Is a Good Snake a Dead Snake????

Absolutely NOT!!!!

Snakes do not deserve the reputation they have gained over the years. People have come to fear snakes based on myths and untruths they have heard over the years. I hope to give you some information on snakes and why we need snakes around. I used to be deadly afraid of snakes. Until I started volunteering at the local botanical gardens, I thought all snakes were bad. I knew there were poisonous and non-poisonous snakes but not until then did I learn the big difference that I point out below. Now I tolerate snakes, I look to see what it is before I take any kind of action. Majority of the time, it is a harmless snake and I leave it alone.

Just like the birds, armadillos, opossums, raccoons, rabbits, snakes come on your property not to hurt you or your family. They are there looking for food, places to hide, to build a nest or a mate. They are a part of nature just like the other animals.

If you see a snake, leave it alone. It is more afraid of you than you of it, in most cases. If you leave the snake alone, it will slither off. Most people are attached or bitten when the snake is provoked trying to get a better look or kill it. If you continue seeing snakes on your property here are some things you can do:

- Remove weeds, excess vegetation, piles of debris and any other areas where snakes can hide
- Mow your lawn regularly
- Keep firewood piles & lumber elevated from the ground 1-2 feet
- Keep birdseed from falling to the ground. This will attract rodents to eat the seed that drop to the ground
- Seal any cracks and crevices around your foundation to keep snakes out
- Install screens over vents and seal openings around plumbing entering home
- Keep compost piles in closed containers to keep rodents & snakes away.

There are snake repellents on the market, which are suppose to affect the olfactory senses in snakes but they do not always work on all snakes. People say mothballs, this is a myth so **do not** waste your money for snakes, rats, mice, bats, armadillos, raccoons, and opossums.

Along with doing the items above, you can build a snake proof fence. It is made of any material that is not easily moved or that contains large openings. Wire mesh is often a popular choice, though some people have installed solid, wooden fences instead. Snakes do not need much room to fit under or thru to get on the other side, so it is best to bury the bottom a few inches into the ground. Some snakes are fantastic climbers such as the rat snake. So, when building the fence, slope the fence outward and do not use wire based fencing material since the snake can easily climb this. Also this would help keep other animals out.

Snakes are beneficial as they eat rodents (mice, rats, etc.) and insects which can carry harmful diseases that can cause illness, or, in some cases cause death. Some snakes even eat other snake. I will go into that next.

There are two types of snakes – Venomous (Poisonous) and Non-Venomous (Non-Poisonous). All snakes will bite. Just because it is a Non-Venomous does not mean it will not bite. If provoked it will bite as stated above.

The famed King Snake is so named, as it is the KING of snakes in most every region they live in. That means they EAT other snakes and other things we find undesirable. On the top of the list of the King Some of their favorite foods are rats and mice but their top choice is eating other snakes – venomous snakes (poisonous snakes). If that does not make you LOVE the all mighty King Snake, then eating rats and mice should.

The Speckled King Snake is the most common King Snake in our area of Orange County and South East Texas. It is a pretty snake with the yellow speckles on the dark green back and yellow belly. King Snakes have been kept as pets due to their ease of care. If you decide to keep one as a pet, always provide a pre-killed rodent. A live rodent can deliver a powerful bite, which could injury the snake. King Snakes are generally docile, curious and gentle. But, you should let the King Snake stay in the wild to take care of what nature has intended for it to do – eat rodents and venomous snakes.

Other Non-Venomous Snakes found in South East Texas and Orange County:

Eastern Hognose Eastern Hognose
(These snakes have been seen in different colorings)
Average size 25 – 36 inches, eats toads

Texas Brown Snake
Average size 8 – 14 inches
Eats slugs, snails & earthworms

Rough Earth Snake
Average size 9 – 14 inches
Eats earthworms, ant larvae

Texas Rat Snake
Average Size 42 – 72 inches
Eats rodents, birds, frogs, eggs, fledgling birds

Diamond-Backed Water Snake
Average Size 3 – 5 ½ ft
Eats fish, amphibians, crayfish

Note: All snakes can swim and most of them do quite well, but some do better than others. The Cottonmouth or Water Moccasin, a close relative of the Copperhead, is very buoyant and floats while holding their head high out of the water. Water snakes typically swim at or under the surface of the water, with their heads level with their bodies. Sometimes Water snakes may float/swim at the surface while Cottonmouths go under water to catch fish. Copperheads often do the same.

Broad Banded Water Snake
Average size 25 – 25 inches
Eats frogs

Yellow-Bellied Racer
Average Size 30 – 50 inches
Eats eggs, small birds & eggs

Yellow Bellied Water Snake
Average Size 30 – 42 inches
Eats frogs, tadpoles

Gulf Coast Ribbon Snake
Average Size 8 – 34 inches
Eats worms, slugs, insects

Buttermilk Racer
Average size 28 - 58 inches
Eats rodents, lizards & frogs

Blotched Water Snake
Average Size 30 – 48 in.
Eats small rodents

Eastern Coachwhip
Average Size
Eats lizards, SNAKES, small mammels

Western Coachwhip
Average Size 4 – 6 ft.

Rough Green Snake
Average Size 20 – 30 in.

Bull Snake
Average Size 4 – 7 ft.
Eats small rodents

Mud Snake
Average Size 36 – 48 in.
Eats amphibians

Graham's Crayfish Snake
Average Size 18 – 32 in.
Eats crayfish

Louisiana Milk Snake
Average 16 – 22 in.
Eats lizards, snakes & small mice

Texas Night Snake
Average Size 10 – 14 in.
Eats small lizards

Common Kingsnake
Avg. size 18 – 36 in.
Eats snakes, lizards, rodents

Two good websites to identify snakes are http://www.texassnakes.net/index.htm and http://herpsoftexas.org . Information for this article was obtained from both websites.