

Coverboard Demo Checklist

Proper Clothing: Covered shoes (ideally tall boots), long pants and long sleeve shirt (light-colors to visibly observe ticks), sun block and sun hat when appropriate.

Western Rattlesnake Safety

Habitat (www.californiaherps.com):

- Inhabits rocky hillsides, talus slopes and outcrops, rocky stream courses, rocky areas in grasslands, mixed woodlands, montane forests, pinyon juniper, sagebrush.

Activity (www.californiaherps.com):

- Primarily nocturnal and crepuscular during periods of excessive daytime heat, but also active during daylight when the temperature is more moderate.
- Not active during cooler periods in Winter.
- In colder areas, known to den in burrows, caves, and rock crevices, sometimes in large numbers, and sometimes with other snake species.
- Even a dead snake can bite and inject venom if the jaws reflexively open when they are touched.

Identification (www.californiaherps.com):

- A heavy-bodied pit viper, with a thin neck, a **large triangular head**, and a rattle on the end of the tail consisting of loose interlocking hollow segments.
- The ground color is variable, matching the environment.
- Young are born with a bright yellow tail with no rattle - just a single button which does not make a sound.

Proper (plywood) coverboard technique:

- Lift coverboard AWAY from self and others, especially in areas where rattlesnakes are most likely to be found (grassland, etc.). Use of snake hook to lift coverboards is optional.
- If rattlesnake is found underneath a coverboard, carefully set coverboard back down.

Statistics and misconceptions

- “The chances of dying from a venomous snakebite in the US is nearly zero”.
- “You are nine times more likely to die from being struck by lightning than to die of a venomous snake bite”. (http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/venomous_snake_faqs.shtml)

Leading School Groups:

With children, avoid “Sage on Stage” A 'sage on stage' is an instructor who lectures almost exclusively, who has the philosophy that s/he has knowledge to “give” learners who would benefit from this.

“Give a kid a job”: Initially provide students a responsibility at the beginning of a hike such as “Species ID Helper” (herpetofauna guidebook), “Herpetologist” (capture tools if captures allowed which may include nets, nooses, etc.), “Wildlife Photographer Assistant” which may include optional photograph items (white Dollar Store bowls, objects for scale, etc.).

“Pair Share”: Use “pair shares” where students whisper answers to a question first before sharing aloud. This increases their answer response time, boosting confidence and engaging more students.

Model (and/or ask students to model):

- Encountering rattlesnakes
- Coverboard technique
- Use of field guides and tools, etc.

Engaging Students:

Provide answer options or open-ended answers (with or without examples) depending on group level.

Ask about herpetofauna characteristics: Visual (“What color?”, How many legs?”, etc.); Touch if handling allowed (“Does it feel smooth or rough?”), etc.

Model how to find answers: Use field guide book or refer to a “kid with a job”, add observation to iNaturalist project for future ID, etc.

If no herpetofauna observed, ask if they notice any evidence of any other animals (or fungus, etc.). Often coverboards will have spider webs, evidence of rodent activity, ants, spiders, scorpions, centipedes, etc.

Have students point out obvious (or non-obvious) findings on the trail, comparisons between organisms found in different habitat types (grassland, forest canopy edge, forest).