

A GUIDE TO
TEXAS
SNAKES

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Mexican king snake. *Lampropeltis mexicana*. Color: brightly colored, beautiful snake with a variable pattern. One variant is dark gray with narrow dark crossbands alternating with wider black crossbands having scarlet centers. Another variant has a striking pattern of alternating black-bordered red blotches and white-bordered gray blotches. Range: western Texas to central Mexico. Food: snakes, lizards, rodents, birds, eggs. Habitat: arid mountains, canyons. Reproduction: oviparous; little else known. Size: 18–33 in., record 45 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Texas distribution: Areas 4 (Edwards and Val Verde counties), 6, 7.

Prairie king snake. *Lampropeltis calligaster*. Color: light brown to gray with squarish dorsal blotches of brown, green, or reddish brown bordered with black, two alternating rows of smaller lateral blotches, belly yellowish with squarish dark blotches. Range: Maryland to Florida west to Central Texas and the Panhandle of Texas and Oklahoma, north to Iowa and Illinois. Food: snakes, lizards, rodents, birds, eggs. Habitat: grasslands, open woodlands. Reproduction: oviparous; young 9–11 in. at hatching. Size: 30–42 in., record 50 in. Texas distribution: Areas, 1, 2, 3, 5.

Common king snake. *Lampropeltis getulus*. Color: extremely variable from east to west across the United States, black with large, bold, white markings like links of chain, to black and white striped or black and white ringed. In Texas the general color is black or dark brown. In eastern Texas many white or yellowish spots are scattered over the back and sides to provide a salt and pepper effect. In western Texas the salt and pepper effect persists on the sides, but dorsally there is a row of dark spots separated by a row of dots across the back. Most Texas snakes show some intergradation between the two extremes. The belly color ranges from pale spotted to almost black. Range: southern United States from New Jersey to Florida, Nebraska to Texas, west through southern New Mexico to California, south into Mexico. Food: snakes, lizards, rodents, birds, eggs. Habitat: variable—swamps, woods, valleys, uplands, arid regions. Reproduction: oviparous; young 9–12 in. at hatching. Size: 36–60