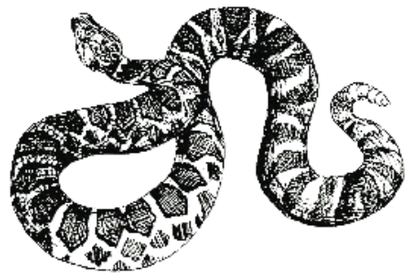
Lava Beds

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Lava Beds National Monument

Amphibians and Reptiles of Lava Beds



Step Carefully

Lava Beds National Monument is home to 14 species of reptiles and amphibians. Eight of these are snakes, including the Western rattlesnake. Rattlesnakes may be seen on the surface or under a rock outcrop. They may be found near a cave entrance but seldom go inside. If you are lucky enough to see one, please do not disturb it. If it is on a trail, in a campsite or any other location where the public is present, please contact a ranger so it can be removed to a safer location.

Rattlesnakes are poisonous, but no one has reported being bitten by one at Lava Beds since the area became a monument in 1925. In order to avoid rattlesnakes, use caution when you are hiking, always looking first before you place your hands and feet.

Reptiles

Reptiles have been around for 300 million years. They are air-breathing animals, but can live both in land and survive in water. The majority of reptiles lay eggs to give birth. The most noticible feature of repiles are sclaes. Reptiles are often called **cold-blooded** because they cannot regulate their own body temperature. Their temperature depends upon the outside temperature. You will see them laying in the sun to warm themselves or laying on warm rocks or even the warm, black pavement. You can even see some reptiles in water to cool themselves. Snakes are reptiles. Snakes can be found in nearly every habitat throughout the Lava Beds. The Rocky Mountain Boa is one snake seen in Lava Beds NM. Unlike most sun-loving reptiles, it prefers cool locations and is often seen at the entrances of caves.

Lizards too are reptiles. The northern sagebrush lizard and western fence lizard with its blue belly are commonly viewed on warm summer days. One of the most striking lizard reletives within the Lava Beds is the western skink. The juvinile skiks have a bright blue tail.

Lava Beds Reptiles

Iquanidae (Fence Lizards)
- ❑ Northern Sagebrush Lizard ..... *Sceloporus graciosus*
- ❑ Great Basin Fence Lizard ..... *Sceloporus occidentalis biseriatu*

Anguidae (Glass Lizards)
- ❑ Shasta Alligator Lizard..... *Gerrhonotus coeruleus shastensis*

Scincidae (Skinks)
- ❑ Western Skink..... *Eumeces skiltonianus*

Boidae (Boas)
- ❑ Rocky Mountain Rubber Boa..... *Charina bottae utahensis*

Colubridae (Colubrids)
- ❑ Western Yellow-bellied Racer..... *Coluber constrictor mormon*
- ❑ Ringneck Snake..... *Diadophis punctatus*
- ❑ Desert Night Snake..... *Hypsiglena torquata deserticola*
- ❑ Desert Striped Whipsnake..... *Masticophis taeniatus*
- ❑ Gopher Snake..... *Pituophis melanoleucus*
- ❑ Valley Garter Snake ..... *Thamnophis sirtalis fitchi*

Crotalidae (Rattlesnakes)
- ❑ Western Rattlesnake..... *Crotalus viridis*

Amphibians

The word amphibian comes from the Greek word *amphibios*, meaning "a being with a double life." An amphibian's "double life" refers to two distinct life stages -- a larval stage and an adult stage. Most amphibians lay eggs, which hatch into larvae and undergo an amazing transformation, metamorphosis, as they move from larval to adult stages. Tadpoles, for example, have gills and a tail that enables them to live underwater. During metamorphosis, tadpoles lose their gills and develop lungs so they can breathe on land. At the same time, they begin to grow limbs and lose their tails. Adult frogs live mostly on land, breathing air and hoping their long legs. Almost all amphibians have thin, moist skin that helps them breathe. No other group of animals has this special skin.

Frogs and Toads

Here in the Lava Beds they include toads and frogs. Frogs and toads are very similar and very different. Frogs need to live near water. Toads do not. Frogs have smooth, moist skin. Toads have rough dry, bump skin. A frog's body is narrow while a toad is flat and wide. Frogs have high, round bulgy eyes and toads have foot-ball shaped eyes (often with horizontal pupils). Frogs have long hind legs (the better to jump with) but toads have shorter less powerful legs (runs or takes small hops rather than jumps). Frogs have many unlike toad's whose skin lets out a bitter taste and smell that burns the eyes and nostrils of its predators.

True toads, such as the boreal toad looked very stocky with short legs. They lack a tail or teeth and have horizontal pupils. Their dry skin is think and bumpy and the color can vary from browns to grays.

Neither frogs nor toads will give you warts! That is just a myth.

Amphibians at Lava Beds

- Boreal Toad.....*Bufo boreas*
- Pacific Treefrog ……. *Hyla regilla*