

Prairie Rattlesnakes and the Department of Defense

The Prairie Rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*) is a wide-ranging venomous snake species found primarily in the central United States. Representative of its name, it often inhabits prairie ecosystems.

Description: Adults are typically 35-45 inches (89-114 cm) in total length. The base color of the body can be variations of a greenish gray, olive green, greenish brown, or light brown and yellow. Patterning includes dark oval blotches, sometimes with light-colored borders, running along the center of the back. Two additional rows of small blotches line each side. Facial and head markings are usually prominent and include lines extending from the eye to the corner of the mouth, and a line extending across the top of the head between the eyes. On the end of the tail is a rattle composed of a series of loosely interlocking keratinous sections.

Range: Their range extends from Canada to northern Mexico. In the United States, it can be found in Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, extreme eastern Arizona, the Dakotas, western Iowa, Nebraska, central Kansas, central Oklahoma, and western and central Texas.



Source: IUCN

Habitat: Habitats include prairies, desert scrub, wooded mountains, and croplands. It is often encountered near features such as rock outcroppings and low ridges. When inactive, they can be found in caves, mammal burrows, and crevices. Many individuals will congregate at hibernation sites.

Behavior: Mating typically happens between mid-summer and early fall. Their young are born between August and October. They can give birth to anywhere from 5 to 25 young. They are an ovoviparous species, meaning eggs are produced inside the mother's body that hatch at birth. Prey includes small mammals and occasionally birds and lizards.

Military Interactions: This venomous snake species could be encountered in military training and housing areas. Education and outreach are important tools to reduce negative human-snake interactions and unnecessary rattlesnake killings.

Conservation Status: The Prairie Rattlesnake has no Federally-listing status. It is State-endangered in Iowa, has a NatureServe conservation ranking of G5-Secure, and an IUCN Red List status of Least Concern.

Threats/Planning Considerations: Mortality can be high in first-year young due to predation by various carnivores and even other snakes. Threats include destruction of habitat, road mortality, and direct killing by humans, including activities such as rattlesnake round-ups. Military natural resource managers should try to maintain habitats used by this species and educate military personnel on the potential dangers associated with this venomous snake. It is recommended that installation natural resources personnel have expertise with removing nuisance snakes.



Picture by: J.D. Wilson

Occurrence on Military Lands	
Confirmed	Potential
Confirmed present on 8 Army and 8 Air Force installation across its range.	Up to an additional 5 Army, 9 Air Force installations across its range.

