

Venomous or nonvenomous

There are three venomous snakes in Colorado, the Prairie, Massasauga and Midget-faded rattlesnakes. Only the Prairie Rattlesnake is found in Castle Rock.

The nonvenomous Bullsnake is often mistaken for a rattlesnake, because they have similar markings and will vibrate their rattleless tails on dry vegetation.

Nonvenomous and venomous snakes can be easily distinguished from each other.

What do rattlesnakes look like?

- Broad, triangular head
- Vertical, catlike pupils
- Heat-sensing pits on each side of their face that can determine the size of an approaching human or animal, even in complete darkness
- Jointed rattles on their blunt tail
- Large tubular fangs that fold out when the mouth opens
- Can grow up to 4 feet; average length is 2.5 feet



Rattlesnake

What do Bullsnares look like?

- Oval-shaped head
- Round pupils
- Pointed tail with no rattles
- Rows of teeth
- Can grow to 6 to 8 feet in length



Bullsnake

What to do if you encounter a rattlesnake

- Most importantly, remain calm and still at first.
- Give the snake plenty of room and walk around it, or back away slowly and carefully.
- Do not handle, move or harass it.
- Quickly seek medical attention for venomous snake bites.
- If a rattlesnake is in your yard, call Castle Rock Animal Control, 303-663-6100.

Medical attention for pets

VCA Douglas County Animal Hospital
531 Jerry St.
Castle Rock, CO
303-688-2480

A vaccine is available for dogs against snake bites. Ask your veterinarian for details.

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY,
PLEASE DIAL 911.**

For more information

Town of Castle Rock
Parks and Recreation Department
303-814-7444

Castle Rock Police Department
Animal Protection Division
303-663-6100

Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Northeast Region Office
303-291-7227
www.wildlife.state.co.us

Remember, in most situations, people and wildlife can coexist. The key is to respect the wildness of wildlife.

What you need to know about Rattlesnakes in Castle Rock



TOWN OF CASTLE ROCK
1375 W. Plum Creek Parkway
720-814-7444 • CRgov.com/wildlife



About rattlesnakes

Rattlesnakes can be found throughout Castle Rock. They are most commonly seen in grassland areas and rocky outcrops, but they also are present along both concrete and dirt trails.

Facts about rattlesnakes

- Most Colorado snakes are nonvenomous (nonpoisonous), harmless and beneficial to people because of their appetites for insects and rodents.
- Rattlesnakes generally are nonaggressive toward people unless they are startled, cornered or stepped upon.
- Rattlesnakes are deaf and feel vibrations to detect prey or nearby danger. They do not always shake their rattles before striking, so do not rely solely on your sense of hearing.
- Rattlesnakes can strike a distance roughly two-thirds their length.
- Snakes bask in the sun – on rocks, paved trails and other warm places – to raise their body temperature. They congregate in fall at crevices in rocky ledges to hibernate for the winter.
- Baby rattlesnakes are more dangerous than adults, because their small rattle is noiseless. They will strike immediately when disturbed.

Preventing a bite

- Stay on open pathways, where there is a better chance that you will see a snake instead of stumbling upon it.
- Never put your hand or foot where you can't see. Look before you step over logs or rocks. Avoid crevices, wood piles, brush and shrubs.
- Wear leather boots; rattlesnakes usually can't bite through leather.
- Always keep your dog on a leash no longer than 6 feet and near you at all times when in rattlesnake habitat. If you come upon a rattlesnake, or hear one, keep your dog close at your side and carefully move away.
- Supervise your dog, even if it is just in the backyard. Never allow your dog to go on an exploration of prairie dog holes, because rattlesnakes often live in abandoned prairie dog holes.
- Do not landscape with expanses of large rocks, and remove bird feeders – which attract rodents – from your property.
- Seal entrances to crawl spaces and basements, and check for cracks around doors, windows, water pipes, electrical lines, etc.
- Keep firewood in a covered box.



We need snakes

“Kill it!” is a common response upon seeing a snake, but killing animals just because they frighten us doesn't make sense. Even venomous snakes have a role to play in Colorado's ecosystem and are part of our state's natural heritage.

Not only are the majority of snakes harmless to people, they actually benefit us by eating pests that destroy crops and stored food. Garter snakes eat insects, while Bullsnakes help by eating rodents. In turn, snakes (and their eggs) are eaten by many other species, from skunks to Great Blue Herons and eagles.

While venomous snakes present a danger – and people should always be aware and cautious when in rattlesnake habitat – the aggressive pursuit and killing of snakes is not only unsound ecologically, it is illegal. A statutory provision allows for the killing of rattlesnakes if they are felt to be an imminent threat to human life or safety. Killing a snake just because it is venomous is against the law.

Myths and truths about snakes

Myth: All snakes are aggressive and will always bite.

Truth: Given an opportunity to escape, snakes typically will choose flight over fight.

Myth: Venomous snake bites are usually fatal.

Truth: Snakes often “hold back” their venom when biting defensively; they generally will use venom to kill prey, not to protect themselves. (Forty percent of bites by venomous snakes show no venom.) More people are killed by lightning and bee stings each year than by snake bites.

Myth: All snakes hatch from eggs.

Truth: Rattlesnakes and Garter snakes bear live young.

Myth: Rattlesnakes have one “button” on their rattle for each year of their life.

Truth: The buttons on the rattle are a dried remnant left each time the skin is shed. Snakes may shed their skin two or more times per year, and the dried buttons frequently break off.