



## Forest Service

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# News Release

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## SUMMER RATTLESNAKE AWARENESS

SALT LAKE CITY, June 22, 2016– Spending summer months in the great outdoors enjoying camping, hiking, mountain biking, fishing and a variety of other recreational activities often means dealing with rattlesnakes.

Understanding a little about rattlesnakes is an important first step. Rattlesnakes are most active during spring and fall. Evening, night, or morning hours are favored activity periods; mid-day is generally shunned. These snakes retreat underground to avoid temperature extremes. Like other reptiles, rattlesnakes are “cold-blooded” relying essentially on outside heat sources rather than an internal metabolism to maintain their body temperature. They typically function most effectively at temperatures between about 70 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit. During your trip, be sure to keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Be careful where you put your hands or feet and where you sit. Most snakes are inactive animals that depend upon concealment for protection. A rattlesnake in its natural habitat is almost impossible to see, when motionless and silent.
- Do not depend on a rattlesnake to rattle before it strikes. Most rattlesnakes will not rattle unless they are frightened or endangered.
- Don't jump or step over logs, rocks, or plant material, walk around these obstacles. Be careful in the outdoors when turning over logs, rocks, or other large objects, a snake may be laying underneath resting or looking for food.
- When hiking, watch where you step, stay on paths or in clearings if possible. Avoid tall grassy areas with heavy underbrush. Do not put your hands or feet into places where you cannot see. Look closely at the ground before crossing over or under fences.
- If you come across a snake, maintain a safe distance. Stay at least a body length away from the snake. A snake can normally strike 1/2 their body length, but this could be further if they are facing downhill. Snakes normally aren't aggressive, but be prepared to retreat if a snake comes toward you; it may only be seeking escape cover.
- Wear suitable clothing and footwear when outdoors. Leather boots provide protection for the feet and ankles; low cut shoes or sandals should not be worn in rattlesnake country, especially at night. Rattlesnakes fangs can penetrate through clothing, loose-fitting is better than close binding styles.

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**How do I know it's a Great Basin rattlesnake?**

- Light tan, yellowish or light gray with dark blotches on back.
- Thick heavy body with flattened, triangular shaped head
- Vertical pupils, heat sensory pits on face
- Rattles at tip of tails (warning rattle a hiss or buzz)



Can you see the snake in this photo taken 6/14/16 Logan Canyon Scenic Byway



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