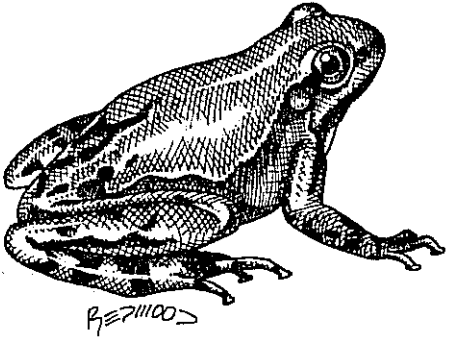
Arizona Wildlife
Amphibians and Reptiles



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Education Branch
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The reptiles and amphibians included in this booklet represent a sample of the more than 120 species found in Arizona. The species in this booklet were chosen for their unique qualities and in some cases, high visibility.

Amphibians

Tiger salamander	Lowland leopard frog
Sonoran toad	Arizona treefrog
Couch spadefoot toad	Bullfrog

Reptiles

Western banded gecko	Spiny softshell turtle
Chuckwalla	Rosy boa
Collared lizard	Common kingsnake
Desert spiny lizard	Sonoran mountain kingsnake
Western whiptail lizard	Coachwhip
Gila monster	Gopher snake
Desert iguana	Ground snake
Regal horned lizard	Wandering garter snake
Tree lizard	Coral snake
Side-blotched lizard	Arizona ridge-nosed rattlesnake
Desert tortoise	Mojave rattlesnake
Western box turtle	Western diamondback rattlesnake
Sonoran mud turtle	Sidewinder

For more information:
Western Reptiles and Amphibians, Peterson Field Guides by Robert C. Stebbins
National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Reptiles & Amphibians

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Amphibians

For a "desert state" Arizona has a surprising variety of amphibians. There are 23 species of frogs and toads, and 1 species of salamander found in our state. All of Arizona's amphibians, with the exception of the barking frog, go through an aquatic larval stage.

A few of our amphibians are spring breeders, traveling to breeding areas when snow melt or spring rains fill ponds, creeks, and marshes. Summer breeding amphibians are mostly desert dwelling species who remain buried beneath the earth until warm summer rains fill desert water sources. Many desert toads are capable of long estivation (dormant) periods, sometimes lasting years.

Frogs are generally distinguished from toads by their smooth, moist skin and greater dependence on water. Toads, on the other hand usually have dry, warty skin, parotid (poison) glands, and can often be found far from water.

Frogs and toads generally attract mates by calling from breeding sites. The calls of Arizona amphibians vary from the "creaking" call of chorus frogs to the loud "trill" of great plains toads. Most toads and frogs lay hundreds, perhaps thousands of eggs at a time, but only a handful of those that hatch survive through the first year of life.

Tiger Salamander: Ambystoma tigrinum

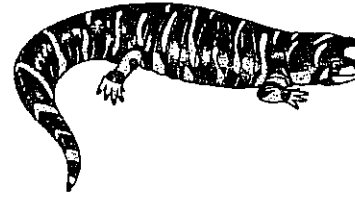
Description: A large, stocky salamander up to 12" in length. Color varies from a black background with yellow or cream spots to a dusky, spotted background or a broken pattern of "tiger" markings. Eyes are small, snout is rounded. Tubercles (small bumps) are present on the underside of the feet. Larvae look similar to adults but are dull brown, and have gills and tail fins.

Range: Most of the state except western and southwestern desert areas.

Habitat: Streams, lakes, ponds, and temporary pools, from arid sagebrush and grasslands to mountain meadows and forests.

Niche: A primarily subterranean (underground) carnivore feeding on insects and earthworms.

Comments: Adults spend most of their time underground in the burrows of ground squirrels, gophers, or other animals, but may be observed on rainy nights in the spring and late summer, crawling to and from breeding sites. Salamander larvae are called waterdogs and are used as bait animals for fishing.



Sonoran Desert Toad (Colorado River Toad):

Bufo alvarius

Description: Largest toad in Arizona, reaching 6" in length. Color is dark brown to greenish gray. Skin is smooth between warts. Large warts on hind legs and head, with enlarged white warts at corners of mouth.

Range: Lower Colorado River drainages in the southern ½ of the state.

Habitat: Usually near permanent water, from arid creosote bush lowlands and grasslands, to lower mountain canyons.

Niche: A semi-nocturnal predator, preying on insects and small animals. Adults are seldom preyed upon because of a powerful nerotoxin (a poison that affects the nervous system) secreted from the skin glands.

Comments: A summer breeder, its call resembles that of a faint steamboat whistle. The toxin secreted by this toad is its main defense against predators. If an animal mouths or bites this toad, it may become paralyzed or die.

Couch Spadefoot Toad: Scaphiopus couchii

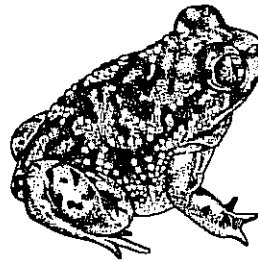
Description: A medium-size toad, 2 ¼ – 3 ½" in length. Greenish yellow to brownish yellow in color with dark blotches. "Spade" (bump) on hind foot is black and sickle-shaped.

Range: Southern ⅓ of the state.

Habitat: Creosote bush desert, mesquite grassland, and desert scrub.

Niche: Primarily a nocturnal predator, feeding on insects. Active during spring and summer rains.

Comments: Its call, "Waaaa", sounds like the bleat of a lamb. Males gather at temporary pools during summer thunderstorms, calling from the water to attract females. After eggs are laid, tadpoles emerge and transform into tiny toadlets in as little as three weeks.



Lowland Leopard Frog: Rana yavapaiensis

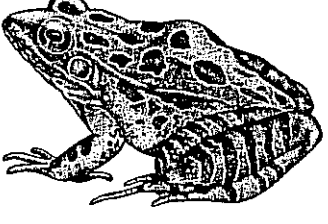
Description: A medium-size frog, 2 – 4" in length. Skin is tan, grayish green, to green above; yellow below. A fold of skin runs along each side for the length of the body. Dark markings on yellowish background on rear of thighs.

Range: Found near permanent water in southern and western parts of the state.

Habitat: Permanent pools and springs, side channels of major rivers, overflow ponds, and stock tanks in drier areas.

Niche: A diurnal and nocturnal aquatic carnivore, feeding on insects and other small invertebrates. Preyed upon by large fish, bullfrogs, snakes, birds, and mammals such as raccoons.

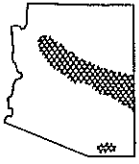
Comments: Its call consists of 1 – 4 short, guttural, chucklelike notes, which sounds like someone rubbing an inflated balloon. This is one of several species of leopard frogs native to Arizona. In each species the males have a unique call used to attract mates or ward off competing males.



Arizona Treefrog: Hyla eximia

Description: A small frog, ¾ – 2" in length. Usually green but may be gold or bronze-colored with spots on the back. A dark stripe runs from the snout, through the eye, and along the side of the body ending just before the hind legs. Disc-like pads on the tips of the toes.

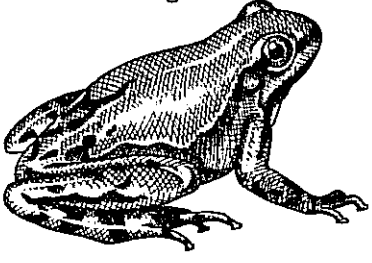
Range: Mountains of central Arizona along the Mogollon Rim. An isolated population is found in the Huachuca Mountains in Cochise County.



Habitat: Oak, pine, and fir forests usually above 5,000 ft.

Niche: Primarily nocturnal, their diet consists entirely of insects.

Comments: Arizona's State amphibian, this treefrog is one of two native species of treefrogs in Arizona. They are known for their climbing abilities. The male's breeding call sounds like a nasal clacking.



Reptiles

Arizona is home to an incredible diversity of reptiles – 49 species of snakes, 43 species of lizards, and 4 species of turtles and tortoises. Due to latitude, a strong tropical influence, and a diverisity of elevations, our state has a tremendous variety of flora and fauna.

As would be expected of a mostly arid state, only a few species of native reptiles are truly aquatic. Most species are adapted for life in dry environments. However, many of our native reptiles have tropical origins and reach the northern limits of their range in Arizona.

Reptiles are ectotherms (ecto = outside, therm = temperature). They do not make and maintain their own body heat. They raise or lower their body temperature through specialized behaviors, such as basking in the sun or seeking shelter. When temperatures are warm, reptiles can maintain amazingly constant body temperatures through these behaviors. It is far less expensive, energy-wise, for ectotherms to survive. A reptile requires only $^{1}/_{10}$ the calories of a mammal of the same size.

Reptiles, for the most part, may be distinguished from amphibians by their dry, often scaly skin, clawed feet, no larval stage, and reproduction by means of eggs laid on land or the bearing of live young.

Western Banded Gecko: *Coleonyx variegatus*

Description: A small, delicate lizard with smooth skin. Adults are about 4 – 5" long. Body may be pale pink to yellowish, with brown bands and blotches on the body and tail. Geckos have large "catlike" eyes with vertical pupils.

Range: Southeastern through central and northwestern parts of the state.

Habitat: From creosote flats and boulder habitats to piñon-juniper woodland. Found under rocks, boards, dried cow dung and dead saguaros.

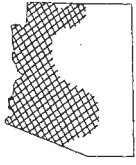
Niche: A nocturnal predator, feeding on soft-bodied insects and spiders. Preyed upon by snakes, owls, and small mammals.

Comments: Western banded geckos are often mistaken for baby Gila monsters. An adult gecko is much smaller than even a young Gila monster and Gila monsters have beaded skin. If handled, geckos squeak and may lose their tail, but as in most native lizards, the tail will grow back.

Chuckwalla: *Sauromalus obesus*

Description: A large heavy-bodied lizard, up to 16" in length, with loose folds of skin on neck and sides. Adult males have a black head and legs, a creamy ivory or orange tail, and a brick-red or black back. Some males may be all black with an orange tail.

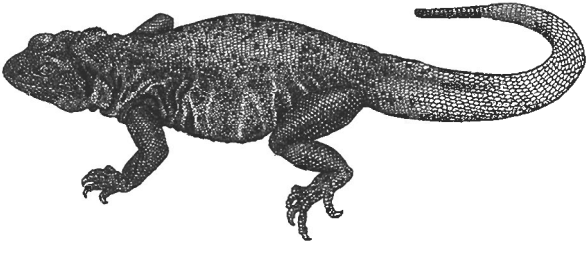
Range: Western ½ of the state.



Habitat: Rocky areas, especially near large boulders.

Niche: A diurnal herbivore that browses on leaves, buds, flowers and fruit. Preyed upon by hawks, owls, coyotes, foxes, snakes and other small predators.

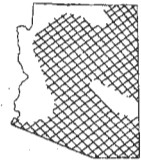
Comments: Chuckwallas seek shelter in rock crevices, wedging themselves in by inflating their bodies. Some Native Americans used chuckwallas as a food source.



Collared Lizard: *Crotaphytus collaris*

Description: A large lizard, up to 15" in length, with a very large head and a black and white collar. Yellowish brown to green, with bluish highlights on the body. Face has dark spots.

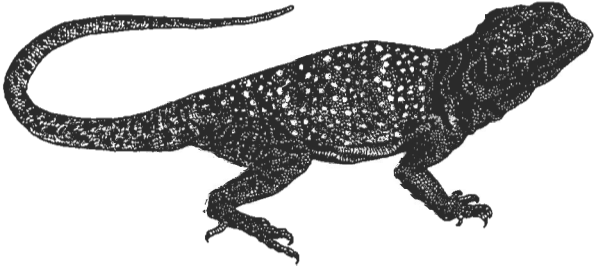
Range: Mostly statewide, except extreme western and northwestern portions, where a related species occurs.



Habitat: Forested, hilly areas and arid areas where rocks are available for use as shelter, lookouts, and basking sites. Often very abundant on rocky plains.

Niche: A diurnal carnivore that feeds on large insects and small lizards.

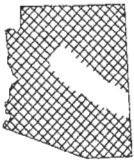
Comments: A very agile and fast moving lizard. Often runs on hind legs. Can give a painful bite if handled.



Desert Spiny Lizard: *Sceloporus magister*

Description: A stocky lizard, up to 10" in length, with very rough, pointed scales on the body and tail. Yellow to brown in color with some crossbanding and a black triangular mark on each shoulder. Males have blue patches on throat and on each side of the belly.

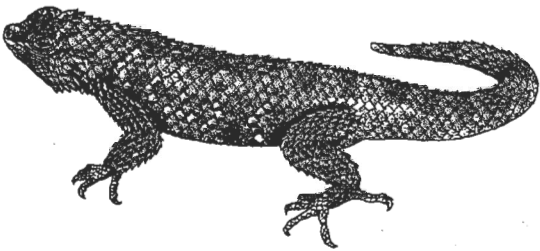
Range: Occurs almost statewide below 5,000 ft., from low deserts to piñon-juniper woodlands.



Habitat: Prefers rocks, shrubs, and trees such as mesquite, cottonwood, and Palo verde.

Niche: A diurnal carnivore that eats insects and small lizards; but also vegetation such as flowers.

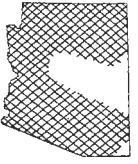
Comments: Commonly seen on buildings, rocks, trees, and fence posts. Often uses pack rat nests for shelter.



Western Whiptail Lizard: *Cnemidophorus tigris*

Description: A slender lizard, up to 12" in length including the very long tail. Yellow to grayish brown in color, often with dark markings. Belly usually white or yellow. Mature males have black throat and chest.

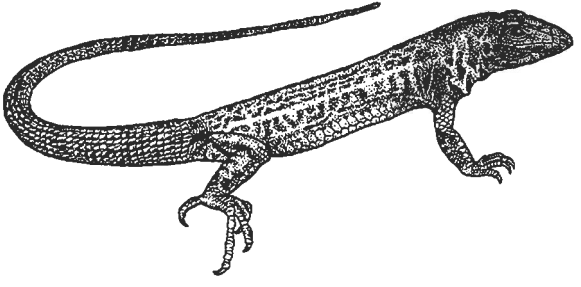
Range: Most of the state, except high mountain areas.



Habitat: Arid and semiarid desert to open woodlands; where vegetation is sparse enough to make running easy.

Niche: A diurnal predator that feeds on termites, spiders, and insects. Preyed upon by birds, snakes, and small mammals.

Comments: A swift runner, this lizard will stalk any small moving object. It digs burrows for safe retreats and in search of underground prey.



Gila Monster: *Heloderma suspectum*

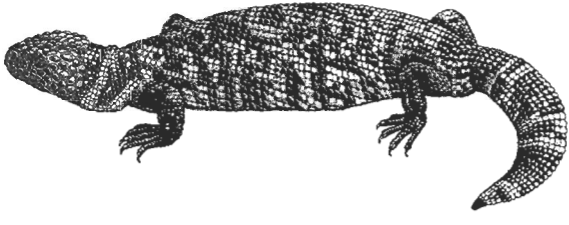
Description: A very large, up to 2 ft. in length, heavy-bodied lizard with a short, fat, tail. Bead-like scales are brightly colored orange, pinkish, or yellow, and black. Face is black.

Range: Low deserts of southeastern through central and northwestern Arizona.

Habitat: Arid and semiarid regions of rocky and sandy soils.

Niche: A diurnal and occasionally nocturnal predator, feeding on small mammals, ground-nesting birds, reptile eggs, and lizards.

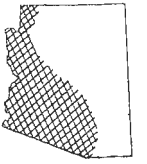
Comments: The only venomous lizard in Arizona. Venom glands, located beneath the skin in the lower jaw, have ducts that carry venom to the edge of grooved venom-conducting teeth. The first venomous reptile to be protected by law in the U.S., they cannot be disturbed or killed.



Desert Iguana: *Dipsosaurus dorsalis*

Description: A large, pale colored lizard, up to 16" in length. Tan to brown with lighter spots or speckles. Very long tail, rounded body, small, round head, with a crest of slightly enlarged scales down middle of back.

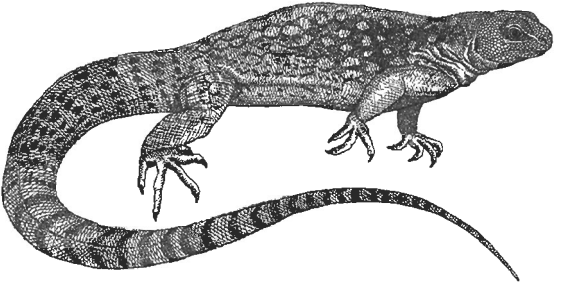
Range: Western through central parts of the state.



Habitat: Arid and semiarid open regions of sand, scattered rocks, and creosote bush.

Niche: A diurnal lizard that can tolerate temperatures up to 115°. Mostly herbivorous, but will also eat insects and carrion.

Comments: This wary lizard will flee to the nearest rodent burrow when in danger. Breeding adults show pink or orange on sides of belly.



Regal Horned Lizard: *Phrynosoma solare*

Description: The largest of the horned lizards, 3 ½ – 6 ½" in length. Easily identified by the 4 large horns at the back of the head, whose bases touch each other. Body is flat with a large light colored area on the back, bordered on each side by a broad, darker band.

Range: Southeastern and central Arizona up to 4,800 ft.

Habitat: Arid and semiarid areas in rocky and gravelly habitat where cactus, creosote, and mesquite are present.

Niche: A diurnal predator, feeding mainly on ants but also spiders and other invertebrates. Preyed upon by birds and small mammals.

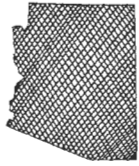
Comments: One of 6 species of horned lizards in Arizona – often called "horny toads". When threatened, this species may spurt blood from a sinus at the inside corner of the eye.

Tree Lizard: *Urosaurus ornatus*

Description: A slender brown, black, tan, or gray lizard, 4 ½ – 6 ¼" in length, with small scales. Long thin tail has a rusty area at the base. Fold of skin on each side of the body. Males gave blue-green throat and belly patches.

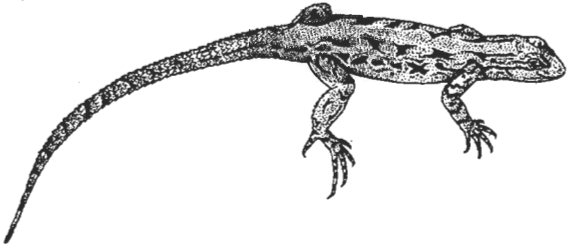
Range: Statewide

Habitat: From desert to lower edge of spruce-fir zone and near water courses. Found frequently on rocks, trees, fence posts, and buildings in arid areas. One of the few native lizards that persists in urban areas.



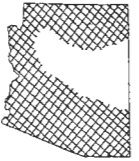
Niche: A diurnal predator on spiders and insects. Most active in the morning and late afternoon.

Comments: A shy lizard that is active year-round and often found in pairs or groups. The most common lizard in urban areas, it is often seen doing "push-ups" on fences and walls.



Side-blotched Lizard: *Uta stansburiana*

Description: A smal, brown lizard with a bluish black spot in the armpit, behind the foreleg. Back pattern may consist of speckles, spots or stripes.

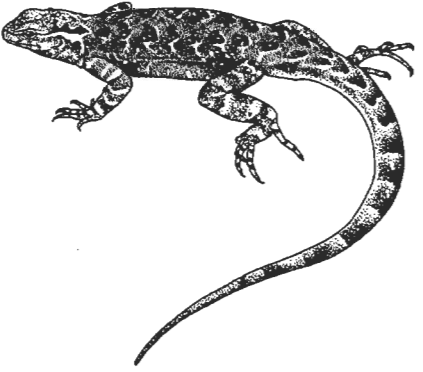


Range: Most of the state except for Mogollon Rim.

Habitat: From rocky, sandy areas to grass and shrub habitats. Often found near washes where low-growing bushes and rocks are present.

Niche: A diurnal, ground-dwelling lizard that eats insects and spiders.

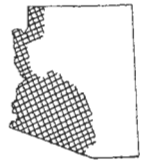
Comments: Active year-round. During the hot summer months, side-blotches are the first lizards out in the morning. Activity ceases by mid-morning, when most lizards are at peak activity.



Desert Tortoise: *Gopherus agassizii*

Description: Carapace is up to 15" in length. The high-domed shell is brownish-yellow, made up of plate-like segments with deep growth rings. Limbs are stocky, tail is short. Adult males have a concave plastron.

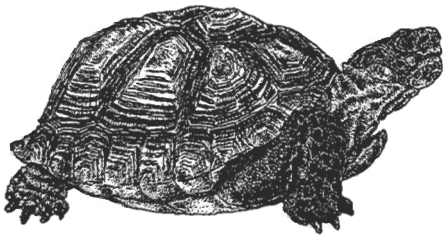
Range: Far western and southwestern portions of state.



Habitat: Arid sandy or gravelly areas with thorn scrub, cacti, and creosote; also canyon bottoms and desert washes.

Niche: An herbivore, feeding on grasses, flowers, and fruit of desert plants.

Comments: Burrows have half-moon shape openings and may be up to 30 ft. long. Young hatch from ping pong ball-shaped eggs and are about the size of a half dollar. Desert tortoises are protected by law and may not be removed from the wild. The Mojave desert tortoise population is endangered.



Western Box Turtle: *Terrapene ornata*

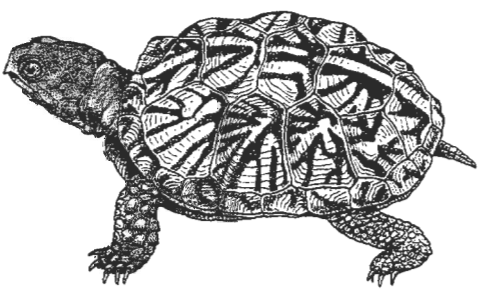
Description: A small land turtle, 4 – 5 ¾" in length. The shell is high and rounded. Usually the carapace is brown or black with yellow radiating lines. The bottom part of the shell (plastron) is hinged and allows the turtle to completely enclose itself.

Range: Southeastern corner of the state.

Habitat: Predominantly desert grasslands, desert brush, and open woodland.

Niche: A diurnal turtle, feeding on carrion, insects, leaves, and tender shoots.

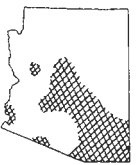
Comments: Sometimes seen along roadways in southeastern Arizona. Becomes more active during rainy periods. Disturbed piles of cow dung may be a "sign" that a box turtle has been there searching for beetles.



Sonoran Mud Turtle: *Kinosternon sonoriense*

Description: Carapace is up to 6 ½" in length, brown, smooth, and elongated with three indistinct lengthwise keels. The head and neck are mottled with light and dark markings.

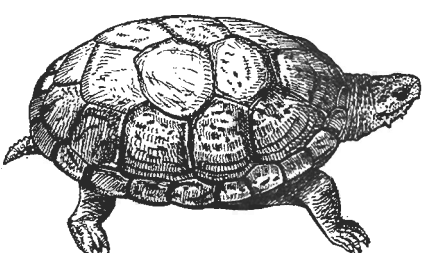
Range: Gila River drainage of central and southeastern parts of the state.



Habitat: Streams, ponds, springs, and creeks in Sonoran upland desert, oak woodlands, pinyon-juniper, ponderosa pine, and Douglas fir.

Niche: A diurnal and nocturnal stream-dwelling turtle that feeds on insects, fish, amphibians, snails, crustaceans, and some plant material.

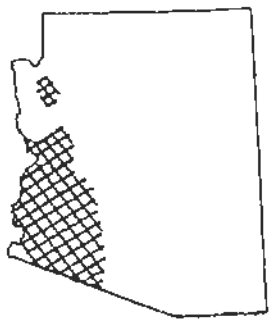
Comments: Sonoran mud turtles give off an odor when handled, giving them uncomplimentary names such as "stinkpot" and "musk turtle".



Rosy Boa: *Lichanura trivirgata*

Description: A heavy-bodied snake, 24 – 44" in length. Beige to grayish above with three broad, brownish or rosy, lengthwise stripes. Creamy-colored below with gray spots. Scales are shiny and smooth. The head is only slightly wider than the neck. Eyes are small with vertical pupils.

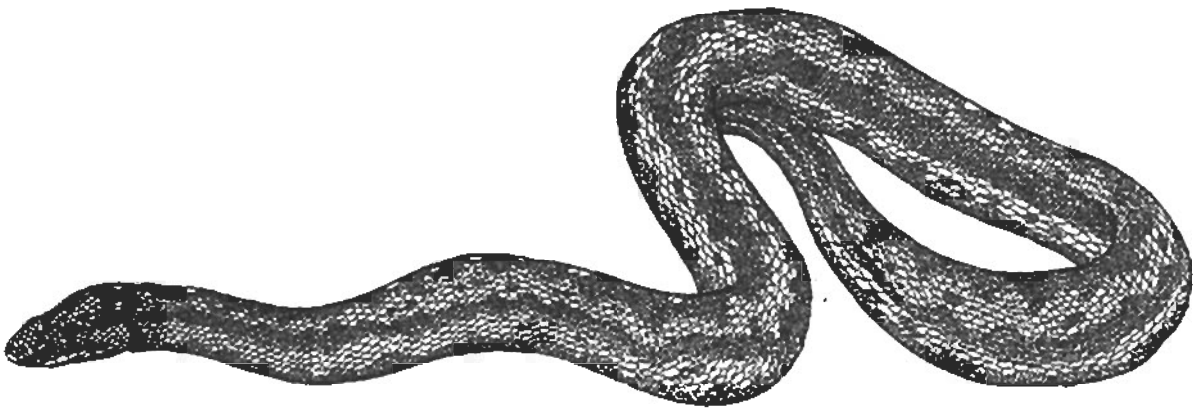
Range: Southwest portion of the state.



Habitat: Desert and rocky shrublands. Does not require a permanent water source, but usually stays near permanent water or intermittent streams.

Niche: A mostly nocturnal predator, feeding on small mammals and birds.

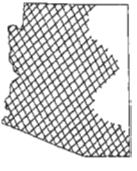
Comments: Rosy boas are good climbers. They kill their prey by constriction and may roll themselves into a ball when threatened.



Common Kingsnake: *Lampropeltis getula*

Description: A medium-size snake, 3 ½ – 4 ft. in length. Pattern variable, but usually strongly marked with alternating rings of black or dark brown and cream or light yellow. The light bands are wider on the belly. Scales are smooth and glossy.

Range: Southern and western ⅔ of the state.



Habitat: Found in a variety of habitats such as deserts, scrub oak, and farmland. Frequents rock piles, downed trees, and areas of dense vegetation.

Niche: A diurnal and nocturnal predator that kills its prey by constriction. Its diet consists of snakes (including rattlesnakes), lizards, frogs, birds, eggs and small mammals. Preyed upon by hawks, owls, and other predators.

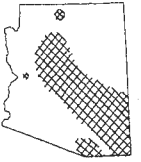
Comments: Will climb trees after its prey. This kingsnake has chemicals in its blood that partially counteract the effects of rattlesnake venom.

Sonoran Mountain Kingsnake:

Lampropeltis pyromelana

Description: Up to 40" in length. A brightly colored snake, marked with red, black, and white or yellow bands. The red and light colored bands are always separated by black. The nose is white and the head is fairly flat.

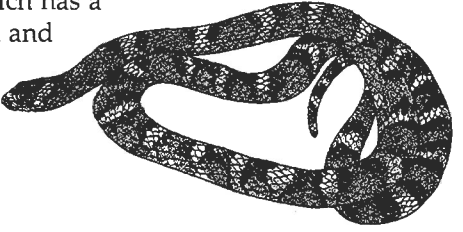
Range: Central and southeastern Arizona.



Habitat: A mountain snake, inhabiting oak woodlands and pine forests. Prefers areas of dense vegetation, rock piles, and old logs.

Niche: A nocturnal and diurnal predator that kills its prey by constriction. It feeds mainly on lizards, but may also eat snakes or small mammals.

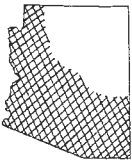
Comments: This beautiful Arizona snake is usually not aggressive, but rather shy. It is sometimes mistaken for the coral snake which has a black nose, and red and black bands that do not touch.



Coachwhip: *Masticophis flagellum*

Description: A long, slender snake ranging in color from red to brown to black, and combinations of all three colors. Commonly grows to over 5 ft. in length and may reach 7 ft. As its name suggests, body appearance is that of a braided whip and it moves very rapidly.

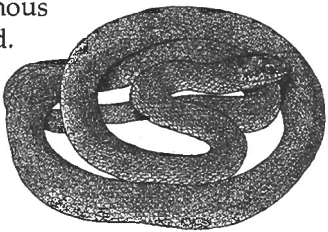
Range: Statewide except northeast 1/4.



Habitat: Varied habitat, from desert to grassland. Prefers open country, brushland, and dense vegetation. Very tolerant of dry, warm environments.

Niche: A diurnal carnivore, even in summertime, feeding on a wide variety of small mammals, birds, snakes, eggs, lizards, and insects. Preyed upon by hawks and other predators.

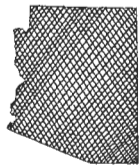
Comments: Known locally as "red racers", coachwhips often climb into trees and bushes. They crawl with great speed and take shelter in rodent burrows if pursued. This is a non-venomous snake that will bite if handled.



Gopher Snake: *Pituophis melanoleucus*

Description: A large snake, commonly 5 – 6 ft. in length, rarely to 7 ft. Yellow or cream colored with brown, black, or reddish-brown blotches on the back. Underneath white to yellowish, sometimes spotted with black. A dark line runs from angle of jaws, across face in front of eyes.

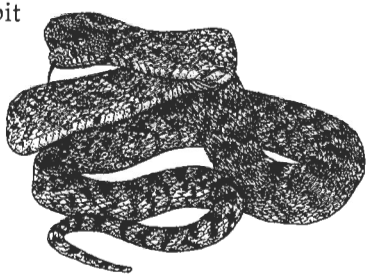
Range: Statewide.



Habitat: Can be found in almost any part of the state, even at elevations above 9,000 ft. Prefers cultivated fields, grass, and brush.

Niche: A nocturnal and diurnal predator that kills its prey by constriction. Its diet consists of rabbits, birds, eggs, small mammals, and lizards.

Comments: A snake that thrives around human habitation. Often mistaken for rattlesnakes because of its size and color, and habit of hissing and vibrating its tail when disturbed.



Ground Snake: Sonora semiannulata

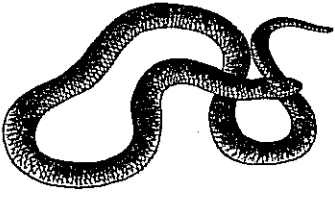
Description: A small striped, crossbanded, or plain colored snake. Reddish, brown, orange, or gray above, lighter on sides. Scales are smooth and shiny. The front of each scale has a dark blotch or bar (sometimes faint), most evident on sides.

Range: Southeastern through northwestern parts of the state.

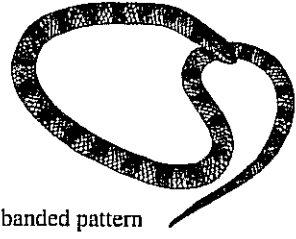
Habitat: Arid and semiarid regions where soil is sandy, gravelly, or rocky. From desert, grassland, and piñon-juniper to oak-pine zone. Almost always found under cover.

Niche: A secretive, nocturnal predator, feeding on insects, spiders, centipedes, and scorpions.

Comments: A common inhabitant of backyards, this snake is most often observed in spring. The shallow grooves on the rear teeth suggest it may be venomous, but it is not dangerous to humans.



plain pattern

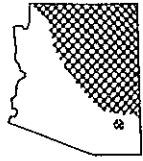


banded pattern

Wandering Garter Snake: Thamnophis elegans

Description: Narrow, light side stripes; sometimes with a stripe on the mid-back. Pale color between stripes is marked with dark spots, or is dark with light specks. Brownish, bluish, or gray below, with reddish blotches.

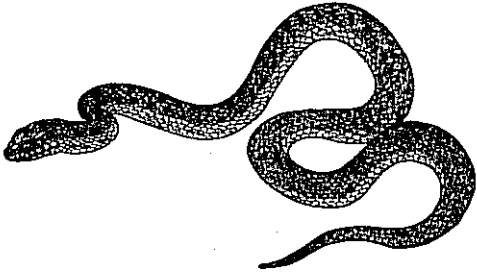
Range: Northeastern ½ of the state.



Habitat: Grassland to forest, mostly in mountains. Common in pine forests along water courses, but occasionally far from water.

Niche: A terrestrial and aquatic nocturnal and diurnal predator of fish, tadpoles, frogs, earthworms, snails, lizards, small mammals, and occasionally insects, birds, and carrion.

Comments: This is the most commonly seen snake near water in the high country of central Arizona.



Coral Snake: Micruroides euryxanthus

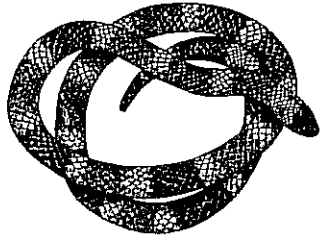
Description: A small snake, up to 24" in length. Brightly colored with alternate bands of black and red, separated by narrow bands of yellow or white. The black and red bands do not touch. Slender, small head is black to well behind the eyes.

Range: Southern ½ of the state.

Habitat: Found from desert to mountain slopes. Prefers palo verde/saguaro desert slopes covered with rocks.

Niche: A diurnal and nocturnal predator that preys on lizards and small snakes, especially blind snakes (genus Leptotyphlops).

Comments: Because of its small size and timid nature, this secretive snake is usually not a threat to humans. It is a member of the cobra family and has a potent venom. Several brightly colored, non-venomous snakes are often mistaken for coral snakes.



Arizona Ridge-nosed Rattlesnake:

Crotalus willardi willardi

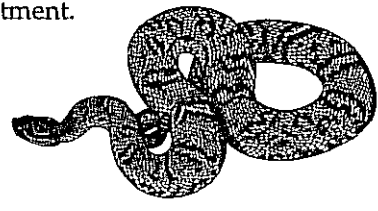
Description: A small snake, 15 – 25" in length, reddish brown to gray above, with cream-colored crossbars edged with dark brown or black: crossbars blend with color on sides. Ridge on the snout, with a vertical white line at the tip. White facial stripes.

Range: Mountains of southeastern part of the state.

Habitat: Cool canyons of oak and pine forests, but also in foothills of piñon-juniper habitat.

Niche: A diurnal predator, preying on lizards, centipedes, and rodents. Most active during summer rains.

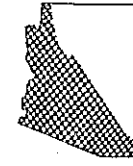
Comments: Arizona's State reptile, this snake has a limited range and is one of four protected species of rattlesnakes in Arizona. It is illegal to possess or kill this snake without a permit from the Arizona Game and Fish Department.



Mojave Rattlesnake: Crotalus scutulatus

Description: A large snake, up to 4 ft. in length, greenish to brownish with a crisp pattern of light-edged darker diamonds down the back. The last few inches of the tail are whitish with narrow black bands. Black bands are narrower than light bands.

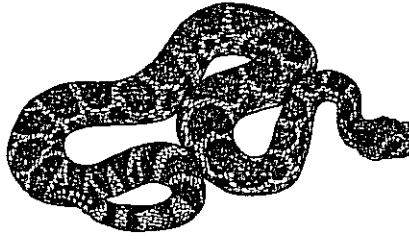
Range: Southeastern through northwestern parts of the state.



Habitat: Sonoran upland, deserts, desert grasslands, and juniper woodland.

Niche: A nocturnal and diurnal predator that feeds primarily on rodents, but will also eat lizards, amphibians, and birds. It is preyed upon by hawks and owls.

Comments: The venom of this snake is very potent, making it one of the most dangerous snakes in North America. Two to eleven young are born live with fully developed fangs and venom, as with all rattlesnakes.



Western Diamondback Rattlesnake:
Crotalus atrox

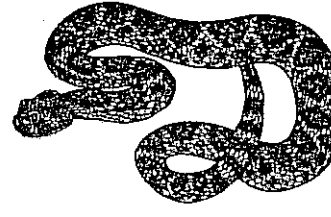
Description: The largest of the western rattlesnakes, reaching 6 ft. in length in Arizona. Has a "salt and pepper" look. Gray, grayish brown, buff, or even pink in color, with darker brownish-colored diamond markings. The tail is black and white banded, with bands of equal width. (The Mojave rattlesnake has narrow black bands and wider light-colored bands).

Range: Southeastern through northwestern parts of the state.

Habitat: Arid and semiarid regions up to 7,000 ft.

Niche: A mostly nocturnal predator, feeding mainly on small mammals.

Comments: Because of its large size, wide distribution, and nervous disposition, it is considered to be one of the most dangerous snakes in the United States. It is responsible for most of the snake bites and therefore deaths. It has live young as do all rattlesnakes, boas, and garter snakes.



Sidewinder: Crotalus cerastes

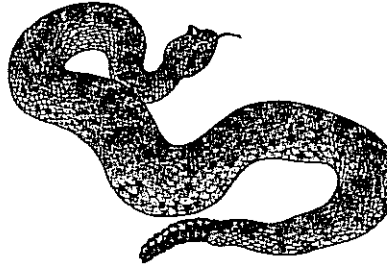
Description: A small, pale rattlesnake which may be tan, gray-pink or cream colored with indefinite blotches of a darker tone down the back. This snake has a "dusty" look. The most noticeable feature is the hornlike structure above each eye.

Range: Southwestern 1/4 of the state. There is a small population of the Mojave desert subspecies in the northwest corner.

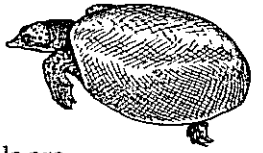
Habitat: Usually found in sandy areas with scattered bushes and barren dunes.

Niche: Mostly nocturnal, feeding on small rodents and lizards. Preyed upon by larger snakes, hawks, and owls.

Comments: Adapted to movement in loose sand. Moves by "sidewinding", leaving "J" shaped marks in the sand. Burrows into sand or seeks shelter in rodent dens during daytime heat.



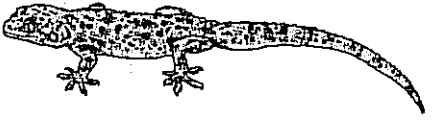
Some Introduced Reptiles and Amphibians



Spiny softshell turtle: This large turtle, up to 30 lbs., was introduced to Arizona's waters in the early 1900's as a food animal. Softshell turtles are native to the Rio Grande River system and eastward. Softshells are found in most of our lower elevation waters.

Bullfrog: This is the largest frog found in the U.S. and was introduced into Arizona as a food animal around the turn of the century. Bullfrogs are voracious predators and compete with native frogs and toads for food and space. They have been documented preying upon many species of native wildlife. The bullfrog's familiar call "Barrrrum" can be heard on most warm evenings at water sources throughout Arizona.

Mediterranean Gecko: This gecko first appeared in Arizona in the early 1970's. As its name implies, it is native to the Mediterranean area. This gecko has filled a niche that was previously unoccupied. Unlike most introductions, it does not appear to compete with native wildlife. Mediterranean geckos are common in low elevation urban areas and can often be found around porch lights.



Vocabulary

amphibian: frogs, toads, and salamanders. Most have an aquatic larval stage and semi-aquatic or terrestrial adult stage.

aquatic: growing or living in or frequenting water.

carapace: the upper shell that covers the back of a turtle; the backbone is connected to the carapace.

carrion: the decaying flesh of a dead animal.

constriction: the act of drawing together or squeezing. A constrictor is a snake that kills its prey by coiling around it and squeezing.

diurnal: active by daylight; the opposite of nocturnal.

habitat: the arrangement of food, water, shelter or cover, and space suitable to animals' needs.

invertebrate: an animal without a backbone or spinal column, such as insects, spiders, and worms.

larva: the early form of an animal that changes structurally when it becomes an adult. The tadpole is the larva of the frog.

niche: the role played by an organism in a biological community: its food preferences, shelter requirements, special behaviors, and active period (e.g., nocturnal or diurnal). What it does for a living – predator, decomposer, etc., and how it performs that function.

nocturnal: active by night; the opposite of diurnal.

plastron: the ventral or underside of a turtle shell.

venomous: having a venom-producing gland and being able to inflict a poisoned wound by biting or stinging.