

Reptiles & Amphibians

Capulin Volcano
National Monument

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Cold-blooded and lovers of warmth, reptiles can be seen sunning themselves on the volcanic rocks at Capulin Volcano during most of the summer months. The most common reptile to see are the fence lizards that will scurry away as you hike the trails. Though several snakes call Capulin home, the only venomous species is the prairie rattlesnake, which will warn you from getting too close with a dry rattle. After rainstorms, you may also be able to catch sight of one of Capulin's few amphibians that are well adapted to living in the dry environment on the volcano.



Bullsnake

(*Pituophis catenifer*)

Also known as gopher snakes, bullsnakes are sometimes mistaken for rattlesnakes. They are non-venomous and constrict their prey.



Fence Lizard

(*Sceloporus undulatus*)

Commonly seen in the park, these lizards feed on insects and will do push-ups to attract mates and warn other males away from their territory.



Western Prairie Rattlesnake

(*Crotalus viridis*)

The only venomous snake in the park, these rattlesnakes are not aggressive unless threatened and will rattle their tail to warn people away.



Short-Horned Lizard

(*Phrynosoma douglassi*)

Also known as the "horny toad," these small round lizards have spikes of modified scales and may squirt blood from their eyes when threatened.



Garter Snake

(*Thamnophis elegans*)

These common snakes give birth to live young and can be identified by the brown and tan stripes running the length of their body.



Collared Lizard

(*Crotaphytus collaris*)

These large colorful lizards can be identified by two black bands around their neck. They are able to run on just their hind legs and are very fast.



Western Coachwhip

(*Masticophis flagellum testaceus*)

These non-venomous snakes are long and thin with a small head. Their color varies from red to tan based on the soil.



Western Coachwhip

(*Masticophis flagellum testaceus*)

Either tan or red colored snakes can be seen in the park. They are fast snakes and can move 4-7 miles per hour.



Plains Milk Snake
(*Lampropeltis triangulum*)
Colorful, non-venomous snakes that are mostly nocturnal, these reptiles mimic the coloring of more venomous snake species to protect themselves from predators. They mainly eat small animals such as rodents.



Lesser Earless Lizard
(*Holbrookia maculata*)
Another common lizard, they get their name from the fact that they have no external ear openings (though they do have the ability to hear). They mainly eat insects and are most active in the summer.



Plains Hognose Snake
(*Heterodon nasicus nasicus*)
With a distinctive nose that looks like a pig's snout, this non-venomous snake uses its snout to dig into the soil looking for toads, its main food source. To protect itself from predators, it either plays dead or flattens its head and hisses.



Prairie Ringneck Snake
(*Diadophis punctatus*)
These nocturnal non-venomous snakes are not aggressive and will roll themselves to expose their bellies when threatened. They can be identified by a brightly colored ring around their necks and eat mainly lizards and frogs.



Eastern Yellow-bellied Racer
(*Coluber constrictor flaviventris*)
Non-venomous and rarely seen, this racer has smooth grayish brown scales with a yellow belly. Though not as fast as other snakes, they will undulate back and forth rapidly when escaping from predators.



Great Plains Skink
(*Eumeces obsoletus*)
These skinks can be found among the rocks and low vegetation on the top and sides of the volcano. They enjoy eating insects and will hibernate through the winter months.



Plateau Striped Whiptail
(*Cnemidophorus velox*)
This all female lizard reproduces by parthenogenesis, or the spontaneous development of an embryo from an egg. They can be identified by six stripes running the length of their body and a blueish tail.



New Mexico Spadefoot Toad
(*Spea multiplicatus*)
Usually found after summer rains, this toad completes its life cycle from egg to tadpole to toad in about three weeks. Mostly nocturnal, it digs into ground using "spades" on its hind feet and feeds on insects.



Barred Tiger Salamander
(*Ambystoma tigrinum mavortium*)
A rare sighting, occasionally these salamanders can be found in wet areas during a particularly rainy year. They are identified by a yellow stripes along their black bodies.



Boreal Chorus Frog
(*Pseudacris triseriata maculata*)
A rare sighting in the park due to lack of permanent water source, these small frogs are considered an indicator species. When breeding in late spring, they can often be heard singing in the evenings.