

Oregon's Sensational Snakes



Common garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*)

Common garter snakes are beneficial because they eat slugs, snails and other yard pests.

Lives: Throughout most of the state.

Fun Fact: All snakes are ectotherms. They control their body temperature by moving in and out of the sunlight.



Northwestern Garter Snake (*Thamnophis ordinoides*)

This snake likes grassy-brushy areas and weedy sections of suburban backyards and city parks. They are most active on warm, sunny days.

Lives: West of the Cascade Mountains.

Fun Fact: Garter snakes get their names from the stripes on their body, which resemble the design on garters once worn by men to hold up their socks.



Western Terrestrial Garter Snake (*Thamnophis elegans*)

Despite its name, this snake spends a lot of time near the water. In the summer they are most often seen basking in the morning before the temperature gets too hot.

Lives: Throughout the state, except along most of the coast and the crest of Cascades.

Fun Fact: It makes its winter den in rocky areas—often with dozens or even hundreds of other snakes.



Gopher Snake (*Pituophis catenifer*)

The Gopher Snake is a constrictor. It tightly coils around its prey to suffocate it.

Lives: Throughout the state, except along most of the coast and the crest of Cascades.

Fun Fact: If threatened, a Gopher Snake vibrates the tip of its tail, flattens its head and hisses, resembling a rattlesnake.



Pacific Coast Aquatic Garter Snake (*Thamnophis atratus*)

This snake stays close to water and eats mostly fish and amphibians.

Lives: In Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson and Josephine counties.

Fun Fact: To escape predators, it dives beneath the surface of the water and hides under rocks.



Night Snake (*Hypsiglena chlorophaea*)

This snake is rarely seen because it hunts and moves at night. It eats lizards, which it subdues with the help of mildly poisonous saliva. It is harmless to humans.

Lives: In Eastern Oregon.

Fun Fact: Night snakes and rattlesnakes have elliptical (vertical) pupils. Oregon's other native snakes have round pupils.



Common Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula californae*)

The common kingsnake feeds on a variety of live prey, particularly lizards. It gets quite excited when disturbed and may vibrate its tail, hiss or strike. It is classified as a Protected and Sensitive Species in Oregon.

Lives: In southwest Oregon.

Fun Fact: These snakes are known to eat rattlesnakes and appear to be immune to their venom.



California Mountain Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata*)

The California Mountain Kingsnake eats other snakes, lizards, small mammals and the eggs and nestlings of birds. It is one of Oregon's most colorful snakes. It is classified as a Protected and Sensitive Species in Oregon.

Lives: In southwest Oregon.

Fun Fact: It kills its prey by wrapping around it and suffocating it.



Racer (*Coluber constrictor*)

The Racer is extremely fast. It can hold its head and neck above the ground when hunting. It prefers warm, dry, open or brushy country where it is often observed crossing roads.

Lives: Statewide except along the north coast and the crest of the Cascades.

Fun Fact: It is sometimes seen moving in grasslands with its head held up, looking for prey.



Western Ground Snake (*Sonora semiannulata*)

This is one of Oregon's smallest snakes with adults averaging eight to 12 inches. It eats spiders, grasshoppers and insect larvae. It is a Protected Species in Oregon.

Lives: In a small area of southeast Oregon.

Fun Fact: These snakes are scarce and hard to catch so biologists don't know too much about them.



Rubber Boa (*Charina bottae*)

The Rubber Boa eats small rodents, mostly mice and shrews, and is a good swimmer, burrower and climber. It measures 14 to 30 inches.

Lives: Statewide except along the coast north of Coos Bay, the Cascade crest, a section of the Columbia Gorge, and south Harney County.

Fun Fact: All snakes have forked tongues that deposit air molecules on receptors in the mouth; thus, snakes "taste" the air, which helps them locate prey and sense their way in the dark.



Striped Whipsnake (*Coluber taeniatus*)

Striped Whipsnakes can grow to five feet in length. Like Racers, they sometimes hunt with head held above the ground, climbing into shrubs to pursue prey or evade predators.

Lives: In Eastern Oregon.

Fun Fact: Snakes flick their tongues to help "smell" the air around them to sense danger and locate prey.