

## Book Review

### **The Mohave Rattlesnake—And How it Became an Urban Legend**

Mike Cardwell

Rodeo, NM: ECO Publishing, 2020

US \$14.95, 138 pages, paperback



This short but information-laden and richly illustrated book provides a summary of the biology and behavior of the Mohave rattlesnake. Resident to the Mohave, Sonoran, and Chihuahuan Deserts of the American Southwest and Northern Mexico, the Mohave rattlesnake, *Crotalus scutulatus* (commonly known as the Mohave green) is one of more than 30 species of rattlesnake native to North America, but one with an especially sensational folklore.

Encompassing 14 chapters and a substantive bibliography and glossary, the book's nontechnical but authoritative text will resonate with experts and non-experts alike. The narrative reads quickly and is abundantly supplemented with clear illustrations and outstanding photographs, most of which were taken by the author. Although it focuses on the Mohave rattlesnake, it offers many insights into rattlesnakes broadly.

Individual chapters cover the naming, taxonomy and identification, distribution, behavior, ecology, and evolution of the Mohave rattlesnake. Chapters 5, 9, 13, and 14 may be of most interest to clinicians insofar as

they discuss the venomology, biting behavior, and first aid and medical management of bites. While underscoring their potential seriousness, the author debunks claims that bites from this species have exceptional lethality. The discussion of antivenom succinctly reviews its evolution from polyvalent Crotalidae antivenom to CroFab to AnaVip and issues regarding its use for bites from this species. However, clinicians treating crotalid envenomation, Mohave or otherwise, should consult more detailed clinical references (eg, Auerbach's *Wilderness Medicine*, seventh edition) for more specific guidance.

An especially useful feature of this book is its focus on distinguishing fact from fiction about what it calls "America's most misunderstood rattlesnake." Chapters 10, 11, and 12 especially discuss misinformation and myths (including some conspiracy theories) surrounding Mohave rattlesnakes and convincingly put many of the urban legends to rest.

This is a well-written and visually pleasing book that will both inform and entertain armchair and expert herpetologists, first responders, and clinicians who may be called upon to manage rattlesnake bite victims, and all manner of outdoor enthusiasts recreating where Mohave rattlesnakes live.

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