

**SAN JOAQUIN COACHWHIP  
(MASTICOPHIS FLAGELLUM RUDDOCKI)**



*Description*

The San Joaquin Coachwhip is a large, very fast snake with a snout to vent length of 3 to 5 feet (90 to 155 cm) long. Body coloration is tan-yellow, or olive-brown on the back and yellowish on the belly. The scales are large and smooth and no stripes or bands are seen on the body.

Very little is known about the habits of this subspecies but it is thought that they nest in rodent burrows and lay eggs in June or July with young appearing in August to September. They are extremely aggressive and will strike, bite and hiss if cornered.

*Habitat*

These snakes are generally found in dry, desert-like habitats as well as grasslands, chaparral and pastures. They prey upon lizards, small mammals, eggs, insects and nestling birds but have been known to feed on dead animals. These snakes are active in the hottest part of the day usually from mid-morning to late afternoon. They tend to search for prey with their head up while in the open, but will poke their head into burrows and climb trees in search of prey.

*Range/distribution*

The San Joaquin Coachwhip has been found in Alameda, Contra Costa, Kern, Lake, Merced, San Benito, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare counties, but may be found in appropriate habitat throughout the San Joaquin Valley, especially along the western edge.

Photo: © California Academy of Sciences. Calphotos: seq\_num=1096&one=T

References:

Amphibian and Reptile Species of Special Concern in California, San Joaquin Coachwhip. California Department of Fish and Game, 1994. URL:

[http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hcpb/species/jsp/ssc\\_result.jsp?specy=reptiles&query=Masticophis%20flagellum%20ruddocki](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hcpb/species/jsp/ssc_result.jsp?specy=reptiles&query=Masticophis%20flagellum%20ruddocki)

California Department of Fish and Game. California Interagency Wildlife Task Group. California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System. Sacramento, California URL: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/whdab/R052.html>

Jennings, M.R. and M.P. Hayes. 1994. Amphibian and reptile species of special concern in California. California Department of Fish and Game, Inland Fisheries Division. Rancho Cordova, California. 255 pp.