

# Reptiles

A range of snakes and lizards have been observed in the preserve. Some are quite common and seasonally very visible. Treat all snakes with caution, but know that even the **rattlesnakes are NOT aggressive**. They will not attempt to chase you. They will however defend themselves if you get too close. If you come across a snake, simply **observe from a distance** (they are beautiful!), and wait for the snake to move well off the trail before proceeding.

## *In this guidebook:*

- Desert Spiny Lizard (Page 20)
- Zebra-tailed Lizard (Page 21)
- Western Whiptail (Page 22)
- Common Side-blotched Lizard (Page 23)
- Regal Horned Lizard (Page 24)
- Western Banded Gecko (Page 25)
- Ornate Tree Lizard (Page 26)
- Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake (Pages 27-28)
- Long-nosed Snake (Pages 29-30)
- California King Snake (Page 31)
- Gopher Snake (Page 32)
- Saddled Leafnose Snake (Page 33)
- Desert Nightsnake (Page 33)
- Species not pictured (Page 34)



**Common name:** Desert Spiny Lizard

**Scientific name:** *Sceloporus magister*

**Sightings:** Abundant (seasonal - warm months)

**Notes:** If you spot a large, colorful lizard in the preserve it is most likely one of these. They are very common and can get quite large. Their coloration varies a bit depending on season, temperature, and sex.

**Common name:** Zebra-tailed Lizard

**Scientific name:** *Callisaurus draconoides*

**Sightings:** Abundant (seasonal - warm months)

**Notes:** These lizards can be found sunning themselves on the paths all over the preserve. Look for their black and white striped tails.



**Common name:** Western Whiptail

**Scientific name:** *Aspidozelis tigris*

**Sightings:** Abundant (seasonal - warm months)

**Notes:** These lizards are fast and rarely hold still. They are typically seen as they rapidly seek cover whenever a person enters their vicinity.

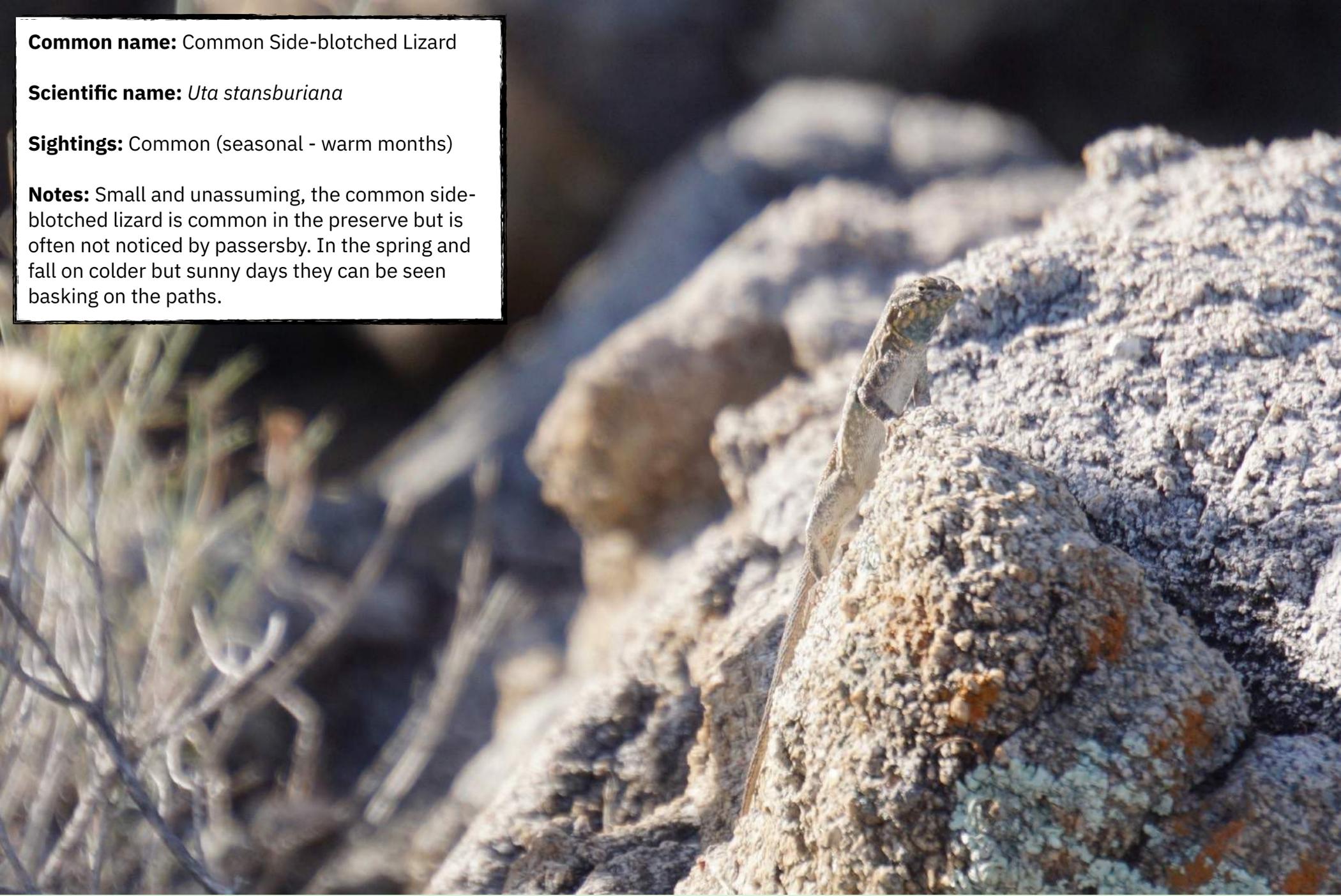


**Common name:** Common Side-blotched Lizard

**Scientific name:** *Uta stansburiana*

**Sightings:** Common (seasonal - warm months)

**Notes:** Small and unassuming, the common side-blotched lizard is common in the preserve but is often not noticed by passersby. In the spring and fall on colder but sunny days they can be seen basking on the paths.





**Common name:** Regal Horned Lizard

**Scientific name:** *Phrynosoma solare*

**Sightings:** Common (seasonal - warm months)

**Notes:** While common, their camouflage makes them hard to see unless they happen to be basking on the path. Look for them around sunrise or sunset on warm days.

**Common name:** Western Banded Gecko

**Scientific name:** *Coleonyx variegatus*

**Sightings:** Occasional (seasonal - warm months at night)

**Notes:** Arizona's only native gecko, look for these along the paths after sundown on warm evenings. They are shy and will typically scurry away quickly.



**Common name:** Ornate Tree Lizard

**Scientific name:** *Urosaurus ornatus*

**Sightings:** Uncommon (but abundant around homes)

**Notes:** Often mistaken for geckoes, these lizards are ubiquitous on the walls and fences of homes around the preserve. They can also be found within the preserve, especially around manmade structures.





**Common name:** Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake

**Scientific name:** *Crotalus atrox*

**Sightings:** Common (seasonal - warm months)

**Notes:** Venomous. Likely the most abundant snake in the preserve. Certainly the most often seen. They are NOT aggressive. Maintain a good distance from them and heed their warnings (rattling, hissing, and defensive posturing). They are most often seen on warm spring and fall days, and humid summer nights. Look for their black and white-striped tails, diamond-shaped head, and namesake pattern on their backs. See the following page for additional photos to assist in identifying this beautiful but potentially dangerous snake.





**Common name:** Long-nosed Snake

**Scientific name:** *Rhinocheilus lecontei*

**Sightings:** Common (seasonal - warm months)

**Notes:** Non-venomous. Long-nosed snakes are the second most commonly seen serpent in the preserve, after Western diamond-backed rattlesnakes. Their patterns are highly variable with some showing more red like the snake pictured on the next page, and others with less red like this one. The snakes with less red can be confused with king snakes, which are typically larger and have more of an angled pattern (see page 31).



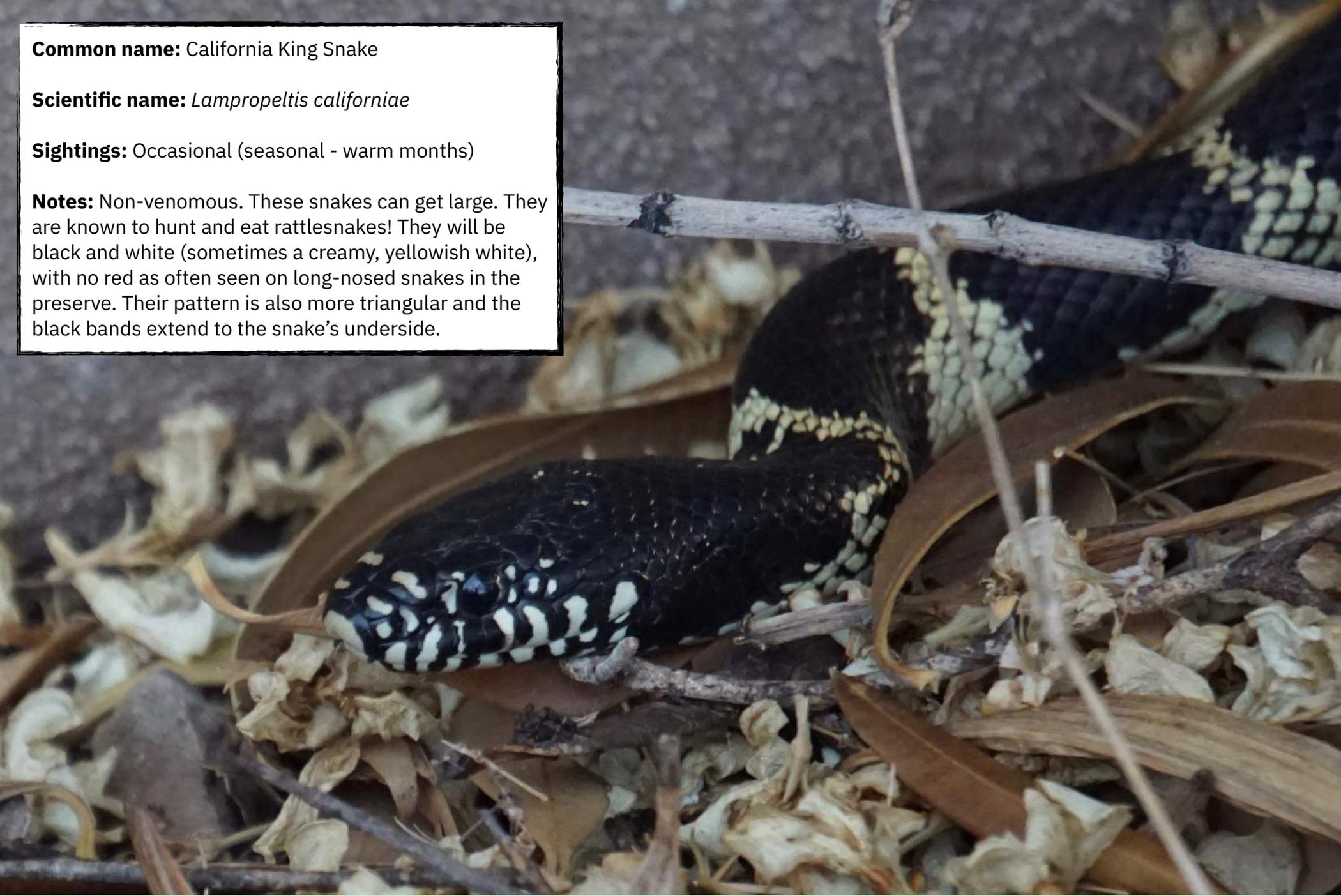
This **long-nosed snake** exhibits more red in its pattern. Given the similarities of their colors, individuals like this one can be confused with the much smaller coral snake. However, long-nosed snakes are typically much bigger, and their banding does not extend all the way around the snake in clean bands as it would on a coral snake.

**Common name:** California King Snake

**Scientific name:** *Lampropeltis californiae*

**Sightings:** Occasional (seasonal - warm months)

**Notes:** Non-venomous. These snakes can get large. They are known to hunt and eat rattlesnakes! They will be black and white (sometimes a creamy, yellowish white), with no red as often seen on long-nosed snakes in the preserve. Their pattern is also more triangular and the black bands extend to the snake's underside.





**Common name:** Gopher Snake

**Scientific name:** *Pituophis catenifer*

**Sightings:** Occasional (seasonal - warm months)

**Notes:** Non-venomous. Their pattern can be mistaken for that of a rattlesnake at first glance, but note the lack of rattles, the lack of black and white stripes at the tail, and shape of the head. Rattlesnakes have much much angular heads, in a triangular shape. Gopher snakes have round pupils, and rattlesnakes have thin, vertically oriented oval pupils.



**Common name:** Desert Nightsnake

**Scientific name:** *Hypsiglena chlorophaea*

**Sightings:** Uncommon (seasonal - warm months at night)

**Notes:** Mildly venomous but not considered dangerous. These are small and secretive snakes, active primarily on warm nights. While technically venomous, their venom is mild, they rarely bite, and they lack typical fangs.



**Common name:** Saddled Leafnose Snake

**Scientific name:** *Phyllorhynchus browni*

**Sightings:** Uncommon (seasonal - warm months at night)

**Notes:** Small, secretive, and nonvenomous. They are named for a leaf-like scale covering the nose, which may be used for digging.



## *Not Pictured*

Coachwhip snakes have been observed in the preserve, but not nearly as often as many of the other snakes described here. Coachwhips are fast and rarely hold still, which may explain the dearth of observations. That is certainly why the author lacks suitable photos! They range from all black to all brown to a mottled pink color. Desert tortoises have also been observed in the preserve but they are extremely rare here (possibly no longer in the preserve) with no recent sightings.