

# Wisconsin Rattlesnake Mimics

Although Wisconsin is home to two species of rattlesnake (eastern massasauga and timber rattlesnake), these species are very rare, secretive and are only found at a small number of sites, which means sightings of rattlesnakes in Wisconsin are also very rare. If you believe you have observed a rattlesnake, you may instead have observed one of Wisconsin's rattlesnake mimics...

Rattlesnake mimics are not venomous but physically resemble rattlesnakes and most also vibrate or "rattle" their tails when they feel threatened. Although it may sound like the vibration or "rattle" of a true rattlesnake, it is actually made by the tail hitting vegetation, gravel or other substrates. If you are able to see the tail, true rattlesnakes will have obvious rattles or a blunt end to their tail, whereas rattlesnake mimics will have a very pointed tail, similar to the shape of a sharpened pencil tip.

Rattlesnake  
Mimic Tail Tip



Rattlesnake  
Tail Tip



Rattlesnake mimics often act very aggressively, frequently coiling up or striking. Conversely, Wisconsin's true rattlesnakes are relatively non-aggressive, often times never rattling or striking at all.

The snakes shown below include the species most often mistaken for rattlesnakes, as well as the eastern massasauga and timber rattlesnake. For additional photos showing color variations and range maps, please refer to the [Snakes of Wisconsin page](#) (visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "Snakes of Wisconsin").

Eastern Foxsnake (Juvenile)



Milksnake



Common Watersnake



Bullsnake (Gophersnake)



Eastern Hog-nosed Snake



North American Racer (Juvenile)



Gray (Black) Ratsnake



Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake



Timber Rattlesnake



If you have seen a true rattlesnake (or would like to report any other snake sighting), please submit the information on our [species reporting page](#) (or visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "species report form") or contact the Wisconsin Rattlesnake Hotline at 888-74SNAKE (888-747-6253) for additional information.