



Jens V. Vindum, © California Academy of Science

**common name** California Kingsnake

**scientific names** *Lampropeltis getulus californiae*

**phylum** Chordata  
**class** Reptilia  
**order** Squamata  
**family** Colubridae

**habitat** grasslands, freshwater marshes, desert, farmland, chaparral, forest, and woodland

**size** 27 to 76 cm

**description** The California Kingsnake is dark brown or black with whitish-yellow bands.

**fun facts** The Kingsnake received its name because it often eats other snakes. It is famous for eating Rattlesnakes. When a hungry Kingsnake finds a Rattlesnake, it will bite the Rattlesnake behind the head and coil itself around the body. The Kingsnake is nearly immune to Rattlesnake venom and does not worry about being bitten. Like a Boa Constrictor, the Kingsnake tightens the coils around the Rattlesnake and suffocates it. Sometimes the Kingsnake will eat the Rattlesnake before it is dead.

**life cycle** In June or July, the female California Kingsnake lays 2 to 24 eggs under leaves on the ground. She leaves the eggs after laying them. About 70 days later, the baby snakes emerge. They are 20 to 33 centimeters and look like miniature adult snakes.

**ecology** Kingsnakes eat lizards, snakes, mice, birds, and bird eggs. California Kingsnakes have even been known to eat their own shed skins! The Kingsnake is eaten by hawks, owls, coyotes, opossums, skunks, and other predators.

**conservation** Some people kill snakes because they are afraid that the snakes might hurt them. They do not realize that the snakes are even more afraid of humans than we are of them! Kingsnakes, like many snakes, play an important role in controlling [rodent](#) populations. What are some of the rodents living at Mather Field?

investigate

California Kingsnakes have been found in the grasslands at Mather Field but they are not common. It is exciting to see them because they are so beautifully colored. What would be some effects on the food web if people kill every snake they see? If there were no Kingsnakes, what poisonous snake population might increase?

