

Opossums

The opossum is the only marsupial native to North America. It was introduced into California in San Jose during the 1920s as a game animal, and has dispersed throughout the state.

Opossums are active at night, and are known to “play dead” when startled or confronted. They generally are not aggressive or destructive, but may try to bluff their attacker by hissing, salivating and opening their mouths wide to show their 50 teeth. Opossums are less likely to linger if garbage cans are well sealed and pet food is not left out.



Snakes



Photo by CDFW

The Bay Area is home to many different species of snakes, including the gopher snake, king snake and rattlesnake. The only potentially dangerous venomous snake in the Bay Area is the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake.

Although the Night Snake and Ring-necked snake with rear fangs are mildly poisonous, they are generally not harmful to humans due to their size and demeanor.

Gopher snakes are more common than rattlesnakes in the Bay Area and are often mistaken for rattlesnakes. A gopher snake has a pointed tail. A rattlesnake will have rattles on its tail, or if it is young, it may have a rounded tail with a button, but will never have a pointed tail.

Rattlesnakes are potentially dangerous to humans and pets. Any rattlesnake bite should be treated as a medical emergency that requires immediate care for humans or veterinary care for pets. The bite victim should be immobilized, remain calm and be transported to a hospital. Vaccinations are available for pets.

Snakes are beneficial because they eat many animals we consider to be pests, such as mice, rats and ground squirrels. They should not be killed.

To make your yard less attractive to snakes, clear or thin dense brush and weeds from around your house to reduce rodents. In particular, discouraging ground squirrels will also reduce the attractiveness of an area to rattlesnakes.

Fencing may keep most snakes out of yards. Use small-mesh wire fence that extends 18 inches into the ground and 3 feet above ground. Do not use plastic mesh because snakes can become entangled.