

Got Snakes?

Don't Panic

A Guide to Information and
Identification of Kansas Snakes



List of 39 Kansas Snakes

1. Bull snake or Gopher snake
2. Western rat snake
3. Great plains rat snake
4. Coach whip
5. Eastern hognose snake
6. Western hognose snake
7. Plains milk snake
8. Common king snake
9. Prairie king snake
10. Common garter snake
11. Plains garter snake
12. Checkered Garter snake
13. Lined snake
14. Ribbon snake
15. Brown snake
16. Prairie ring neck snake
17. Western Worm snake
18. Ring neck snake
19. Eastern Glossy snake
20. Plains Black headed snake
21. **Long nose snake***
22. Grahams crayfish snake
23. **Night snake***
24. Rough earth snake
25. Smooth earth snake
26. Flathead snake
27. Ground snake
28. Northern Water snake
29. Diamond backed water snake
30. Plain belly water snake
31. Rough green snake
32. Timber rattlesnake
33. Massasauga rattlesnake
34. Western rattlesnake
35. Cottonmouth
36. Copperhead
37. **New Mexico blind snake**
38. Eastern racer
39. **Redbelly snake***

*** Protected: Endangered, threatened,
or species in need of conservation**

Douglas County Snakes

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27. Redbelly snake*

Snake Facts

Don't panic when you see a snake , read some basic Kansas snake facts:



- Kansas has 38 species of snakes.
- Only 5 species are venomous
- Only 2 kinds of venomous snakes regularly occur in Douglas County, copperheads and timber rattlesnakes.
- No one has died from a venomous snakebite in Kansas for over 50 years

Did You Know?

- Approximately 2500 different species of snakes are known worldwide. Approximately 20 % of the total number of the snake species are poisonous.
- The rattlesnake's rattle consists of six to 10 layers of scales, which fail to shed and make that distinctive sound when the tail is shaken as a warning. Eventually the older segments will slough as the rattle lengthens
- Snakes move slower than an adult human can run; the fastest recorded speed achieved by any snake is about 13 km/hr (8 mph), but few can go that fast
- The greatest age known for any snake is just under 30 years, attained by both the anaconda and the black-lipped cobra.

Snake Myths

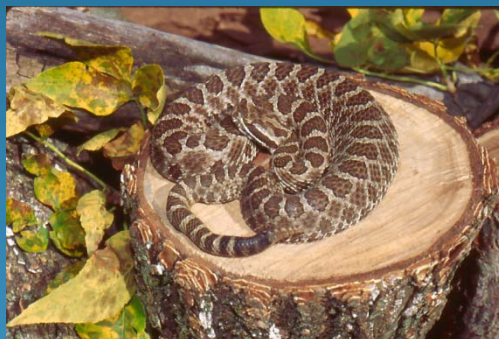
- **Snakes always travel in pairs.** This is false. Exceptions to the rule: during breeding season (usually April-June) you may see males and females together
- **Most venomous snakes can jump at least 2 feet.** Remember - snakes don't have legs! They can't jump
- **Snakes spit.** Not the ones in Kansas. The clumps of foam-looking spittle found on blackberry bushes and vines in Kansas are often thought to be "snake spit," but the fact is, this foam is produced by Spittle Bugs.
- **Snakes won't cross a hemp rope.** Snakes don't care about ropes. They will cross anything they can get over.

The Venomous Snakes of Kansas



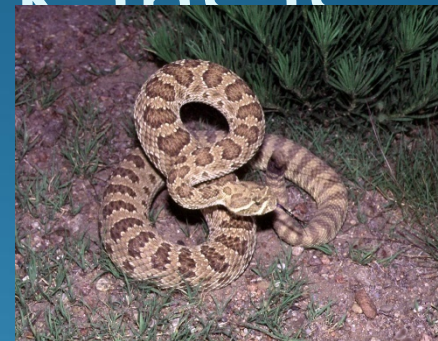
Timber rattlesnake,

Uncommon and protected species found in Douglas County. Found in wooded areas.



Massasauga rattlesnake

A small rattlesnake most common in central Kansas, only 2 records from Douglas County



Western rattlesnake

Formerly known as the prairie rattlesnake, it is common in western Kansas.



Copperhead

The most common venomous snake in Douglas county. Copperhead venom is weak and death is humans is almost unknown.



Cottonmouth

Found rarely, only in Cherokee County, KS

Venomous snakes rarely find their way into suburban areas. without human assistance.

Gopher Snake



Also known as the bullsnake, this snake is found throughout Kansas but is most common in the central and western prairies.

It feeds on a variety of rodents, including voles, rats, pocket gophers and young prairie dogs.

Gopher snakes are the largest Snakes in Kansas reaching lengths Of up to 8 ft. They are also considered to be the most economically beneficial, as they often feed on rodents around grain storage areas.

Western or Black Rat Snake



Juvenile western rat snakes are boldly patterned, but darken as they age. The abdomen is creamy white.

The western rat snake is a large snake found throughout the state, but is common in the eastern Kansas woodlands and frequents urban areas.

Its name both identifies its family and its diet. In addition to rodents, the western rat snake feeds on birds and their eggs. Its remarkable ability to climb permits it access to nests. These snakes have been observed climbing power poles.

Coachwhip

The long, slender coachwhip varies in color regionally from light gray to brown to nearly black in the western part of its range.

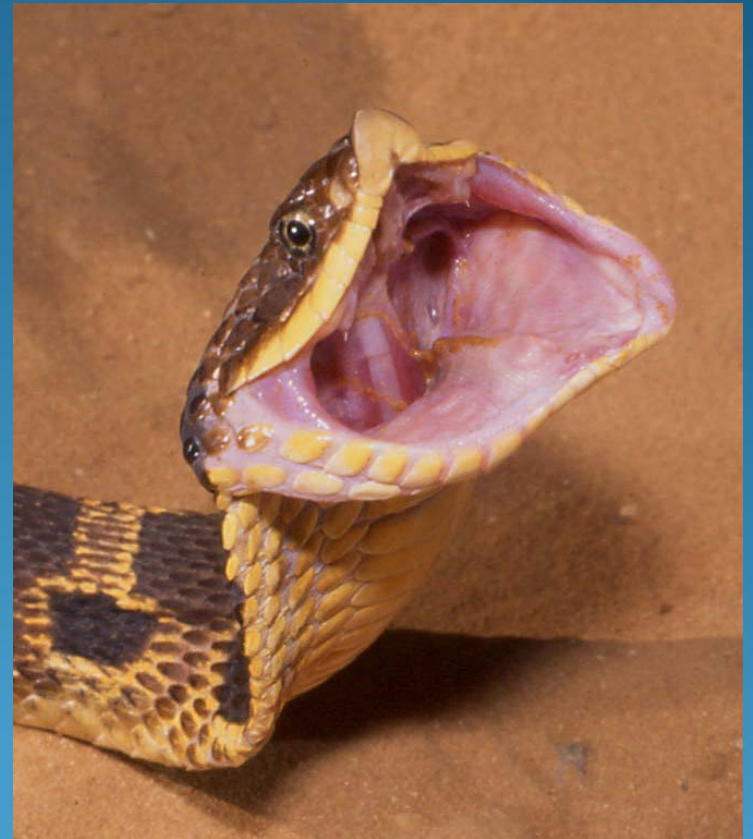
It is found in the southern and western prairie regions of Kansas.

Coachwhips feed on birds, bats lizards and other snakes.



Eastern Hognose Snake

- The rare and secretive eastern hognose has an amazing repertoire of defensive behaviors. When disturbed it spreads its neck in a posture like a cobra. It will spray musk vigorously if picked up, and will feign death if the interference continues.
- It feeds mainly on frogs and toads. Its cryptic camouflage allow it to blend into the forest floor. It is often mistaken for a timber rattlesnake.



Great Plains Rat Snake

Smaller and more slender than the western rat snake, this snake is the same species as the corn snake, but wears a camouflage color pattern more suitable to Kansas soils.

This resident of Kansas prairies feeds on rodents.

It is frequently misidentified and mistaken for the similarly appearing massasauga rattlesnake and prairie kingsnake.



The dark line from jaw to jaw and through the eyes identifies it . Juveniles are difficult to distinguish from rat snakes.

Prairie Kingsnake

At first glance this prairie dweller resembles the great plains rat snake and the massasauga rattlesnake.

Its small head, broad brown triangular patch on the head and broken eye line are the signs to look for.

Like most kingsnakes it prefers to eat other snakes and lizards, but also feeds on rodents.



Common Kingsnake



The beautiful and secretive common kingsnake can be found most often in the overlap habitat between woodlands and Prairies.

Its boldly speckled black on cream or yellow background gives it the alternate name “speckled kingsnake”.

Like others of its family, its diet is primarily other snakes and lizards, as well as rodents.

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Plains Milksnake

This striking member of the kingsnake family resembles the venomous coral snake (not found in Kansas). Its red, black and yellow banding are mention to confuse predators into thinking that it is venomous.

Like all kingsnakes, the plains milksnake eats other snakes, lizards, and small mice.

The Plains milksnake is found through Kansas.



Western Hognose Snake

This gentle resident of the central Kansas prairies gets its name from the upturned snout it uses for digging into the soft sandy western Kansas soils.

Like the larger Eastern hognose, it eats primarily frogs and toads. It also utilizes the same repertoire of dramatic defenses including the playing dead posture seen at left.

This increasingly rare snake has been a victim of the illegal pet trade.



Timber rattlesnake

The background color of timber rattlesnakes can vary from brown to gray. Its cryptic camouflage allows it to blend into woodland habitat.

While its venom is the most potent of any snake in Kansas, the timber rattlesnake is shy and docile. This snake will bite only when provoked.

The dark zigzag pattern is similar to an eastern hognose. Timber rattlesnakes can reach lengths of up to 40 inches.

They are found in Douglas County. This snake is rare and protected.



Western Rattlesnake

Also known as the prairie rattlesnake, this common venomous snake of western Kansas has dark brown oval patches on a tan background. The color camouflages the snake against the prairie soils.

The nervous and territorial disposition of this rattlesnake makes it more inclined to defend itself when harassed.

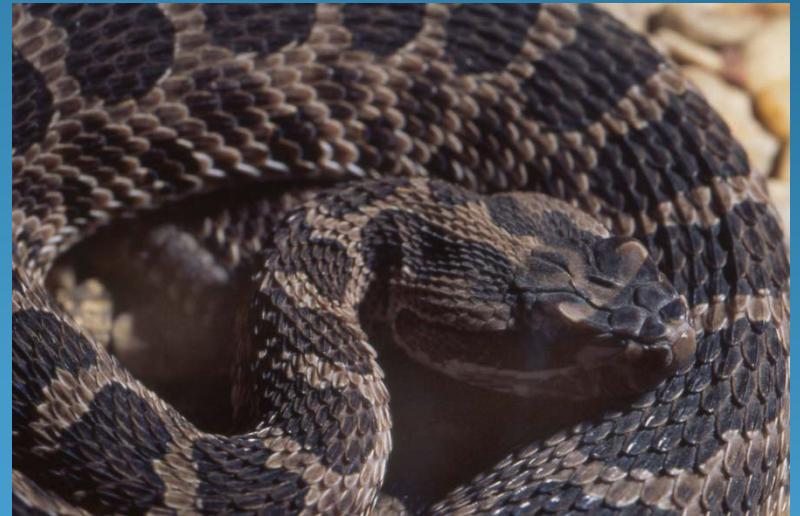
It is similar in appearance to the western hognose



Massasauga Rattlesnake

This small prairie rattlesnake ranges from central to western Kansas from prairies to wetlands. Wearing the classic prairie coloration, this snake can be mistaken for several nonvenomous, but similar looking snakes.

Massasaugas feed on frogs, lizards, other snakes, and small rodents.



Copperhead

One of Kansas' most beautiful snakes the copper and gray banding camouflages it perfectly in its home in the eastern woodlands.

The young copperhead carries a bright green tail which it uses as a lure for frogs and toads, its favorite food. It also feeds on small mice.



The potency of the copperhead's venom has been greatly exaggerated. While capable of producing a painful injury, the bite of the copperhead is not lethal to humans.

Photo © by Suzanne L. Collins
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Prairie Ringneck

The prairie ringneck is the most common snake in Kansas. This snake shows off its reddish orange belly when disturbed.

It is secretive, and commonly hides under rocks and logs. The ringneck eats earthworms.



Western Worm Snake

The western worm snake strongly resembles its namesake and favorite food.

The bright pink underbelly makes it frequently mistaken for an earthworm.

The worm snake grows up to 14 inches in length.

This small snake is secretive and often found under rocks and logs in wooded areas.



Brown Snake

Also known as the Texas brown snake or DeKays snake, this snake is frequently misidentified as a baby copperhead or rattlesnake.

It grows only 10 to 16 inches in length and feeds on earthworms, slugs and snails

It is found throughout Kansas in moist, wooded areas.



Garter Snakes

All garter snakes have lines from head to tail. Frequently found in wetlands and moist areas of the prairies and woodlands.



Plains Garter Snake



Common Garter Snake

The common garter snake feeds on frogs, crawfish, fish, and insects.

Lined Snake

The lined snake is frequently spotted in suburban gardens. The lines from head to tail resemble the garter snake but it lacks the checkboard pattern on the side.

Lined snakes feed on insects,

The lined snake is very similar in appearance to Graham's crayfish snake.



Western Ribbon Snake



The western ribbon snake is found in the eastern half of Kansas near wetlands. It is identified by its orange dorsal stripe on a black background.

The ribbon snake feeds on frogs and fish.

Rough Green Snake

The cryptic green color of the rough green snake makes it difficult to find and observe in the wild.

Feeding mainly on caterpillars and other insects, the green snake hunts in the shrubs along eastern Kansas wooded streamsides.

This slender snake grows to lengths of about 24 inches.



Photo © by Suzanne L. Collins
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Earth Snake



Graham's Crayfish Snake

Graham's crayfish snake is found in the eastern two thirds of the state around wetlands, streams, and lakes.

It feeds almost exclusively on crayfish as it's name suggests.

It will grow up to 40 inches in length.



Northern Water Snake

A common snake of lakes and wetlands, the northern water snake is often mistaken for a cottonmouth or copperhead because of its banding pattern and aquatic preferences.

The northern water snake feeds on fish, frogs and crayfish. It can grow to lengths of up to 45 inches.



Diamondback Water Snake

Found in the central and eastern lakes and streams of Kansas, this large water snake feeds on frogs, fish and crayfish.

The netlike pattern on the back forms the appearance of diamond shapes.

Like other water snakes, this is often mistaken for cottonmouths and killed needlessly.



Plainbelly water snake

This large water snake is heavily patterned when young but turns darker with age. It can grow in excess of 50 inches.

Like others of the *Nerodia* genus, it inhabits wetland area and feeds primarily on, frogs, fish and crayfish.

This water snake may be found at some distance from water sources.



Eastern Racer

Sometimes called the yellow bellied racer or “blue” racer due to the color variations, this common prairie snake is heavily patterned as a juvenile and solid gray green as an adult.

The eastern racer feeds on birds, bird eggs, lizards, frogs, snakes and insects.



Ring neck Snake

Our most common Kansas snake , the ringneck is a prairie inhabitant, feeding almost entirely on earthworms . The red coloration on its neck and belly is a warning signal to possible predators.



Cottonmouth

The cottonmouth is known to occur only in Cherokee County and has been found mainly along the Arkansas River during times of flooding. This represents the most northerly part of its range.

Many species of common watersnakes throughout are mistaken for cottonmouths and killed each year needlessly.

The cottonmouth's mild venom is similar to the copperhead's. It can cause severe tissue damage but rarely results in death.



Green Snakes



The eastern or “yellow bellied” racer is a solid olive green snake of slender build. Its occasional blue tint has given it the nickname “blue racer”.



The rough green snake is found in streamside bushes in eastern Kansas. It feeds mainly on insects.



Lined snakes are lined and patterned on a dark green background.

Gray and Brown Snakes



Prairie Ringneck

Our most common Kansas snake, it is solid gray on the back and a bright orange-red underside



Black headed snake

The only solid brown snake found in Kansas. This snake is rare in its habitat.



Western Worm snake

Like its namesake, this snake resembles an earthworm., gray on the top and pink on the abdomen. Its diet is primarily earthworms.



The Cottonmouth

aka
Water moccasin
This is one of the most often misidentified snakes. It has been reported less than 20 times in the state

Patterned Snakes



Northern Watersnake



Gopher snake



Great Plains Rat Snake



Western Hognose



Eastern Hognose



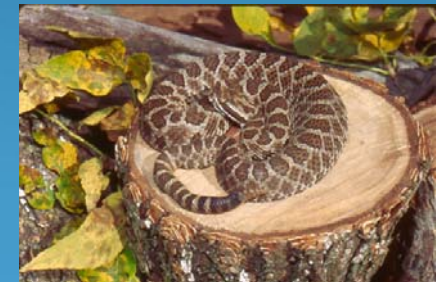
Prairie Kingsnake



Timber rattlesnake



Western
rattlesnake



Massasauga
rattlesnake

Snakes With Lines



Garter snakes have yellow or cream colored lines from nose to tail. There are several species.



Graham's Crayfish snake



Ribbon snakes are named for the ribbon like lines from nose to tail.



Slender glass lizards are often mistaken for snakes. They are found in prairies.



Lined snake

Black Snakes



Western or black rat snakes are frequently seen climbing trees, where they are searching for birds and bird eggs. Young western rat snakes are grey and brown patterned.



The common or speckled kingsnake is a beautiful snake of the eastern Kansas woodland-prairie borders. They eat other snakes and lizards.

Banded Snakes



Copperhead

Copperheads are found in moist woodlands of eastern Kansas. Their coloration allows them to blend easily against the forest floor.



Northern water snake

Often mistaken for a cottonmouth or copperhead, it is the most common water snake around lakes and streams in Douglas County.



Plains Milksnake

A harmless mimic of the coral snake, (which is not found in Kansas) is found in prairies throughout Kansas.

Snakes with Red



Plains milksnake



Common garter snake



Prairie ringneck

Snakes of the Prairies



Prairie Ringneck



Prairie Kingsnake



Great Plains rat snake



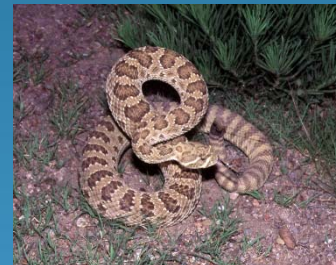
Gopher snake



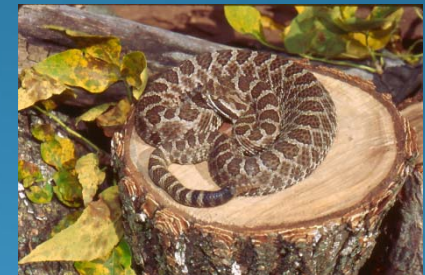
Eastern Racer



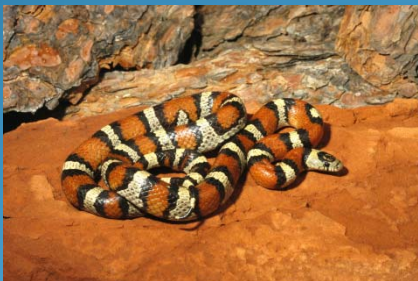
Coach whip



Western
rattlesnake



Massasauga rattlesnake



Plains Milksnake



Western hognose

Snakes of Lakes & Wetlands



Northern watersnake



Diamondback
Watersnake



Plainbelly watersnake



Cottonmouth



Common garter
snake



Grahams crayfish
snake

Snakes of the Woodlands



Timber rattlesnake



Eastern hognose



Western rat snake



Copperhead



Common kingsnake



Common garter

Snakes of the Suburbs



Western rat snake



Ringneck snake



Common garter snake



Lined snake



Brown snake

Small Snakes



Western wormsnake



Ring neck snake



Rough green snake



Brown snake



Plains milksnake

Medium Sized Snakes



Western hognose



Prairie kingsnake



Great Plains rat snake



Eastern racer



Common kingsnake



Common garter snake



Big Snakes



Gopher snake



Timber rattlesnake



Northern
watersnake



Plainbelly
watersnake



Western rat snake



Copperhead



Coach whip

Non-native snakes in Kansas

In many counties and municipalities of Kansas it is illegal for individuals to keep venomous snakes or snakes in excess of 8 ft. These snakes are dangerous and may pose a threat to public safety. It is also illegal to release non native snakes to the wild. Non native snakes released to the wild may introduce disease or compete with native snakes



- **Eastern Diamond backed Rattlesnake**
- Identifying marks : yellow outlined diamond patches, raccoon tail.



Western Diamondback Rattlesnake
Rounded patches with yellow outlines, raccoon tail.