

Keep Texas Wild

S-S-S-SNAKES ALIVE!

Without them in the world,
we'd be in big trouble.



Rough green snake

» SLIM AND SLITHERY

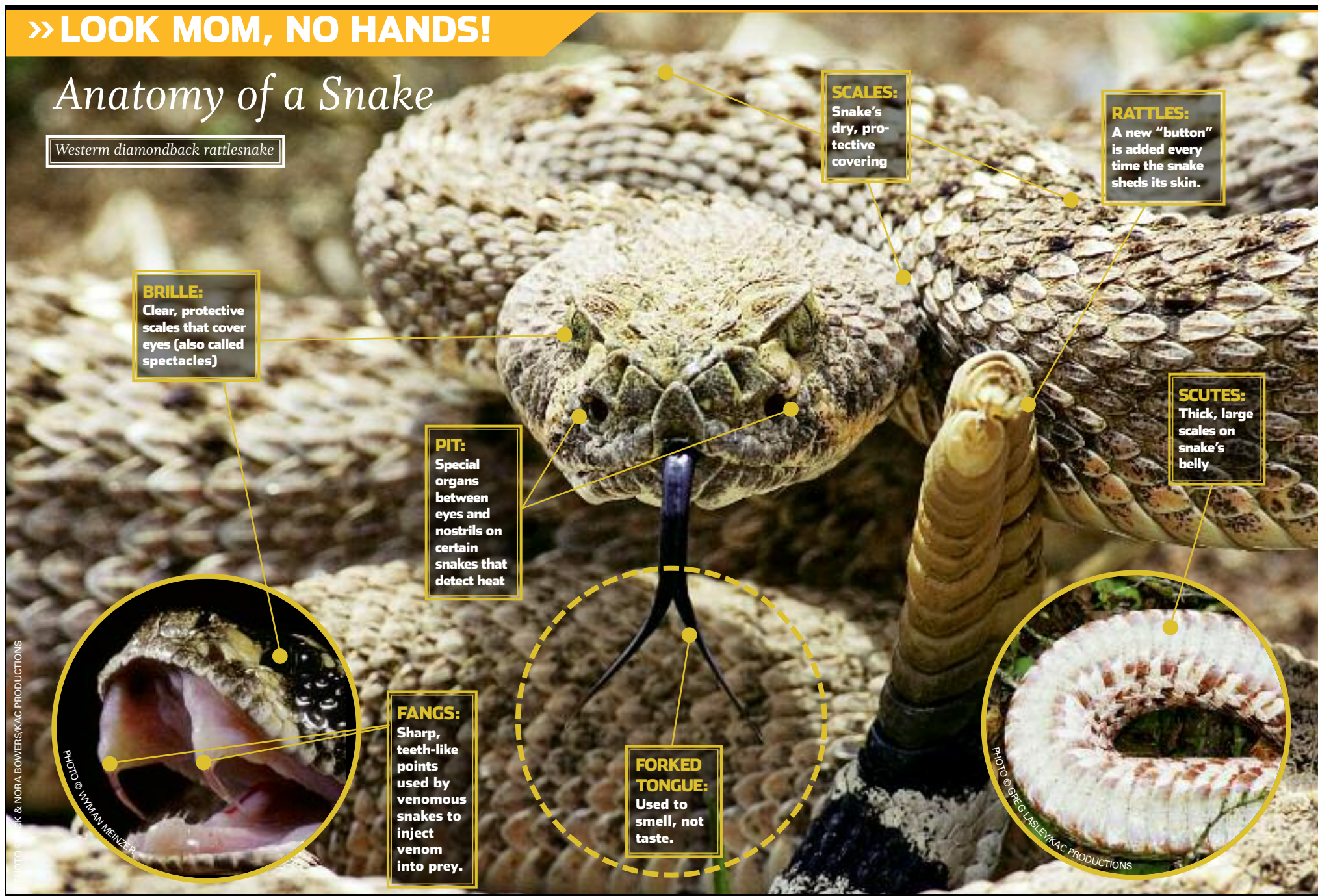
Hey, wait a minute — don't hurt that snake! Sure, a few kinds are deadly, but most are harmless. In Texas, we have 76 species of snakes, the largest number found in any U.S. state. That's really good news. Why? Because snakes eat mice, rats and other critters that can spread diseases. Like turtles and lizards, snakes are cold-blooded reptiles, which means their body temperature changes depending on their surroundings. Scientists who study snakes are called herpetologists. If you learn about snakes, too, then you'll be less afraid of these beneficial animals.

PHOTO © BILL DRAKER/ROLFNP.COM

» LOOK MOM, NO HANDS!

Anatomy of a Snake

Western diamondback rattlesnake



BRILLE:
Clear, protective scales that cover eyes (also called spectacles)

SCALES:
Snake's dry, protective covering

RATTLES:
A new "button" is added every time the snake sheds its skin.

PIT:
Special organs between eyes and nostrils on certain snakes that detect heat

SCUTES:
Thick, large scales on snake's belly



FANGS:
Sharp, teeth-like points used by venomous snakes to inject venom into prey.



FORKED TONGUE:
Used to smell, not taste.



» FRIEND OR FIEND?

"Red and yellow, kill a fellow.
Red and black, friend to Jack."

CORAL SNAKE **VERSUS** MILK SNAKE

RATTLESNAKE **VERSUS** RAT SNAKE

COPPERHEAD **VERSUS** HOGNOSE

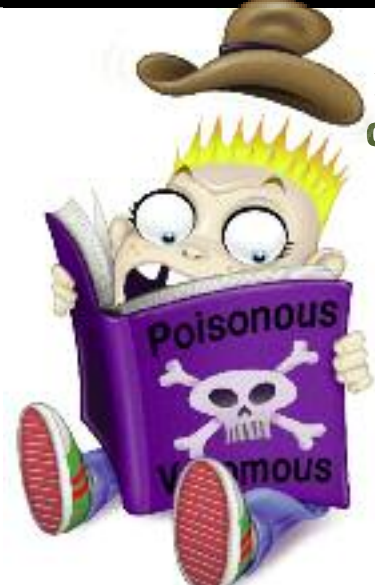
» Did You Know?



- Have you ever found a snake skin? That's how snakes grow — by shedding their old skin.
- Because snakes burn up little energy, they don't need much food. Some eat once a week while others dine only a couple of times a year!
- When they do eat, snakes swallow their food (like a mouse or frog) whole.
- Snake Menu: slugs, worms, fish, birds, mice, eggs, other snakes.



• Snakes brumate (like hibernation) in the winter and come out of their dens in the spring.



» Venomous or poisonous?

An animal that can bite or sting and inject a harmful toxin (venom) is "venomous." An animal or plant that would make you sick if you ate it is "poisonous." Example: Rattlesnakes are venomous. Some mushrooms are poisonous.

» Common Non-Venomous Snakes





Spike's Activity Page



WILD ART

WHY DO SNAKES COIL UP? Curling up helps a snake stay warm or moist. Some snakes coil up before they strike at prey. Think of a spring. If you hold it down, then let go, what happens? BOING! A snake can strike with more force! Make your own coiled snake from a paper plate. First draw a spiral (like the picture) on a plate. Using markers or crayons, color your snake. Cut the plate along the spiral line. Glue on a forked tongue and googly eyes if you like. Then attach a piece of string or yarn to the head and hang it up!

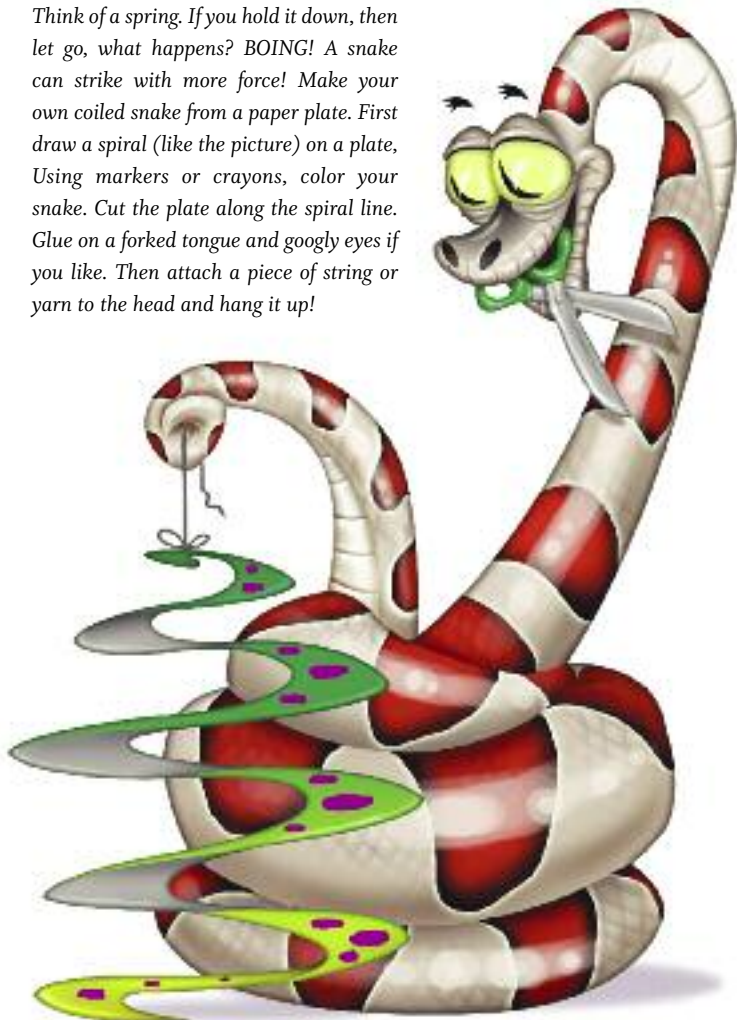


ILLUSTRATION © FIAN ARROVO

WILD SCIENCE

Poisonous or venomous?

Circle your answer.

Black widow



- VENOMOUS
- POISONOUS

Oleander



- VENOMOUS
- POISONOUS

Puss caterpillar



- VENOMOUS
- POISONOUS

Bee



- VENOMOUS
- POISONOUS

Wheel bug



- VENOMOUS
- POISONOUS

Mistletoe



- VENOMOUS
- POISONOUS

Jellyfish



- VENOMOUS
- POISONOUS

Poinsettia



- VENOMOUS
- POISONOUS

Answers below.

KEEPING IT WILD

SCIENTISTS FEAR THAT WE HUMANS could kill off snakes completely. Why? The more new homes and roads we build, the fewer habitats there are for them. Many people kill snakes out of fear and ignorance. What can you do to help snakes? Learn about one you might find in your yard and tell your friends (especially the ones who don't like snakes) why that snake's so cool. For instance, rough green snakes — which do not bite — mostly eat caterpillars, spiders, grasshoppers and crickets. Plus, they're really cute, don't you think?

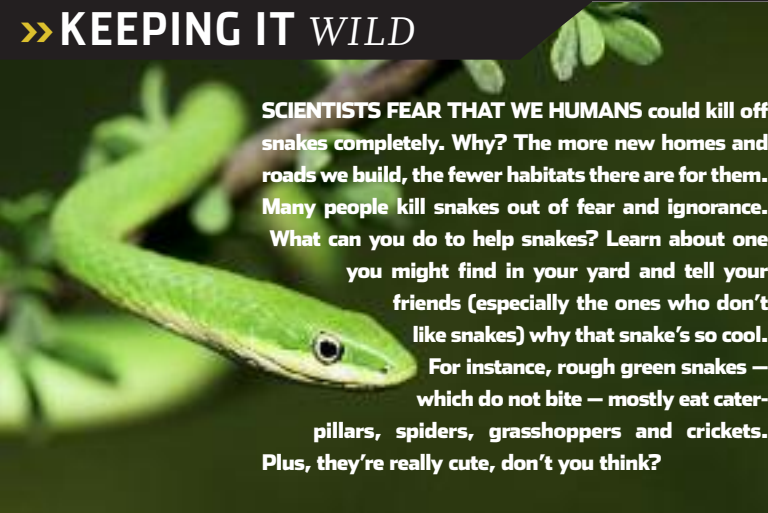


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NEXT MONTH: Back to School



TEACHER RESOURCE

Visit www.tpwmagazine.com to download a printable PDF, access lesson plans, find additional resources or order copies.

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 Oleander = poisonous
 Puss caterpillar = venomous
 Bee = venomous
 Wheel bug = venomous
 Mistletoe = poisonous
 Jellyfish = venomous
 Poinsettia = poisonous