



# Snakes on the Brain

**It's spring!**

**And that means flowers are  
blooming, birds are singing,  
and snakes are back.**



**At Travelers' Rest, we've been seeing garter snakes as they come out from their winter dens.**

**Video: What's It Like to Be a Snake?**

**Meet Clyde the Garter Snake and hear about his life at Travelers' Rest!**

**[www.facebook.com/TravelersRestStatePark/videos/571841193750852/](http://www.facebook.com/TravelersRestStatePark/videos/571841193750852/)**

**Snakes are very different from humans.**



**What are three things that make them different?**

# Activity: Can You Be a Snake?

**1. Snakes have no arms or legs.** Get into a sleeping bag or clean trash bag (keep your head out!). How long does it take you to move across the floor on your belly?

**2. Snakes have no ears and weak eyes.** Snakes depend on touch and smell to find food and stay safe. They do have an ear bone that helps sense vibrations.

Pull a winter hat down over your head, so it covers your ears and eyes. Have a family member stomp on the ground. Can you sense where they are? Now have your family member put vinegar and water in a cup. Can you find the cup using your sense of smell?

# Activity: Can You Be a Snake?

**3. Snakes shed their skin.** Snake's scales are made from the same material as our hair and fingernails. But their skin can't grow, so they instead grow a new skin and then get rid of the old one.

Take some Elmer's glue.\* If you have a plastic snake at home, you can paint a few layers of glue on the snake and let it dry overnight. Otherwise, paint some glue on one fingertip and wait for it to dry. Then try to peel the glue off in one layer. Can you see the skin's patterns on it?

**\*Elmer's is non-toxic and won't stick to skin. Read label carefully before using any other glue.**



**Snakes are different. But that doesn't mean they're scary.**

**Snakes only bite people when they feel threatened. Those bites can hurt. But it's only dangerous if the snake is **venomous**. That means that the snake can also inject a toxin when it bites.**

**Even then, only a few people in the U.S. die from snakebites each year.**

**In Montana, there are  
ten native snake species.**

**Of these, only **one** is venomous.**



# Which one do you think is venomous? Why?



# Which one do you think is venomous? Why?



**Northern Rubber Boa**



**Gopher Snake**



**Prairie Rattlesnake**



**Terrestrial Garter Snake**



## **Prairie Rattlesnake**

**With this group, your clue was that rattle! All rattlesnakes are part of a venomous group of snakes called pit vipers.**

***Note:* We've never seen a prairie rattlesnake at Travelers' Rest, but they do live in most of Montana. If you think you see one, leave it alone. If you do get bitten, keep calm and get medical help. (Don't suck the bite—that's a myth!)**

# It can get tricky....



**Prairie Rattlesnake**



**Gopher Snake**

**See some similarities? The gopher snake hopes so!  
If scared, it will get into the same strike position,  
flatten its head, and even shake its tail in dry leaves,  
to fool the predator into thinking it's a rattler.**

**You should be careful  
around snakes and leave  
them alone. But you should  
also tell them thank you  
when you see them!**

# Why?

## Choose all that you think are true!

### Good Teachers

Studying snakes can help us design better machines.



### Important Prey

They are a food source for other animals.



### Helpful Predator

Snakes eat many things, including mice and rats



### Handy Rope

Since snakes are long and skinny, you can use them to tie things together.



# Why?

## Choose all that you think are true!

### Good Teachers

Researchers have studied snakeskin to help machines move better.



### Important Prey

Hawks, owls, and coyotes eat snakes. Other animals love snake eggs.



### Helpful Predator

Mice and rats can carry disease. Snakes are key to keeping their numbers under control.



### Handy Rope

Don't do this! Leave the snake alone.

# Want to keep learning?

**Go online to watch snake videos and see how they move, or research one of Montana's ten species of snakes!**

