

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**Animal Abstract**

**Element Code:** ARADE02051

**Data Sensitivity:** Yes

**CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE**

**NAME:** *Crotalus lepidus klauberi*

**COMMON NAME:** Banded Rock Rattlesnake

**SYNONYMS:** None

**FAMILY:** Serpentes: Viperidae

**AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** Gloyd, H.K. 1936. Occ. Pap. Mus. Zool. Univ. Mich. 337:2.

**TYPE LOCALITY:** Carr Canyon, Huachuca Mountains, Cochise County, AZ.

**TYPE SPECIMEN:** UMMZ 79895, L.H. Clark, 10 August 1930.

**TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS:** Approximately 30 species in the genus *Crotalus*. Of the four subspecies of *Crotalus lepidus*, only *C. l. klauberi* occurs in Arizona (Lowe et al. 1986).

**DESCRIPTION:** This is small rattlesnake with a total length of about 38-84 cm (15-33 in). Males typically have between 152 and 172 ventrals and 20 to 29 caudals, while females have between 155 to 170 ventrals and between 16 to 24 caudals. Dorsal scales range from 21 to 25 with a mean of 23. Scale rows at midbody are strongly keeled dorsally (Gloyd 1936). Scalation on the head is highly modified with a distinct vertically divided upper preocular, and a small eye with an elliptical pupil. Ground color is generally pale gray to bluish or greenish gray, and the body is vividly marked by about 14-24 black or dark brown jagged cross bands. Spaces between bands are moderately dark-spotted. The tail is yellowish brown to salmon (Stebbins 1985; Gloyd 1936; Gloyd 1940).

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** The upper preocular is divided vertically, a feature common in no other species of the genus (Gloyd 1936). *C. l. klauberi* is differentiated by the absence of a postocular stripe and a dorsal pattern strongly contrasting with the ground color and equally distinct throughout the snakes length. Intermediate blotches are less evident, as well as a lighter ventrum and merged occipital spots that are usually paired in *C. l. lepidus* (Degenhardt et al. 1996).

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** Color drawing (Stebbins 1985: plate 45)  
Color photo (Behler and King 1979: plates 636, 640)  
Color photo (Lowe et al. 1986: page 70)  
Color photo (Campbell and Lamar 1989: figures 358-363)  
Color photo (Ernst 1992: plate 34)  
Color photo (Degenhardt et al. 1996: plate 118B)

**TOTAL RANGE:** *C. lepidus* ranges from southeastern Arizona east through New Mexico to west Texas, then south to Jalisco and San Luis Potosi, Mexico (Lowe et al. 1986). *C. l. klauberi* occurs from southeastern Arizona, west-central New Mexico and west Texas southward into Mexico to Jalisco (Armstrong and Murphy 1979; Klauber 1972).

**RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA:** Documented sightings have been reported from the Canelo Hills and the Chiricahua, Dos Cabezas, Dragoon, Huachuca, Santa Rita, and Whetstone mountains (Johnson and Mills 1982). Records also exist for the Peloncillo Mountains (A.T. Holycross, pers. comm. 2001).

## **SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS**

**BIOLOGY:** *Crotalus lepidus klauberi* are active throughout the year, but have low surface activity when it is hot and dry (McCrystal et al. 1996). Most activity occurs during morning and evening hours, although they may become nocturnal during warm summer months (Degenhardt et al. 1986). They are often active in light rains or during periods of high humidity and are frequently observed basking on exposed rock ledges after monsoons (Lowe et al. 1986). This species, along with the black-tailed rattlesnake, is one of the most likely rattlesnakes to find crossing roads in the "Mexican Mountains" of southeastern Arizona (Lowe et al. 1986).

**REPRODUCTION:** In captive population studies, reproduction began in early June and ended in August. The initiation of courtship and breeding appears to be dependent upon female shed cycles. Neonates were observed within 312 and 362 days after the first observed mating (Swinford 1989). Neonates were not offered food until their first shed, which occurred 10 to 14 days after birth. Brood sizes range from 2-8 (average 4) and newborns are between 15 to 20 cm (6-8 in) in length. It is thought that reproductive timing may be synchronized with increased mountain spiny lizard abundance (Lowe et al. 1986).

**FOOD HABITS:** Principal food items include lizards (especially mountain spiny, *Sceloporus jarrovi*), small snakes, and rodents (Lowe et al. 1986). Young *C. l. klauberi* have bright yellow tail tips, which may serve as a lure to attract lizards (Kauffeld 1943; Starrett and Holycross 2000).

**HABITAT:** In Arizona, the Banded Rock Rattlesnake primarily occurs in rocky areas of evergreen woodland, common in rock slides on south-facing slopes, occurs from upper desert-grassland to lower ponderosa pine forest. It is often found in the vicinity of permanent or intermittent streams (Lowe et al. 1986).

**ELEVATION:** In Arizona, *C. l. klauberi* occurs at elevations between 4,000 and 8,200 ft (1219 - 2499 m) (AGFD Heritage Data Management System, unpubl. data; Lowe et al. 1986).

**PLANT COMMUNITY:** *C. l. klauberi* is associated with upper desert grassland, ponderosa pine forest, evergreen oak, and pine-oak woodlands or forest (Lowe et al. 1986).

**POPULATION TRENDS:** Quantitative data are lacking. Numbers appear to have decreased in well known localities in the Huachuca Mountains. However, they are still quite common in Cave Creek, Chiricahua Mountains.

## **SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

**ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:** None  
**STATE STATUS:** 1A (AGFD SWAP 2012)  
**OTHER STATUS:** Determined Subject to Special Protection  
(Secretaria de Medio Ambiente 2000, 2010)  
[Determined Subject to Special Protection,  
Secretaria de Desarrollo Social 1994]

**MANAGEMENT FACTORS:** An active pet trade and poaching is a concern for this species along with local habitat disturbance, including woodcutting, road development, and mining (McCrystal et al. 1996).

**PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:** Banded rock rattlesnakes may not be collected from the wild in Arizona (Arizona Game and Fish Commission Order 43). It is considered a sensitive species by the Bureau of Reclamation.

**SUGGESTED PROJECTS:** Distribution, habitat, population and life history studies are needed.

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** A significant portion of the Arizona range is managed by USFS - Coronado National Forest, but the species also occurs on USDI - Bureau of Land Management lands within the Tucson Field Office and the DOD - Huachuca Military Reservation. The species occurs on the Ramsey Canyon and perhaps Canelo Hills preserves (The Nature Conservancy). The NPS - Chiricahua National Monument contains populations that are protected from collecting. The species also occurs on other private lands.

## **SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION**

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

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