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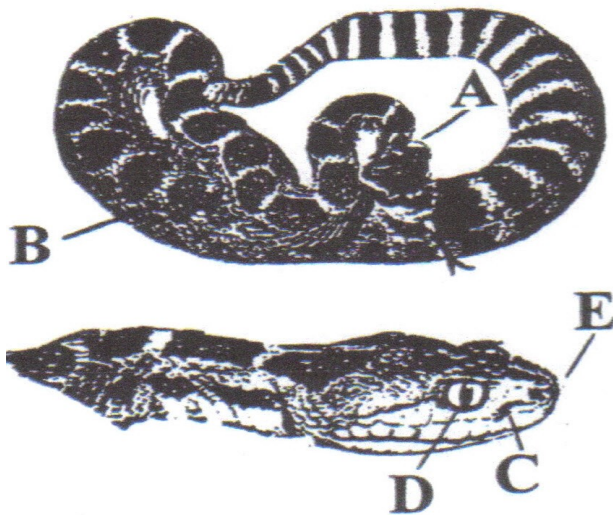
California Snakes

Venomous vs. Non-Venomous

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Venomous

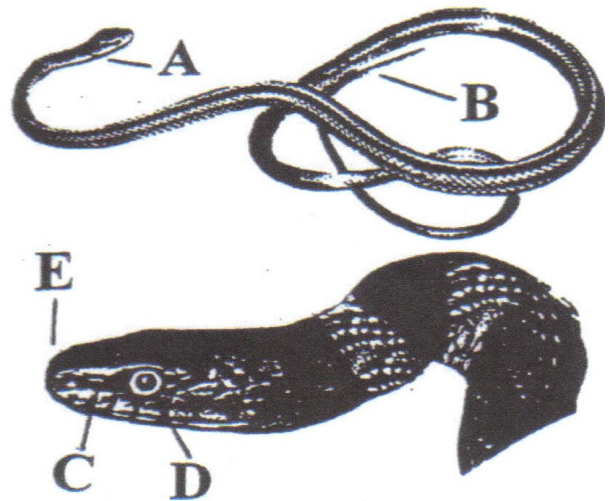
Southern Pacific Rattlesnake



- A - Triangular-shaped head is larger than neck.
- B - Thick, heavy body with blunt tail and rattle.
- C - Heat sensing, or loreal, pit between nostril and eye.
- D - Elliptical, or cat's eye, iris openings.
- E - Turned up nose.

Non-Venomous

Gopher Snake - King Snake



- A - Narrow head is about same size as neck.
- B - Slender body with long, tapered tail.
- C - Absence of loreal pit between nostril and eye.
- D - Circular iris opening.
- E - Smooth, round nose.



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Identification

Telling venomous (poisonous) snakes from non-venomous snakes in California can be made easy. Of course we always stress that you leave wild animals alone and in no way promote you trying to handle these wonderful and sometimes dangerous animals! There is really only one type of venomous snake to be concerned with in California; the rattlesnake. There are six different species of rattlers in California, but all have the characteristics described below on the left. All other snakes in California are not dangerously venomous. There are however, a couple additional snakes that produce venom, but not to the point of being dangerous to humans.

Most all other snakes in California will fit the conformation of the figure on the right. All snakes, venomous or non, are important members of the natural community, and vital to the balance of nature. No snake should be needlessly killed. Again, we stress that looking at wildlife is always okay, but leave wild animals alone!

Venomous

Rattlesnake

Head broad, triangular-shaped

Heavy-bodied or "fat" in appearance

Tail ends in cluster of modified scales – the rattle



Non-Venomous

Gopher Snake

Head narrow, barely distinguishable from neck

Body relatively thin or narrow

Tail long, thin, tapering to a point usually — NEVER with rattles

