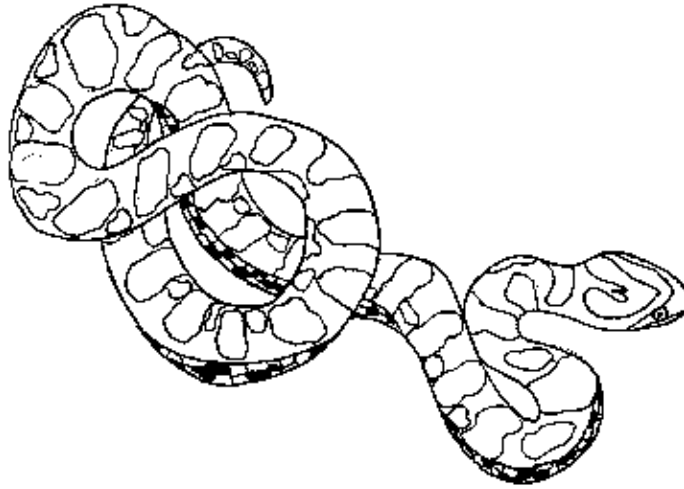


# Corn Snake

Scientific Name: *Elaphe guttata*



## Did You Know?

- Corn snakes are often killed because they are mistaken for the copperhead, a venomous species. Corn snakes, as well as copperheads, are actually beneficial predators of rodents and in turn are important food items for many other animals.
- The corn snake, also known as the red rat snake, is one of several species of rat snakes occurring in the United States. Rat snakes are large, powerful, non-venomous snakes that feed on a variety of prey species, which they overpower by constriction.
- While not venomous, corn snakes will bite. Their striking range is quite long, about 1/3 to 1/2 of their body length.
- Young corn snakes are a favored food item of coral snakes and kingsnakes.
- The genus name *Elaphe* is derived from the Latin word *elaps* (a kind of snake). The species name *guttata* is from the Latin *gutta* (dappled or spotted), a reference to the blotches on the snake's back.
- The corn snake is mainly nocturnal and hides during the day under cover of loose tree bark, in animal burrows, or in old abandoned buildings.
- Predators of the corn snake include foxes, opossums, skunks, bobcats, weasels, and hawks.
- The corn snake is most active from March to November. This species is encountered more frequently in the summer months when it crosses roads at night.
- The corn snake can be distinguished from other rat snakes and from kingsnakes by the stripe extending from the back of its eye past the corner of its jaw, plus the large, bold black and white checkerboard pattern on its belly.

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# General Information on Corn Snakes

## IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS:

Corn Snakes are highly variable in coloration and pattern depending on the age of the snake and the region of the country in which it is found. They are generally very colorful snakes with most adults displaying vivid colors of reddish or orange blotches edged in black with a grayish to orange colored background tinged with yellow. The belly of the snake usually consists of alternating rows of black and white, resembling a checkerboard pattern. The overall appearance of the snake reminds one of brightly colored Indian corn from which it probably gets its common name.

## RANGE:

This is a southeastern rat snake, ranging from Virginia and Maryland south into Florida, west to Louisiana and Mississippi, and as far north as southern Tennessee. There are isolated populations in Kentucky

## HABITAT:

Corn snakes tend to be quite secretive and appear to be active mostly at night. During daylight hours they may be found hiding under loose tree bark and beneath logs, rocks, and other debris. Corn snakes prefer habitats such as overgrown fields, forest openings, and abandoned or seldom-used buildings where their favorite food of mice and other small rodents is abundant.

## NESTING:

Corn snakes usually breed in spring with females laying their eggs in early summer. The eggs are not cared for by the adult snake. They are laid in rotting stumps, in piles of decaying vegetation or other similar locations where there is sufficient heat and humidity to incubate them. The eggs hatch in 2 to 3 months. Young corn snakes often feed on small lizards and frogs until they grow large enough to overpower larger prey. Only a few hatchlings survive to adulthood because of predation by a variety of other animals.

## FEEDING HABITS:

The diet of an adult corn snake is primarily rodents and other small mammals, but it also includes birds and their eggs. The young corn snake will eat lizards, other small snakes, frogs, and rodents.