

March 17, 2021

The Snakes Are Out

By Jolynn Young, Neighborhood News Staff Writer

Warm Spring weather is the start of frequent outdoor activities and the arrival of birds chirping, grass turning green and flowers blooming. Spring also brings snakes out of hibernation. This is the time of year snakes are most active. During cold months snakes hibernate in their dens. The warmer climate provides favorable living environments allowing snakes to bask in the warm sun, although they will take shelter during extremely hot temperatures. Perfect hiding places for snakes to shelter are piles of leaves, flower beds, tall grasses and bushes, and they may even enter homes through cracks in foundations. They can also be found where there is a favorable food source like gardens and ponds.

Snakes are great at hiding and are often found in inconspicuous places. Particularly this time of year, be mindful and watchful on outdoor walking trails. Be aware of snakes and other creatures hiding in unkept brush and shrubs.

There are some important steps to reduce snake attractors, including cutting tall grass, removing brush and debris, and trimming low branches on trees.

There are about 75 species of snakes living in Texas. The most recognized venomous snakes are the coral snake, the rattle snake, the copperhead, and the cottonmouth, also known as a water moccasin.

There is a misconception that all snakes are “bad.” Some of the common backyard nonvenomous snakes in Texas are the rat snake and the garter snake (also known as a garden snake). More information on poisonous and nonpoisonous snakes can be found at <https://www.snakesox.com/blog/2019/4/3/5-ways-to-prevent-snake-bites> . If you encounter a snake learn to recognize the venomous and nonvenomous. Distinctive snake characteristics are:

- Head shape
- Body length and width
- Color and scale pattern
- Eye characteristics, shape of the pupil
- Size of snake
- Behavior, for example, rattlesnakes shake the rattles on their tails

Although many people have a strong fear of snakes, they are a part of the ecological benefit system. Snakes are a food source for coyotes, owls, and hawks, and yard snakes help keep rodents and pests away to help balance ecosystems.

Remember the adage for stripe patterns on coral snakes: “Red touching yellow, kill a fellow. Red touching black, a friend of Jack.”