

Gopher Snake

(*Pituophis melanoleucus affinis*)

Habitat and Distribution: Gopher snakes are one of the most widespread snakes in North America. They are found coast-to-coast, as far north as southern Canada, and as far south as Guatemala. They inhabit deserts, prairies, woodlands, brush lands, coniferous forests and cultivated lands.

Size: Up to 9 feet in length (however 4 feet is more common)

Wild Diet: Small mammals, birds, rabbits, eggs, and lizards.

Predators: Raptors

Life Span: 10-20 years (captive life span)

Reproduction: Courtship may include a highly ritualized male combat. Breeding occurs in the spring. They are oviparous (egg layers) and may lay 12-24 eggs per clutch in a burrow 16 inches deep. Eggs are laid in summer. They incubate the eggs for over two months. At hatching the young are 8-12" in length.

Behavior: Chiefly diurnal, except in hot weather. They will hibernate. They burrow underground for shelter or take over a mammal or tortoise burrow. They kill their prey by constriction. They are good climbers and will actively search for prey in burrows, dens and rocks. When alarmed, gopher snakes will often coil into a S-shape, flatten their head, hiss loudly and rapidly vibrate their tail on the ground mimicking the warning of a similar-looking rattlesnake. This behavior, along with their diamond markings often causes people to mistake them for rattlesnakes.

Conservation Connection: Secure

Interesting Facts: Also called the pine snake and the bull snake.



www.pdza.org

