

Keep Texas Wild

S-S-S-SNAKES ALIVE!

Without them in the world,
we'd be in big trouble.



»SLIM AND SLITHERY

Hey, wait a minute — don't hurt that snake! Sure, a few kinds are deadly, but most are harmless. In Texas, we have 76 species of snakes, the largest number found in any U.S. state. That's really good news. Why? Because snakes eat mice, rats and other critters that can spread diseases. Like turtles and lizards, snakes are cold-blooded reptiles, which means their body temperature changes depending on their surroundings. Scientists who study snakes are called herpetologists. If you learn about snakes, too, then you'll be less afraid of these beneficial animals.

Rough green snake

PHOTO © BILL DRAKER/ROLFNP.COM

Anatomy of a Snake

Westerm diamondback rattlesnake

BRILLE:

Clear, protective scales that cover eyes (also called spectacles)

SCALES:

Snake's dry, protective covering

PIT:

Special organs between eyes and nostrils on certain snakes that detect heat

FANGS:

Sharp, teeth-like points used by venomous snakes to inject venom into prey.

FORKED TONGUE:

Used to smell, not taste.

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» Did You Know?



• Small snakes can live up to 12 years. Large kinds can survive 40 or more years!

• Have you ever found a snake skin? That's how snakes grow — by shedding their old skin.

• Because snakes burn up little energy, they don't need much food. Some eat once a week while others dine only a couple of times a year!

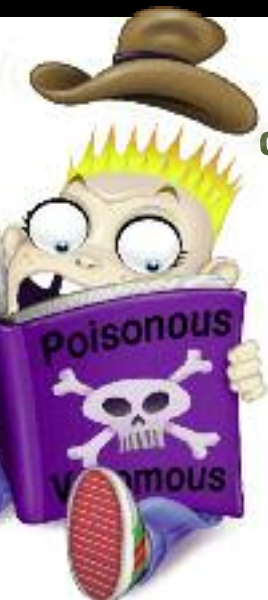
• When they do eat, snakes swallow their food (like a mouse or frog) whole.

• Snake Menu: slugs, worms, fish, birds, mice, eggs, other snakes.



• Snakes brumate (like hibernation) in the winter and come out of their dens in the spring.

ILLUSTRATIONS © FIAN ARROYO



» Venomous or poisonous?

An animal that can bite or sting and inject a harmful toxin (venom) is "venomous." An animal or plant that would make you sick if you ate it is "poisonous." Example: Rattlesnakes are venomous. Some mushrooms are poisonous.

» FRIEND OR FIEND?

"Red and yellow, kill a fellow.
Red and black, friend to Jack."

CORAL SNAKE

VERSUS

MILK SNAKE



RATTLESNAKE

VERSUS

RAT SNAKE



COPPERHEAD

VERSUS

HOGNOSE



» Common Non-Venomous Snakes





Spike's Activity Page



>> WILD ART

WHY DO SNAKES COIL UP? Curling up helps a snake stay warm or moist. Some snakes coil up before they strike at prey. Think of a spring. If you hold it down, then let go, what happens? BOING! A snake can strike with more force! Make your own coiled snake from a paper plate. First draw a spiral (like the picture) on a plate. Using markers or crayons, color your snake. Cut the plate along the spiral line. Glue on a forked tongue and googly eyes if you like. Then attach a piece of string or yarn to the head and hang it up!

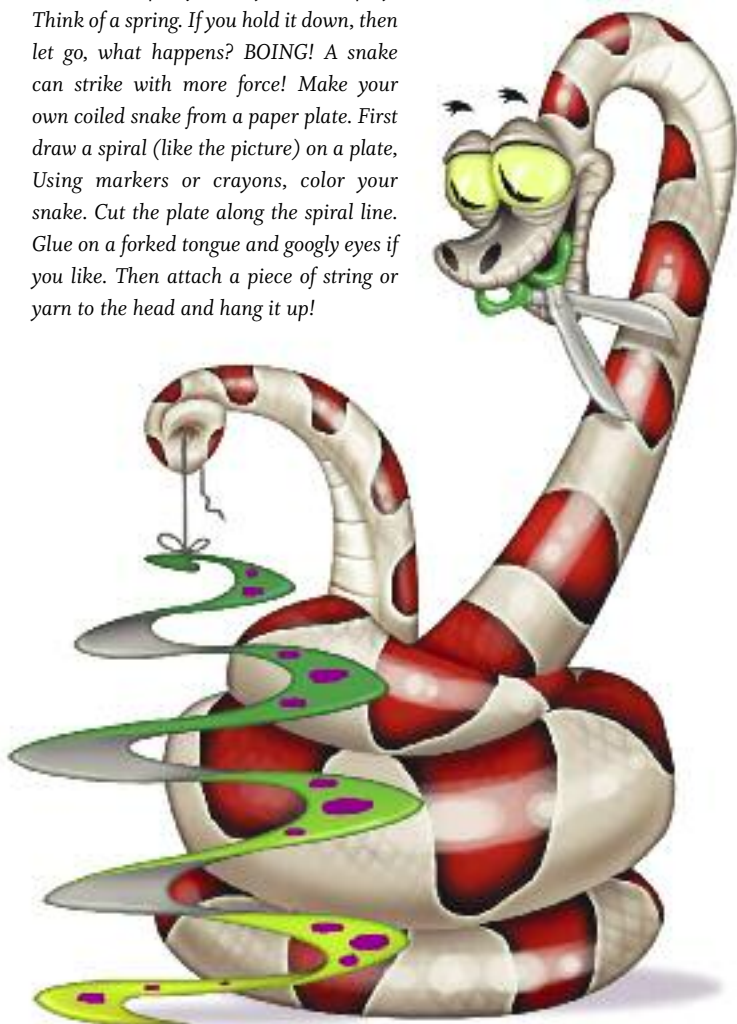


ILLUSTRATION © FIAN ARROVO

Poisonous or venomous?

>> WILD SCIENCE

Circle your answer.

Black widow



- **VENOMOUS**
- **POISONOUS**

Oleander



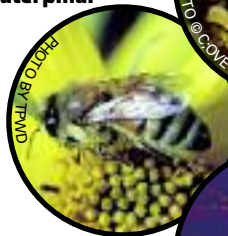
- **VENOMOUS**
- **POISONOUS**

Puss caterpillar



- **VENOMOUS**
- **POISONOUS**

Bee



- **VENOMOUS**
- **POISONOUS**

Wheel bug



- **VENOMOUS**
- **POISONOUS**

Mistletoe



- **VENOMOUS**
- **POISONOUS**

Jellyfish



- **VENOMOUS**
- **POISONOUS**

Poinsettia



- **VENOMOUS**
- **POISONOUS**

Answers below.

>> KEEPING IT WILD

SCIENTISTS FEAR THAT WE HUMANS could kill off snakes completely. Why? The more new homes and roads we build, the fewer habitats there are for them. Many people kill snakes out of fear and ignorance. What can you do to help snakes? Learn about one you might find in your yard and tell your friends (especially the ones who don't like snakes) why that snake's so cool. For instance, rough green snakes — which do not bite — mostly eat caterpillars, spiders, grasshoppers and crickets. Plus, they're really cute, don't you think?

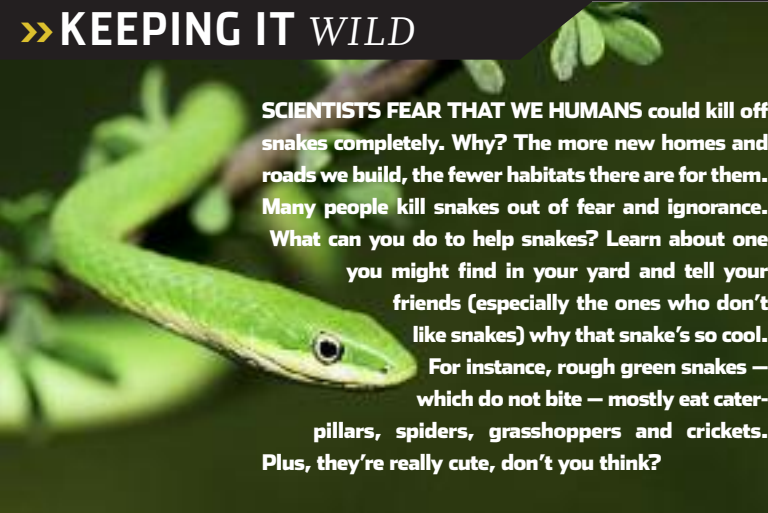


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NEXT MONTH: Back to School

TEACHER RESOURCE

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Black widow = venomous
Oleander = poisonous
Puss caterpillar = venomous
Bee = venomous
Wheel bug = venomous
Mistletoe = poisonous
Jellyfish = venomous
Poinsettia = poisonous