

# Snakes



Just five of the twenty-eight Colorado snake species are most often encountered in the City and County of Broomfield—bullsnakes; eastern yellow-bellied racers; western terrestrial and plains garter snakes; and venomous western rattlesnakes. Snakes act as a natural pest control and are very beneficial to have around.

## Habitat:

Snakes are poikilothermic (ecothermic), which means their internal temperature fluctuates with that of their environment. On cool days, they warm their bodies in the sunshine; while in the hot summertime, they may seek cool, dark areas sometimes under a house or shed, particularly if inhabited by rodents or insects. During colder months (October through March in our area), snakes hibernate in places where they can escape freezing—crevices, mammal burrows, rock or woodpiles, or building foundations.

## Diet:

The majority of snakes eat rodents, although some prey on insects, other reptiles, frogs, birds, nestlings, eggs, worms, fish and aquatic animals.

## Behavior:

Snakes use their tongues to sense their environment and locate prey. As a snake's forked tongue flicks out, the ends spread wide, then move quickly back to deliver chemicals to two organs on the roof of its mouth. Rattlesnakes have facial pits that can detect infrared heat given off by their rodent prey.

## Nesting:

In summer, bullsnakes and racers lay eggs in protected places, leaving them to incubate on their own. Garter snakes and rattlesnakes retain their eggs inside their bodies, where they grow and hatch internally.

## Possible Conflicts:

Snakes may become a problem when they come into a house, barn, or shed through cracks in walls or foundations, open or broken basement windows, or torn screens. This can happen in summer heat, when they seek cool, damp places. But, it most often happens in the fall, as they search for sheltered places for hibernation.

## What to Do:

If bitten by a venomous snake, remain calm and seek immediate medical attention.

Harmless snakes can be removed by sweeping into a bucket with a broom and releasing them outside. However, removal of rattlesnakes requires the services of a professional.

Eliminate cool, damp places where they hide by removing leaf debris and branches, trimming up bushes that are close to the foundation, and sealing off woodpiles.

Control insect and rodent populations that may attract snakes.

Seal all openings into basements and crawl spaces with wire mesh, including dryer, furnace, or sump pump vents.

Construct a snakeproof fence around the backyard or play area. Use 36-inch high galvanized hardware cloth with a 1/4-inch mesh and bury it 6 inches deep, slanted outward at a 30-degree angle. Make certain the gate fits tightly and swings into the play area. Keep all vegetation away from the fence to prevent snakes from climbing over it. Please also make sure to check local zoning and HOA rules to make sure the fence complies.

## For More Information:

Broomfield Wildlife Masters, 303-464-5554

## Wildlife Observation:

**Look** for wildlife. Remember to watch from a distance and don't get too close.

**Listen** for wildlife. Even if you can't see wildlife, you may hear them.

**Learn** about wildlife. Talk to a wildlife master or naturalist, borrow a book about wildlife.

## Love and Respect the Outdoors!

The more we know about wildlife, the less likely we are to harm or fear wildlife.



City and County of Broomfield  
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