

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.

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A photograph of a Desert Spiny Lizard (Sceloporus magister) resting on a light-colored, textured rock. The lizard is facing right, with its head slightly raised. Its body is covered in small, overlapping scales. The back and sides are a mix of brown, tan, and black, with some yellowish-orange spots. The tail is long and tapers, with a greenish-brown color. The legs are short and thick, with a similar pattern to the body. The background is out of focus, showing some dry grass and a rocky surface.

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: *Aspidooscelis 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.

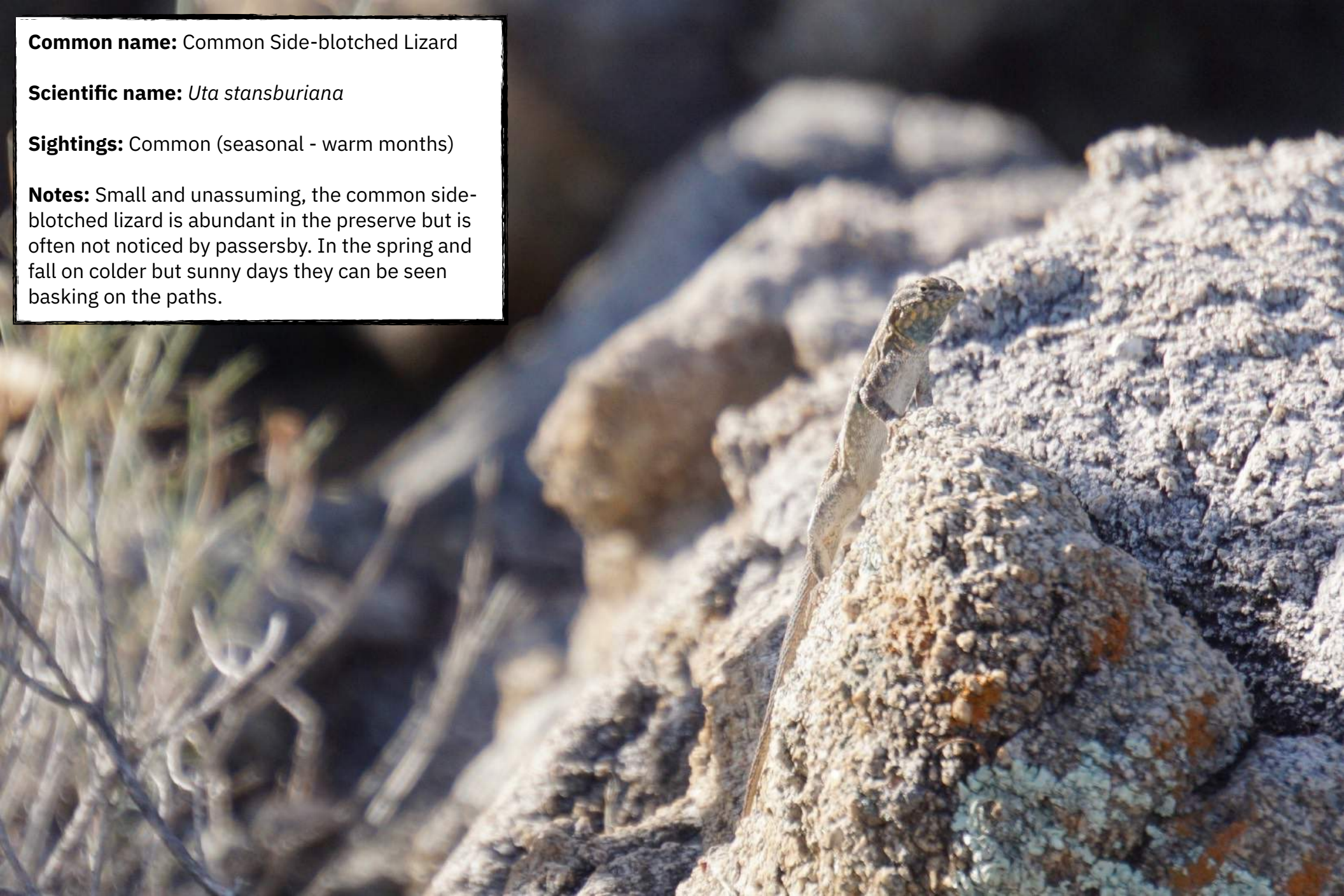


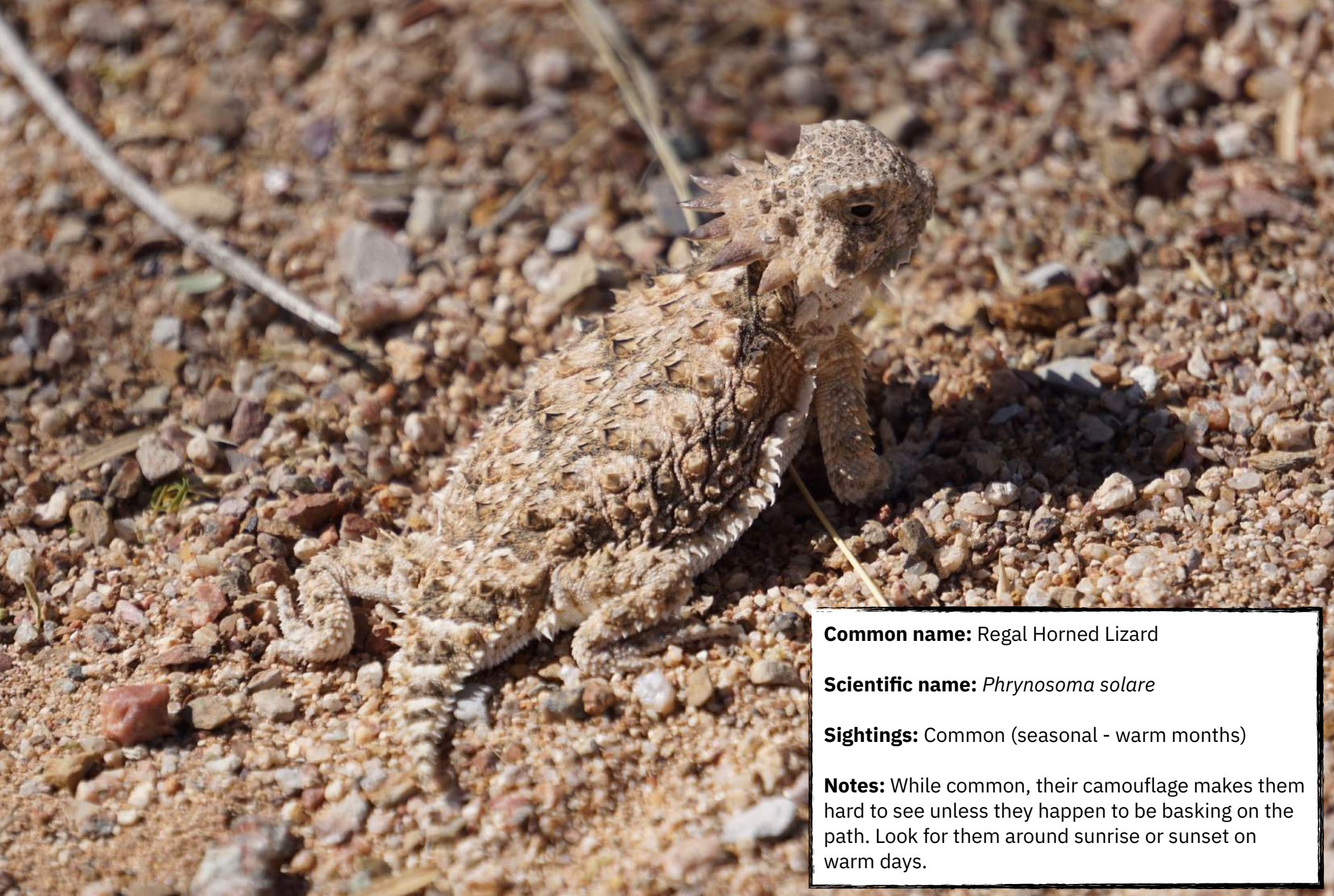
Common name: Common Side-blotched Lizard

Scientific name: *Uta stansburiana*

Sightings: Common (seasonal - warm months)

Notes: Small and unassuming, the common side-blotched lizard is abundant 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 body 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 the shape of the head. Rattlesnakes have much more 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 reclusive 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.