



Pueblan Milk Snake

Lampropeltis triangulum

Natural History



Description: Milk snakes can grow to 20-60 inches in length. Milk snakes range from Canada to Ecuador, and their appearance, habitat, and diet can vary greatly throughout this distribution. Some, like CNC's milk snake, have brightly colored stripes, but others are cream with brown or red blotches. The latter appearance is more common in the northern US, while brightly striped patterns are found in the southern US and down into Mexico and South America. While these snakes lack venom, they can easily be confused with a coral snake, which is venomous. In fact, the red-black-yellow pattern probably evolved to mimic the appearance of dangerous coral snakes.

Vocalizations: If the milk snake feels threatened by a fox, coyote, or other danger, it will vibrate its tail in the nearby leaves or grass, making a sound similar to a rattlesnake.

Breeding: Milk snakes are "oviparous," which means they lay eggs. They mate in late spring or early summer and the female will lay 8-12 eggs. The young snakes are 6 to 10 inches long.

Distribution: Milk snakes are found throughout northern Mexico.

Habitat: The milk snake is able to thrive in a variety of habitats, including forests, grasslands, rocky outcroppings, and barns. They were given the name 'milk snake' because people falsely believed the snakes came to barns to steal milk from cows. Milk snakes like to live near barns primarily due to the abundance of prey there. They are elusive snakes and, in the warmer months, only come out at night to hunt.

Diet: Milk snakes eat their food by constricting it, then swallowing it whole. They eat rodents, birds, eggs, and lizards. Milk snakes, like other kingsnakes (snakes in the genus *Lampropeltis*), can also prey upon venomous snakes.

Lifespan: In captivity milk snakes are known to live to 22 years old, and in the wild they live to an average age of 12-20 years.

Conservation Status: This snake is fairly common throughout much of its range and is not federally protected. In some states, such as Georgia and Montana, it is a Species of Special Concern. Populations are often threatened by habitat loss or persecuted because they are mistaken for venomous coral snakes.