

# Snakes in Highlands Ranch

Highlands Ranch is home to a diverse wildlife population, including different species of snakes. Most snakes you may see are not venomous; they are harmless and are beneficial to our ecosystem because of their appetites for insects and rodents. However, one venomous snake seeks shelter in Highlands Ranch, the western rattlesnake.

The rattlesnake oftentimes gets confused with the non-venomous bull snake. Both species of snakes however prefer to avoid human contact and will do so unless cornered, trapped or otherwise frightened.

## Bull Snakes vs. Rattlesnakes -

|                   | <b>Bull Snake</b>                                       | <b>Rattlesnake</b>   |
|-------------------|---|--|
| <b>Color</b>      | Cream color with dark or brown splotches                | Similar pattern but darker skin color  |
| <b>Protection</b> | Shake tail or hiss like a rattlesnake to protect itself | Coils and makes hiss sound with its rattle; in ready position to strike if necessary |
| <b>Size</b>       | Can grow to 6 – 8 ft. in length                         | Can grow up to 4 ft.; average length is 2.5 ft.                                      |
| <b>Tail</b>       | Pointed tail with no rattles                            | Rattle at end of tail  |
| <b>Teeth</b>      | Rows of teeth   | Fangs in addition to rows of teeth   |
| <b>Eyes</b>       | Round pupils  | Vertical or elliptical pupils  |
| <b>Scales</b>     | Two rows of scales                                      | Single row of scales   |
| <b>Head</b>       | Oval shaped head  | Broad triangular head and narrow neck  |
| <b>Eggs</b>       | Lays eggs   | Gives live birth   |

**Bull Snake**



**Rattlesnake**



## **Awareness**

To avoid an encounter with a rattlesnake, stay aware of your surroundings and follow these tips:

- Never put your hand or foot where you can't see. Look before you step over logs or rocks.
- Most snake sightings occur on summer mornings or evenings. Snakes are most active at temperatures between 50 and 80 degrees. Watch for snakes sunning on sidewalks and trails.
- Avoid places where rattlesnakes are likely to rest. During the day, snakes often seek cooler, shaded places when they are too hot. Avoid crevices, woodpiles, bushes and shrubs, and small animal burrows.
- Wear leather boots. Rattlesnakes usually can't bite through leather.
- If you see a snake, leave it alone. Most snake bites occur when people try to catch them. Back away slowly and give the snake an easy escape route.

## **Prevention**

Follow these tips to deter snakes from your landscape and home:

- Do not landscape with expanses of large rocks, especially in open sunny areas.
- Mow weeds and vegetation, and remove rocks, boards and debris from your property.
- Reduce the insect and rodent population on your property to reduce a major food source for snakes and force them to look elsewhere. One way to accomplish this is to remove bird feeders from your property. Bird feeders are a popular source of seed which attracts rodents.
- Seal entrances to crawl spaces and basements.
- To prevent snakes from entering basements and crawl spaces, seal all openings ¼ inch or larger. Check for holes or cracks around doors, windows, water pipes, electrical lines, etc.

## **Bites**

If you are bitten by a rattlesnake remain as calm as possible and call 911. Get medical help immediately. Check the injured area for visible fang marks in addition to teeth marks. If it is a venomous bite, fang marks will be present. Reaction to venom may include swelling and pain in the bite area, followed by a black and blue discoloration of the tissue and possibly nausea.

Non-venomous snake bites also need immediate medical attention.

## **Law**

According to the Colorado Division of Wildlife, it is legal to kill rattlesnakes when necessary to protect life or property, provided the method used is in accordance with city and county ordinances.

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