



For More Information Contact

wildlifecontrol@spca.bc.ca
BC SPCA Animal Helpline
1.855.622.7722

BCSPCA
SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

SNAKES

WILDLIFE CONTROL BEST PRACTICES

Species

9 wild species

Legal Designation

Schedule A, *BC Wildlife Act*

Disease Risks

Rattlesnakes (*Crotalus oreganus oreganus*) are the only venomous snake in BC; bites are uncommon and are rarely fatal

Seasonal Considerations

Snakes are sensitive to disturbances in winter when they group in hibernacula



Did you know?

Snakes generally remain hidden unless disturbed, and also provide excellent natural rodent and slug control!

Rattlesnake

Common Conflicts

Most species in BC pose no threat to people. Snakes do not cause damage to structures or other areas they live in. They may enter and/or become trapped in houses, or be found during construction when hibernacula (groups of wintering snakes) are uncovered. Rattlesnakes cause fear for some people, but are not a risk unless found close to schools or housing developments. Use caution when hiking in areas where rattlesnakes live.

Garter snake, Photo Credit: Mary Watts

Conflict Prevention

It is illegal to relocate, capture, or kill snakes without a permit. If the finder is particularly confident with species identification (ensuring that the snake is not venomous or an escaped exotic species), snakes that accidentally enter homes can be removed and placed outside. Capture snakes gently by hand, using gloves, or a box or pillowcase secured with a knot on top. If the species is not known, or is definitely a venomous snake, consult a herpetologist or expert snake professional for assistance.





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Gopher snake, Photo Credit: Lauren Sherwood



RECOMMENDED

Actions & methods for control

Snakes can be attracted to areas with lots of rodents, so it's important to treat "snake-proofing" similar to rodent-proofing. Managing rodent problems can help prevent conflicts with snakes and other wildlife. Secure garbage bins and composts, make sure bird feeders are not overflowing and no pet food is left outside. Store food in rodent-proof containers and clean spilled food, waste, crumbs, etc.

Prevent access to structures by blocking access to underneath porches, decks and crawl spaces, removing wood and brush piles, and trimming tall vegetation around buildings where snakes may be a problem. Use a tight mesh fence to deter snakes and protect large areas (e.g. school playgrounds). Seal all holes large enough for snakes – they can fit their body through any crack or hole they can fit their head through, even if only a few millimetres wide. Pay attention to possible openings at ground level and plants or structures that snakes may use to climb.



ILLEGAL

Actions & methods for control

It is illegal to kill snakes for nuisance reasons. Injured snakes should be taken to a veterinarian or wildlife rehabilitator for assessment and/or euthanasia. It is illegal to control snakes using:

- Blunt force trauma
- Carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide
- Cervical dislocation
- Decapitation
- Drowning
- Electrocution
- Freezing (including dry ice)
- Glue trap
- Injection of MS-222 (TMS)
- Pithing (without anesthesia)
- Poison
- Shot to brain

Know before you go

Rattlesnakes are the only species of venomous snake in BC, and bites are rarely fatal. Rattlesnakes will only bite as a last resort if they feel threatened. Most bites happen as a result of people trying to handle or harm the snake. Find out in advance if rattlesnakes are local to areas where you live or visit.

If you encounter a rattlesnake:

1. **Freeze** - rattlesnakes are often heard before they're seen. If you hear their distinctive rattle, freeze in place until you can see the snake.
2. **Make space** - once you can see the snake, back away slowly at least 1.5 m - be careful to check behind you to avoid any tripping hazards.
3. **Avoid** - carefully move around the rattlesnake at a safe distance until you can leave.

If the snake coils and starts to rattle, you are too close! This is their warning to step back.
If you or your pet are bitten by a rattlesnake, seek medical attention as soon as possible.