

Northern Rubber Boas and the Department of Defense

The Northern Rubber Boa (*Charina bottae*) has smooth, shiny scales that look and feel like rubber. Their short, blunt tail appears as another head, giving this snake the nickname “two-headed snake”. As protection from grizzly bears, some Native American hunters wore Rubber Boa tails as charms.



Picture by: J.D. Willson

Occurrence on Military Lands

Confirmed	Potential
Confirmed present on 5 military properties in addition to several U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Habitat Management Units	Up to an additional 5 Air Force; 15 Army; 1 Marine Corps; and 8 Navy properties.

Description: Northern Rubber Boas are medium-sized snakes that typically reach total lengths of 14-33 inches (35.6 - 83.8 cm). The color of this snake ranges from dark to light brown, tan, or olive green with a yellow to cream-colored belly. Dark flecks may occur on the lower sides of the body and belly. Scales are small and smooth. Pupils are vertically oval and copper or bronze-colored. Prominent anal spurs (a diagnostic characteristic for snakes in the boa family) are present in males, but are smaller or absent in females.



Source: IUCN

Range: This species can be found from southern British Columbia south across the western U.S. in elevations ranging from sea level to 10,000 feet (3,050 meters).

Habitat: Northern Rubber Boas are habitat generalists, and may be found in grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, and forested habitats, generally not far from water. Commonly found under or in decaying logs or stumps, rocks, and in rock crevices.

Behavior: Northern Rubber Boas are slow-moving, secretive snakes. This species is mostly active at night and dusk, but also commonly active in the daytime during mild, cloudy weather. They primarily eat small mammals, but will also consume lizards, snakes, salamanders, and small birds. They kill their prey by constriction. The tail of this species is often scarred from bites of predators and parental rodents defending their young against predation. When threatened, this snake can produce a potent odor.

Military Interactions: A generally uncommon snake species on DoD properties. Typically encountered on roads at night or found under logs or the bark of dead trees.

Conservation Status: The Northern Rubber Boa has no federal or state conservation status, has a Nature-Serve Raking of G5-Secure, and is listed as Least Concern by the IUCN Red list.

Threats/Planning Considerations: Although widespread and secure across the major of its range, human development, persecution, and destruction of habitats are threats to this species and can cause local population declines. Large-scale logging on military lands may cause local population declines of this species.

