



# GUIDE TO COEXISTING WITH SNAKES

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**Save The Snakes**  
savethesnakes.org



# QUICK GUIDE TO SNAKES

In a hurry? Here is a quick reference for what to do if you encounter a snake and how to keep your property safe. For more detailed information, please read the full sections below.

## IF YOU SEE A SNAKE...

- **Don't Panic:** Stay calm. Snakes are more afraid of you than you are of them and will usually try to escape.
- **Give it Space:** Back away slowly and maintain a safe distance of at least 10 feet (3 meters).
- **Leave it Alone:** Do NOT try to touch, handle, or kill the snake. Many bites occur when people try to interact with a snake.
- **Call a Professional:** If the snake is in an unwanted location and won't leave, contact a local wildlife professional or a trained snake rescuer.

## TO KEEP YOUR PROPERTY SNAKE-SAFE...

- **Manage Your Landscape:** Keep your lawn mowed and clear of tall grass and thick vegetation, especially near your home.
- **Remove Clutter:** Clean up piles of wood, rocks, yard debris, and trash that can serve as hiding spots.
- **Secure Your Home:** Seal any cracks, gaps, or openings in your home, barn, or other buildings.
- **Control Food Sources:** Keep rodents and other pests away from your property by properly storing trash and food.





# COEXISTING WITH SNAKES

For many people, finding a snake on their property can be an extremely unwanted experience. While panic is a natural first reaction, it's important to remember that most snakes are harmless and all snakes deserve our respect. They are not only fascinating animals, but also play a critical role in our shared environment.



This guide serves as a comprehensive resource to help you understand snakes, manage your property for safety, and learn how to coexist with them in a way that protects everyone involved.

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## QUICK TIPS

### LEAVE ALONE

Most bites occur as a result of attempts to handle or harm the snake. Snakes are more afraid of us than we are of them, and will often move on of their own accord.

### HOME IMPROVEMENTS

There are many ways to declutter and make homes and gardens unappealing to snakes.

### FIND OUT MORE

Learn more about snakes and how to coexist with these incredible animals at our website: [www.savethesnakes.org](http://www.savethesnakes.org)

### RESPECT SNAKES

Snakes play an important role in the ecosystem. They are vastly misunderstood animals and should be appreciated and shown respect.

### CALL A PROFESSIONAL

There may be professional snake removal services available in your area.

### EDUCATION

Learn as much as you can about the local species. Identification and snake handling courses are a good resource.



# SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIFIC REGIONS

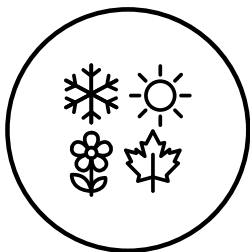
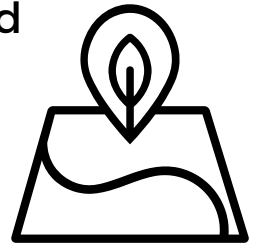
While the information in this guide is generally applicable worldwide, it is always best to supplement it with local knowledge. **The types of snakes, their behavior patterns, and available resources can vary greatly from one region to another.**

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**Research Native Species:** Learn about the snakes that are native to your specific area, including what they look like, their habits, and if any are venomous. Check with your local university, herpetological society, or governmental wildlife agency for a comprehensive guide.

**Find Local Resources:** If you encounter a snake you need removed, search for local resources. Many communities have wildlife relocation services, humane societies, or trained snake handlers who can safely assist. Look for local Facebook groups dedicated to reptile or snake identification in your area, as they can be great sources of information and contacts.



**Seasonal Awareness:** Be aware of the local climate and how it affects snake activity. For example, in warmer climates, snakes may be active year-round, while in colder climates, they will brumate during the winter and be more active in the spring and fall.





# UNDERSTANDING SNAKES AND DISPELLING MYTHS

**Snakes aren't inherently aggressive.** They are generally shy and would rather avoid humans. Most snakes will only bite as a last resort, when they feel threatened, cornered, or are being handled. Their primary goal is to get away from a potential threat, and they will usually retreat if given space.

**Fear often stems from a lack of understanding.** By separating fact from fiction, we can learn to appreciate snakes for what they are rather than fearing them for what we imagine them to be.

**Here are some common myths and the facts that debunk them:**

**MYTH: You can determine a rattlesnake's age by the number of rattles on its tail.**

**FACT:** A rattlesnake adds a new segment to its rattle each time it sheds its skin. Since a snake may shed its skin multiple times a year, the number of rattles is not an accurate indicator of age.

**MYTH: Snakes travel in pairs and will seek revenge if you harm one.**

**FACT:** Snakes are mostly solitary animals. They do not mate for life, live in pairs, or have the capacity to seek revenge. If you see two snakes together, it is most likely a breeding pair or a chance encounter.

**MYTH: All snakes are dangerous.**

**FACT:** The vast majority of snake species worldwide are non-venomous and completely harmless to people.

**MYTH: Snakes will chase you.**

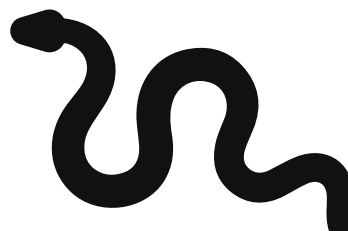
**FACT:** Snakes will not actively chase a person. If a snake moves towards you, it's likely trying to get to a safe spot, which may happen to be in your direction.

**MYTH: Venomous snakes are aggressive.**

**FACT:** With very few exceptions, all snakes prefer to avoid confrontation. A venomous snake will almost always try to escape rather than bite. Bites are typically a defensive last resort when a snake is startled, cornered, or handled.

**MYTH: Snakes are slimy.**

**FACT:** A snake's skin is actually very dry and smooth. The scaly outer layer is made of keratin, the same material as our hair and fingernails.



# The Snake Wheel of Fortune



Snakes are often misunderstood and unfairly maligned due to fear mongering, myths, and misinformation. This situation exacerbates fear of snakes, driving dangerous conflict between humans and snakes. Spreading awareness about the benefits of snakes to people may improve attitudes toward snakes, encourage mutualistic co-existence, and reduce defensive bites. Poster by Dr Christina N. Zdenek, 2025.



**CSL Seqirus**



This resource was produced independently by author Dr Christina Zdenek, with an unrestricted educational grant from CSL Seqirus. Responsibility for this resource remains with the author.



# THE BENEFITS OF SNAKES: WHY WE NEED THEM

Beyond the immediate concern of safety, it's important to understand the immense value that snakes provide to our world. They are not just an interesting part of nature; they are vital to a healthy ecosystem.

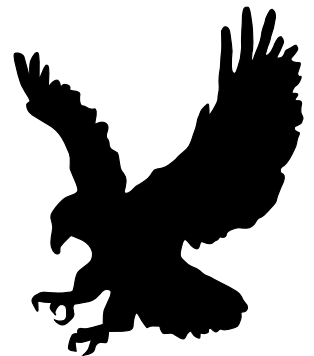
## NATURAL PEST CONTROL



Snakes are nature's most effective and non-toxic form of pest control. They prey on rodents, insects, and other small animals that can damage crops, spread disease, and infest homes. By having snakes in your area, you are a partner in a natural process that keeps the populations of these pests in check without the use of harmful poisons.

## ECOSYSTEM BALANCE

As both predators and prey, snakes play a crucial role in the food web. Their presence helps regulate the populations of small mammals, and in turn, they serve as a food source for other animals like hawks, owls, and foxes. This delicate balance is what maintains a thriving and resilient environment.



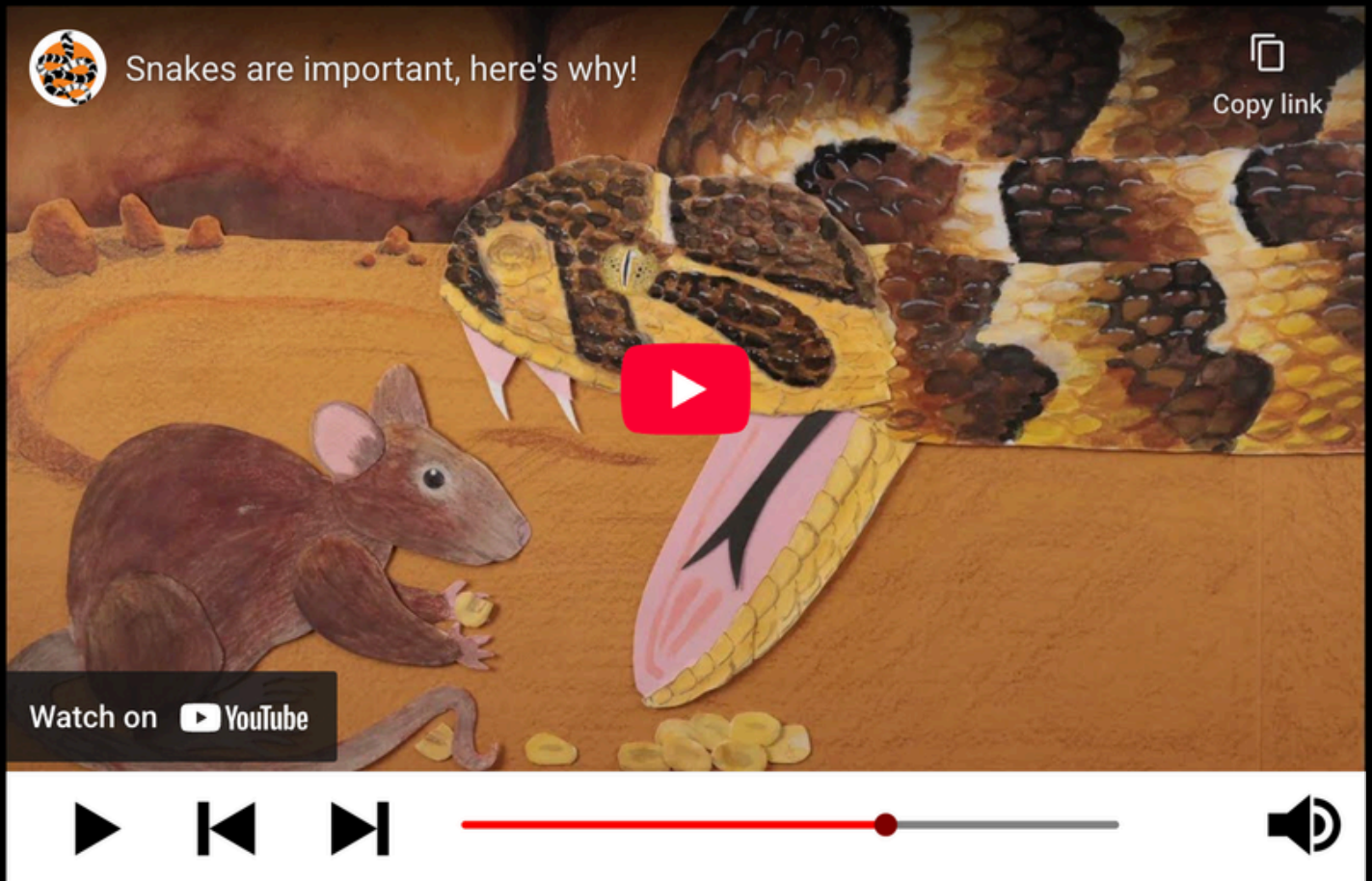
## BIOMEDICAL ADVANCES

Believe it or not, snake venom has been a source of groundbreaking medical research. Scientists have studied the complex compounds found in venom to create life-saving drugs for treating a variety of conditions, including heart attacks, high blood pressure, and blood clots.





# VIDEO: SNAKES ARE IMPORTANT, HERE'S WHY!



Snakes play a crucial role in our ecosystems and this video showcases three important reasons why we need to live harmoniously with snakes. The aim of creating this video was to have a learning resource available to schools, community members and all members of the public to encourage them to appreciate snakes.

**View the video at [savethesnakes.org/important](https://www.savethesnakes.org/important)**

We are incredibly grateful to the talented Ashley Latimer for making this stop motion video. Check out her page at <https://www.studiowild.fr>.



# WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE A SNAKE

Encountering a snake on your property doesn't have to be a stressful experience. The most important thing is to stay calm and give the snake space.

## OBSERVE FROM A DISTANCE:

- **If you find a snake, leave it be.** Remember that the snake is more afraid of you than you are of it. Do not try to touch it or get it to move by hitting it with a stick. Snakes are not aggressive and will move off on their own after some time.
- Keep pets and children away from the snake to avoid a defensive bite.

## SAFE AND ETHICAL RELOCATION:

- **Why relocation is better than killing:** Killing snakes, especially venomous ones, greatly increases the chance of being bitten. Additionally, when a snake is killed, another snake may simply take its place.
- **Why long-distance relocation doesn't work:** Research shows that snakes moved far from their home range have significantly increased mortality rates and may die. It is basically a death sentence.
- **Why short-distance relocation is a better option:** Short-range relocations (less than a quarter of a mile/about half a kilometer) seem to be a viable option for some species, but it is critical to address why the snake was on your property in the first place (e.g., water, shelter, food). If the issue isn't corrected, another snake may come back.
- **Learn to safely move a snake:** If you or your family are interested in learning how to safely and professionally move a snake, consider taking a snake handling and relocation course.



# SNAKE BITE FIRST AID



Most snakebites are accidents and being prepared is crucial, especially if you live in an area with venomous species. **The most important rule is to get to an emergency room as quickly as possible. Time is critical for receiving antivenom, if needed.**



## DO'S:

**Stay calm and still:** The person who was bitten should remain as calm and still as possible to help slow the spread of venom.

**Call for help:** Call emergency services immediately.

**Remove constricting items:** Remove any jewelry, watches, or tight clothing from the bitten limb before swelling begins.

**Clean the wound:** Gently wash the bite with soap and water and cover it with a clean, dry dressing.

**Learn about your local snake species:** Different venomous snakes have different local and systemic effects from their venom. It is important to educate yourself about the venomous snakes and specific snakebite first aid for your region.



## DON'TS:

**Do NOT try to capture or kill the snake:** This greatly increases the risk of a second bite. If you can, take a picture of the snake from a safe distance to help with identification for medical professionals, but do not delay getting to a hospital.

**Do NOT use a tourniquet:** A tourniquet can cut off blood flow to the limb, causing more damage.

**Do NOT cut the wound or try to suck out the venom:** This is ineffective and can introduce infection.

**Do NOT apply ice or submerge the wound in water:** This can cause further tissue damage.

**Do NOT drink alcohol or caffeinated beverages.**

**Do NOT take pain-relieving medications** like aspirin or ibuprofen, as they can increase the risk of bleeding.



# TIPS TO KEEP YOUR PROPERTY SNAKE-SAFE

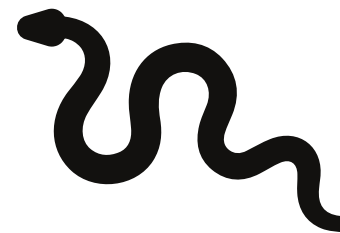
The most effective way to avoid human-snake conflict is to create a clear separation between the areas you use and the areas where snakes are likely to be found. By understanding snake ecology and managing your property appropriately, you can greatly reduce the chances of an unwanted encounter.

## 1. MANAGING YOUR LANDSCAPE FOR SAFETY

Snakes are often drawn to properties by three things: food, water, and shelter. By eliminating these attractants, you can reduce the likelihood of a snake taking up residence near your home.

- **Keep paths clear:** Keep walking paths and trails wide and clear of thick vegetation.
- **Trim the lawn:** Keep your grass cut low and manage thick vegetation around the house and in any areas frequented by people, pets, or livestock.
- **Remove clutter:** Get rid of piles of wood, rocks, yard debris, and trash. A board on the ground is a perfect hangout spot for a snake.
- **Close up gaps:** Examine your home, barn, or other buildings and seal any cracks, holes, or openings where a snake could enter.
- **Remove food sources:** Rodent-proof your home, but never use poison or glue traps. Snakes will search for food where there is prey.
- **Locate and manage water sources:** Be aware of standing water, such as birdbaths, leaky faucets, or ponds, especially during hot, dry periods. Snakes are attracted to these water sources.
- **Avoid certain netting:** Never use plastic sod netting or bird netting, as they can trap and injure snakes.
- **Welcome natural predators:** Encourage native predators of snakes, such as hawks and owls, on your property.





## 2. SAFEGUARDING PETS AND LIVESTOCK

Pets and livestock can stray into areas where snakes may be resting. If they are naturally curious, this can result in a bite. To keep them safe, consider the following options:

- **Leash or watch closely:** Keep a close watch on your pets when they are outside, or use a fenced-in area.
- **Rattlesnake avoidance training:** For dogs, consider rattlesnake avoidance training.
- **Rattlesnake vaccine:** While there is a rattlesnake vaccine for dogs, its effectiveness is debated and it is not universally recommended by veterinary associations, such as the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA). Consult your veterinarian to discuss the risks and benefits.

## 3. PERSONAL AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

For you and other guests on your property, snake awareness is key. If you live in their habitat, coexistence is certainly possible.

- **Use a light at night:** Always use a flashlight when walking around the property at night to avoid stepping on a snake.
- **Watch where you step:** Be mindful of where you place your hands and feet when working outside or walking in vegetated areas.
- **Check carefully:** Always remember to check carefully when lifting boards, hay bales, or other items that snakes could be resting underneath.
- **Understand snake activity patterns:** In the Northern Hemisphere, snakes, especially rattlesnakes, are often more active in the early spring as they emerge from their winter slumber to find mates. They are also active in late summer and fall as they prepare for cold weather and young snakes disperse. In warmer climates, snakes can remain active throughout the entire year.
- **Learn to identify local species:** Educate yourself about the snakes in your area and learn to properly identify venomous species.







# CREATING A SNAKE-FRIENDLY HABITAT (IF YOU WANT TO)

While the goal of many is to keep snakes away from their immediate living spaces, some people want to encourage them on their property for their benefits to the ecosystem. If you are interested in making your property a safe haven for snakes, here are some things you can do.

- **Provide Safe Hiding Places:** Create a small pile of rocks or logs away from your home. This gives snakes a place to hide from predators and regulate their body temperature.
- **Plant Native Vegetation:** Use native plants to create natural ground cover and habitat for a variety of wildlife. This will attract insects and small prey animals that snakes feed on.
- **Avoid Pesticides and Herbicides:** Chemical treatments not only harm snakes directly but also eliminate their food sources. A natural, pesticide-free yard is a healthier place for all wildlife, including snakes.
- **Install a Pond or Water Feature:** A small, shallow water feature can provide a much-needed water source for snakes and other wildlife during dry periods.

 MARGO HIBBARD





# SUPPORT SNAKE CONSERVATION

The health of our planet and its diverse inhabitants depends on the collective effort of individuals and organizations. By supporting non-profit organizations dedicated to conservation, you are directly contributing to the protection of species and the preservation of natural habitats. Save The Snakes believes that caring for even the most misunderstood creatures, like snakes, is an act of caring for the entire environment.

**Our mission is to foster a world where humans and snakes can coexist peacefully.**

We achieve this through education, on-the-ground conservation efforts, and by promoting a “live and let live” philosophy. Killing or relocating snakes far from their home range is not an effective form of wildlife management, and it often leads to a cycle of conflict. By protecting and appreciating these animals, we not only ensure the survival of vital species but also benefit from their role in controlling rodent populations and maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

**Your support enables us to create and share resources like this one, conduct crucial research, and host educational programs for communities around the globe.** By working together, we can empower people to overcome fear with knowledge and embrace coexistence as a peaceful and effective solution for both humans and wildlife.

**DONATE TODAY: [SAVETHESNAKES.ORG/DONATE](https://savethesnakes.org/donate)**