



Range in CA

CA KING SNAKE

Squamata
Family: Colubridae
Genus: *Lampropeltis*
Species: *getula californiae*



Range: California and Arizona, portions of Utah, Nevada, Oregon, New Mexico, Colorado & Mexico

Habitat: Variety- forest, woodland, chaparral, grassland, marshes, farmland, ranches, and desert

Niche: Terrestrial, diurnal (nocturnal if weather is too hot), carnivorous

Wild diet: rodents, reptiles, birds, amphibians & turtle eggs

Zoo diet:

Life Span: (Wild)
(Captivity) 10 -15 years

Sexual dimorphism: Female is usually larger

Located in SF Zoo: Children's Zoo - ARC

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

California kingsnakes are black with between 20 to 47 white bands or a single stripe down the middle of the back. It has shiny, smooth, non-keeled scales and a relatively cylindrical body, which can get to be about 5 inches in girth. The head is barely wider than the neck. These snakes are highly variable in appearance with more than 0 combinations of patterns and coloration, or morphs. These generally fall under the basic categories of banded, striped, blotched or unicolored. Kingsnakes usually shed four to six times per year.

Weight:

Length: 30 -85 in

Girth: 5 in

All kingsnakes are non-venomous, and are powerful constrictors and generally kill their prey by suffocation. The "king" refers to their propensity to hunt and consume other snakes, including the venomous rattlesnake. California kingsnakes are naturally impervious to the venom of the rattlesnake but not totally immune. The kingsnake's jaws are hinged, allowing them to swallow prey that is larger than their head.

The California kingsnake has a spine consisting of 100 to 400 vertebrae with a pair of thin ribs attached to each. This adaptation allows the snake to coil, climb and move in an S-shape. They can hear low frequency sounds and feel vibrations. This enables them to sense an approaching animal well before it actually reaches the snake's location. The Jacobson's organ and the snake's fork-shaped tongue allow the snake to smell its environment.

STATUS & CONSERVATION

Not threatened. Abundant in suitable habitats. They are remarkably adaptable.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

When disturbed, California kingsnakes will often coil their bodies to hide their heads, hiss, and rattle their tails, which if done in dry vegetation can produce a sound somewhat resembling a rattlesnake's rattle. They are typically non-aggressive when encountered.

In winter, they will usually go deep underground and enter a hibernation-like state called brumation, which is characterized by a slowed metabolism and reduced activity. This snake is usually solitary but will come together to hibernate.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

This species is oviparous, meaning it lays eggs as opposed to giving live birth like some other snakes. Courtship begins in the spring and involves the males competing for the females. Eggs are laid between May and August. The typical clutch size is 10 to 15 eggs and they may lay one or more clutches. The hatchlings usually emerge after 40 to 65 days later. The kingsnake does not care for its young after hatching.

Gestation: 40 – 65 days # of eggs: 10 -15	Sexual Maturity: 3 – 4 yrs Weight at birth: Length at birth: 12 in
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MISCELLANEOUS

Non venomous and considered harmless to humans.

Sources:

Snakes of North America: Western Region © 2000 R.D. Bartlett, Alan Tennant, Gulf Publishing Co., p 111-113
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