and humans.

Sinaloan Milk Snake

(Scientific name: *Lampropeltis triangulum sinaloae*; Family: Colubridae)

DESCRIPTION: Adults can reach over 3 feet long. They are predominantly red with bands of black covering the body, in between the black bands are a cream or white color. The snakes head is black with the cream colored band behind the eyes as well as a cream colored underside. These snakes are easy to identify from other subspecies because of the broad red bands down its body.



RANGE: These snakes are found in Mexico in states like Sonora, Sinaloa, and Chihuahua.

HABITAT: They are found in dry, arid, and semi-rocky regions in crevices, beneath loose rocks and under cactus plants. In areas closer to civilization they can be found under wood piles and in barns.

BEHAVIOR: These snakes are nocturnal, going out at night to hunt for prey. Although considered docile and unlikely to bite, these snakes if handled incorrectly can secrete exudate from the cloaca.

NATURAL DIET: They will eat eggs, birds, reptiles amphibians, and invertebrates but their most common diet consists of rodents. They kill their prey by means of constriction.

LIFE HISTORY: Mating season for these snakes is usually from early May to late June. Females will lay an average of 5-15 elongated eggs under boards, rocks, rotting wood, and rotting vegetation. After this there is no further parental involvement. After about 60 days the eggs will hatch at around 6-7 inches long. These hatchling will reach full maturity after 3 to 4 years.

INTERESTING FACTS: These snakes experience brumation, a time of year during colder months or winters where they spend most of their time sleeping only awakening to drink water this can last between 1 month and 8 months. These snakes are non-venomous and completely harmless to humans.

THREATS: The most common predators of the Sinaloan Milk Snake are skunks, raccoons, dogs, cats, hawks and owls.

Arizona Mountain Kingsnake

(Scientific name: *Lampropeltis pyromelana*; Family: Colubridae)

DESCRIPTION: The front of the face is usually white or yellow followed by over 40 black, white, and red rings around the body. Adult Mountain Kingsnakes can get up to 42 inches.



RANGE: Common in southeastern Arizona, Mexico, Utah, and Nevada.

HABITAT: Most commonly spotted in areas with rocks, tree trunks, and under growth in mountainous areas with water nearby.

BEHAVIOR: These snakes prefer rocky areas and tend not to venture far from their rock-pile homes. They regulate body temperature by moving up or down within the rock pile rather than basking directly in the sun.

DIET: Lizards, rodents and egg.

LIFE HISTORY: Can live between 10-15 years (up to 30 in captivity). Can be a length of 18-44 inches.

INTERESTING FACTS: Their coloration is similar to that of the western coral snake, which most likely is a form of Batesian mimicry (when a harmless animal evolved to resemble another species which possess an anti-predator defense – such as venom)

Kingsnakes get their name because of the habit of eating other snakes, including venomous kinds as they are immune to the venom.

THREATS: Predators include raptors and mammals. Habitat destruction and the pet trade also threaten the species.

Mexican Black Kingsnake

(Scientific Name: *Lampropeltus Getula Nigrita*; Family: Colubridae)

OTHER NAMES: Desert Black Kingsnake, Western Black Kingsnake

DESCRIPTION: The Mexican Black Kingsnake has a long, smooth and slender body with a small oval shaped head. A common misperception is that they are always jet black in color, but they are more of a glossy blackish or very deep, deep, chocolate brown with an iridescence that is reflected in sunlight. Their eyes are small and black. They grow on average to a length of 3 to 5 feet and a weight of 3 to 4 lbs. There is no apparent sexual dimorphism.



RANGE: These snakes are native to the Sonoran Desert, including parts of Arizona and California and most of Mexico and northwestern Sinaloa.

HABITAT: Their preferred habitat includes areas with plenty of rocks and plants for cover. While generally most comfortable on the ground, they will climb rocks, trees, and bushes, and are comfortable going for a swim. They also like to burrow.

BEHAVIOR: These snakes are normally docile, however, if they are cornered or threatened by a predator, they will rattle their tails trying to imitate a rattlesnake. They also will hiss and bite the perceived threat. If picked up by a predator, the Mexican Black Kingsnake may expel a foul-smelling musk or defecate trying to dissuade the predator from eating them. They are an opportunistic burrower as well as an excellent swimmer.

DIET: Mexican Black Kingsnakes, like other kingsnakes, are ophiophagous, which means they are cannibalistic, feeding on snakes of all kinds. They've evolved a stronger PSI constriction strength to kill snakes. Additional sources of food include small rodents, lizards, small birds and frogs. They are diurnal hunters, hunting and eating during the day.

LIFE HISTORY: Mating season for Mexican Black Kingsnakes is spring when females will lay a single clutch of up to 24 eggs. Females provide no parental care to the eggs. Hatchlings are born 50 to 60 days later. The young grow quickly, reach maturity in two to three years, and may live for 10 to 20 years.

INTERESTING FACTS: Mexican Black Kingsnakes kill their prey by constricting – they are not venomous. They are immune to the venom of snakes that live in their habitat, so kingsnakes will prey on rattlesnakes!

THREATS: Predators of the Mexican Black Kingsnake include coyotes, feral cats, hawks and owls. They have not been assessed for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list of threatened or endangered species.

Rosy Boa

(Scientific name: *Charina trivirgata*; Family: Boidae)

DESCRIPTION: Size is usually between 17-34 inches with a rosy or salmon colored belly. These snakes colors can vary but are most commonly mixed with dark to orange spots on a lighter body. They also have stripes either on their sides or their back varying in color from orange to black. The interspace colors can also vary from light to dark grey and yellow or tan.



RANGE: Most common in southwestern America in California, Arizona and Sonora, Mexico.

HABITAT: These snakes are commonly found in deserts, scrubland, sandy plains, and rocky slopes. They can live from sea level up to an elevation of 2,070 meters beneath rocks and in crevices.

BEHAVIOR: This animal can be nocturnal during hot periods of time, it's also extremely docile. When approached by humans oftentimes this snake will curl up into a compact ball with its head in the middle to protect itself. If provoked this snake will rarely bite but instead it will release a foul smelling musk.

NATURAL DIET: Rosy Boas eat a majority of different foods like small mammals, baby rabbits, lizards, deer mice and even kangaroo rats. Their prey is held in place by needle like teeth and then suffocated through constriction.

LIFE HISTORY: These snakes mating season starts in April and ends around June, after 4-5 months of the gestation period female snakes birth live young in a protective membrane. The first litter can be as large as 8 snakes and as small as 3 each snake at about 18 to 36 cm long.

INTERESTING FACTS: Due to the Rosy Boas lack of speed they are forced to ambush their prey or stalk it until the can get inches away to strike and capture their meals. The Rosy Boa can be expected to live around 15 to 22 years.

THREATS: Predator threats for the Rosy Boa are carnivorous mammals such as weasels, skunks, raccoons, ringtails, and coyotes, birds like hawks or shrikes, and even other snakes, such as the California kingsnake.

Western Hognose

(Scientific name: *Heterodon nasicus*; Family: Colubridae)

DESCRIPTION: A small but heavy bodied snake that can reach up to 3 feet but usually averages around 2 feet. It has an upturned and pointed snout.



RANGE: Southern Canada, through the plains of the US and into northern parts of Mexico.

HABITAT: areas with well drained soil and little vegetation like dry prairies or oak savannas which are good for burrowing.

BEHAVIOR: Uses its snout to burrow through the earth in search of toads. Has a slightly toxic venom from its rear fangs to help subdue prey.

DIET: frogs, toads, lizards, smaller snakes, eggs, babies will eat some insects

LIFE HISTORY: As many as 39 eggs are laid in early summer and incubation time is around 50 days.

INTERESTING FACTS: When provoked, it will first spread its jaws and neck out like a cobra and puff up its body. It will then hiss and strike with a closed mouth. If the snake is still under attack, it will put on a dramatic show to attempt to drive the predator away. The snake will twist and turn its body as if it is in pain, roll over onto its back and play dead. While it is pretending to be dead, its mouth will be open with its tongue hanging out, and it may even throw up its last meal! Its body will even be limp and lifeless if picked up while in this state

THREATS: hawks, crows, fox, coyote, raccoons, larger snakes. Habitat destruction

Common Chuckwalla

(Scientific name: *Sauromalus ater*; Family: Iguanidae)

DESCRIPTION: Stout lizards with baggy skin folds near the neck, shoulders, and stomach. Hard scales cover the skin. Five digits on each limb with a tail that is rounded at the tip. Color varies from dark brown to gray to dark yellow depending on location, temperature, surrounding and mood.



RANGE: Found in the deserts in the western US and Mexico as well as some islands in the Gulf of Mexico. Found in southeastern California and Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Utah and parts of Colorado.

HABITAT: Found in deserts with hot and dry air. Need rocks and crevices for hiding, such as past lava flow sites, rocky hillsides and outcrops. Males home range will not overlap with those of other males. Many females may be in the males home range.

BEHAVIOR: Mainly solitary and diurnal. They remain close to their rock shelters and only venture out to eat foliage. Active mostly during mid-March to mid-August and aestivate in summer and brumate in winter.

DIET: Herbivores, especially on plants that are higher in fiber and lower in fat and protein. They get water from the plants they eat and produce it metabolically. Will eat some insects for protein.

LIFE HISTORY: Average weight is 245 grams which males usually weighing more than females. Average length is 6.38 inches. Eggs are laid in an underground nest and hatch after about 30 days. They leave the young once they are hatched. Sexual maturity is at 2-3 years of age, but full size is not reached until about 25 years.

INTERESTING FACTS: They will hide in crevices between rocks and inflate their lungs to wedge themselves tight. The tail acts as a camouflage against the sandy rock colors

THREATS: red tailed hawks, kestrels, coyotes, rattlesnakes

Gila Monster

(Scientific name: *Heloderma suspectum*; Family: Helodermatidea)

DESCRIPTION: Heavy bodied lizards covered with beadlike scales (osteoderms) that are black and yellow or pink. Can get up to about 21.5 inches and 1.5-3 pounds.



RANGE: Mojave, Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts of the southwestern US and northwestern Mexico. The name comes from the Gila River basin in Arizona where they were first discovered.

HABITAT: Desert and semi-desert areas with just enough moisture to support a few shrubs. Commonly create burrows in rocky foothills and avoid open areas.

BEHAVIOR: Solitary lizards that can adjust their behavior according to temperature. They are slow moving, but good climbers.

DIET: Carnivores that use sense of taste and smell to hunt for food. Food items include bird eggs, nestlings, rodents, frogs, lizards, insects, centipedes and worms. Occasionally will eat carrion.

LIFE HISTORY: The female lays 3-13 eggs in a hole just below the surface. Incubation time is about 4 months and the hatchlings are ready to survive on their own immediately. They can live up to 20 years in the wild and over 30 in captivity.

INTERESTING FACTS: The Gila monster is a cousin to the *Heloderma horridum*, the beaded lizard. They are the only two venomous lizards in the North America. A drug for the management of Type 2 diabetes is based on a protein from the Gila monster's saliva.

THREATS: Human encroachment, habitat destruction

Leopard Gecko

(Scientific name: *Eublepharis macularis*; Family Gekkonidae)

OTHER NAMES: Panther Gecko

DESCRIPTION: They reach 8-10 inches, adults are yellow with brown spots on the back and a banded white and light black tail.



RANGE: Leopard Geckos are found in Southeastern Afghanistan, Western India, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran in semi-deserts and arid grassland.

HABITAT: Sand-gravel, rocks, hard clay, coarse grasses, and drought resistant shrubs are most commonly what these geckos are found.

BEHAVIOR: They are nocturnal, ground-dwelling and docile creatures that are easy to tame.

DIET: Leopard Geckos prey on a wide variety of invertebrates like spiders, scorpions, and centipedes but they might also eat smaller lizards and nestling rodents.

LIFE HISTORY: During their breeding season females usually lay a clutch every 15-22 days for a 4 to 5 month period once they are sexually matured. Females lay eggs 16-22 days after copulation, the first clutch of the females lives may be as small as 1 or 2 eggs. Hatchlings can be between 3 and 4 inches long.

INTERESTING FACTS: These geckos have claws instead of sticky foot pads and unlike many other geckos, they have eyelids. They also shake/rattle their tail while hunting, mating, and defending.

THREATS: Because the Leopard Gecko hunts at night near roads their biggest threat is automobiles but they are also targeted by frogs, snakes, foxes and other larger reptiles.

Black Spiny Tailed Iguana

(Scientific name: *Ctenosaura similis*; Family: Iguanidae)

DESCRIPTION: It is the largest species in its genus. Males can grow up to 4'3" while the females are slightly shorter. They have distinctive black scales along their tails. They have 4-12 dark dorsal bands.



RANGE: Native to Mexico and Central America and has been introduced in Florida. Also found on many Caribbean and Pacific islands.

HABITAT: Typically found in grasslands and forests in rocky habitats with crevices to hide in, rocks to bask on and trees to climb.

BEHAVIOR: Excellent climbers. Diurnal and fast moving. They use speed to escape predators but will lash their tails and bite if cornered.

DIET: Primarily herbivorous (flowers, leaves, stems, fruit) but will opportunistically eat smaller animals (rodents, bats, frogs, small birds, smaller lizards) eggs and arthropods. Juveniles are more insectivorous.

LIFE HISTORY: Males attract females with a head bobbing movement. Females dig a nest and lay up to 30 eggs which hatch within 90 days.

INTERESTING FACTS: Maximum sprint speed recorded at 21.5mph! A population has somehow been introduced near the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum grounds.

THREATS: Habitat destruction

Desert Tortoises

(Scientific name: *Gopherus morafkai*; Family: Testudinidae)

OTHER NAMES: Sonoran desert tortoise or Mohave desert tortoise depending on location

DESCRIPTION: High domed carapace (top) that is about 9-15” long. They have elephantine legs with scales on the front.



RANGE: Eastern California, southern Nevada, southwestern Utah, western and southern Arizona and into Sonora, Mexico

HABITAT: Live in burrows that they construct in the sides of washes, hillsides, rock overhangs or crevices in rocky areas.

BEHAVIOR: Burrow to escape heat and store water in their bladder. Can go for long periods of time without food or water.

DIET: Herbivores – various plants depending on season (annuals, grasses, herbs, flowers, cacti and their fruits).

LIFE HISTORY: Can live at least 35-40 years in the wild (some older!) Ravens, gila monsters, kit fox, badgers, roadrunners and coyotes are all predators of the desert tortoise. They prey on the juveniles, which are 2 to 3 inches long and have thin, delicate shells. Mountain lions may occasionally take adult tortoise.

INTERESTING FACTS: They defend themselves by emptying their bladder if they are picked up or handled. This could lead to their death if they can't find water soon as they could become dehydrated.

THREATS: Listed as threatened and are protected by the state. Habitat destruction, introduced grasses, disease, low reproductive rates and illegal pet trade

Sonoran Desert Toads

(Scientific name: *Bufo alvarius*; Family: Bufonidae)

OTHER NAMES: Colorado River Toad

DESCRIPTION: Both males and females reach full size of 3-7" within a month. Described as chunky with short legs. Enlarged whitish wart near the angle of the jaw. There is no or almost no vocal sac so they make a weak low-pitched whistle.



RANGE: California, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico,

HABITAT: Common in the Sonoran Desert, including creosote bush, grasslands, oak-pine woodlands, thorn scrub and tropical deciduous forest. Often found near permanent springs, reservoirs and streams.

BEHAVIOR: Nocturnal. Remains underground during the heat of the day. Activity is stimulated by rainfall. Most active May-July. Breeding usually occurs in spring and summer

DIET: Carnivorous (insects, spiders, beetles, grasshoppers, lizards, rodents and other toads)

LIFE HISTORY: Nocturnal and solitary. Gestation of 2-12 days. Lifespan in the wild 10-20 year

INTERESTING FACTS: A good controller of pest species such as snails. There can be as many as 8,000 eggs in a single strand of black eggs laid by the female. Largest native toad in the US. Poison from the parotid glands and warts can paralyze or kill dogs.

THREATS: Least Concern in most of it's range, but Endangered in California and Threatened in New Mexico

Red-Spotted Toads

(Scientific name: *Bufo punctatus*; Family: Bufonidae)

DESCRIPTION: Only about 3” long. Coloration depends on habitat (can be whitish, light tan to red or brown). Underside is creamy white. Has a flattened appearance.



RANGE: Found from southern Nevada to southwestern Kansas. South into Mexico and Baja California.

HABITAT: Riparian. Usually found in and around rocky streams and arroyos. Can fit in narrow rock crevices.

BEHAVIOR: Nocturnal in summer but may be crepuscular in cooler months.

DIET: Insectivorous.

LIFE HISTORY: Breeds after summer rains. The male has a high pitched trill. Tadpoles metamorphose in 6-8 weeks.

INTERESTING FACTS: Only native toad species to lay eggs singly instead of a string.

THREATS: Least concern

Pocket Mouse

(Scientific name: *Pereognathus amplus*; Family: Heteromyidae)

DESCRIPTION: A small rodent at 2.4-3.3” and 0.3-0.5oz. Has a thinly furred tail that is smooth from base to tip.



RANGE: Native to the Sonoran desert from Southwest AZ into Mexico

HABITAT: desert shrublands, forests and grasslands

BEHAVIOR: Nocturnal. Burrows.

DIET: Granivorous (Seed eater and plants). Uses cheek pouches to carry seed to the burrow

LIFE HISTORY: 3-4 week gestation and weened within 1 week. 3-5 offspring on average

INTERESTING FACTS: 4 subspecies that live in the Sonoran desert. Can live with minimal water because it depends on the water content from the food it eats.

THREATS: Least concern

Desert Hairy Scorpion

(Scientific name: *Hadrurus arizonensis*; Family: Caraboctonidae)

OTHER NAMES: Giant desert hairy scorpion, giant hairy scorpion, or Arizona Desert hairy scorpion

DESCRIPTION: These scorpions are commonly yellow with a dark top and crab-like pinchers, its body is covered in brown hairs to help in sense vibrations on the ground. They can grow around 5.5 inches to 6 inches.



RANGE: Native to Nevada, Arizona, Utah, and California.

HABITAT: They are commonly found in low-elevation valleys or places like the Sonoran and Mojave deserts. They are found in western parts of Arizona, southern Nevada and California, and southwestern parts of Utah. They prosper in dry and hot climates.

BEHAVIOR: These scorpions are aggressive and active. Like many scorpions they are nocturnal.

DIET: They can eat insects like spiders and centipedes as well as other small scorpions and small vertebrates.

LIFE HISTORY: The Desert Hairy Scorpion has no specific breeding season, they are dormant in winter so it's unlikely that mating happens during that time. These creatures breed live young that after birth climb on the females back until they are old enough to live independently or after their first molting. These scorpions are not considered adults until they are 4 years old but are considered independent usually between 1-3 weeks by their mother.

INTERESTING FACTS: They are the longest living species of scorpion, in the wild they can survive between 7 and 10 years and in captivity they can live up to 25 years. They are also known as the largest scorpion in North America at about 5.5 inches long.

THREATS: Common predators of the Desert Hairy Scorpion are owls, large lizards, and other scorpions attempting to assert dominance.

Desert Blonde Tarantula

(Scientific name: *Aphonopelma chalcodes*; Family: Theraphosidae)

OTHER NAMES: western desert tarantula, Arizona blond tarantula or Mexican blond tarantula.

DESCRIPTION: This spider can be 3 to 5 inches with a large body. Females tend to have a tan body and males have black legs, a copper-colored cephalothorax, and a red abdomen.



RANGE: Commonly found in California, Arizona and Mexico.

HABITAT: Typically the Desert Blonde Tarantula is found in saguaro-dominated plant communities but they can also be found in dry, well-drained soils in areas throughout the desert. Tarantulas are usually ground dwellers.

BEHAVIOR: These spiders are usually very docile but they don't like being handled by humans. If irritated or aggressive the spider may release urticating hairs.

NATURAL DIET: Typically they are nocturnal hunters and they feed on insects like grasshoppers, beetles, other small spiders and arthropods. They may also on occasion try eating small lizards.

LIFE HISTORY: Male tarantulas are considered mature at 10-12 years old and females are considered mature by around the same age. After mating females have an urge to eat the male tarantula so it's very common for the male to flee. If the mating was successful the female will produce an egg sack and sometimes stay with the young until they hatch. Soon after mating males die due to many factors, exposure to heat and cold, caught by a predator, or the female ate him, ect.

INTERESTING FACTS:

THREATS: Some of the predators of this spider are foxes, coyotes, birds, lizards, and snakes.