



"GROUND RATTLERS" IN LOUISIANA

MISIDENTIFIED AND MISUNDERSTOOD

THE TERM "GROUND RATTLER" IS OFTEN USED TO DESCRIBE SMALL SNAKES COMMONLY FOUND IN FLOWER BEDS OR OTHER SIMILAR AREAS.

THE 'GROUND RATTLER' NAME IS MOST OFTEN MISAPPLIED TO A PARTICULAR **NONVENOMOUS** AND COMPLETELY HARMLESS SNAKE: THE **DEKAY'S BROWNSNAKE**. THE "GROUND RATTLER" NICKNAME LIKELY STEMS FROM THIS SMALL SNAKE'S ABILITY TO SHAKE ITS TAIL IN LEAVES OR OTHER DRY MATERIAL TO CREATE NOISE WHEN DISTURBED MUCH LIKE A RATTLESNAKE, THOUGH THEY OFTEN DO NOT DISPLAY THIS DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOR. THESE WIDESPREAD, ABUNDANT, AND COMMONLY-ENCOUNTERED SNAKES TYPICALLY LIVE UNDER LOGS, MULCH, LEAF LITTER, OR OTHER DEBRIS AND PREY UPON GARDEN PESTS SUCH AS SNAILS AND SLUGS, WHICH MAKE THIS SPECIES GREAT FOR GARDENS!

LOUISIANA'S SMALL **VENOMOUS** RATTLESNAKE SPECIES, THE **PYGMY RATTLESNAKE**, IS A SPECIES THAT IS RARELY OBSERVED AND A SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED IN THE STATE.

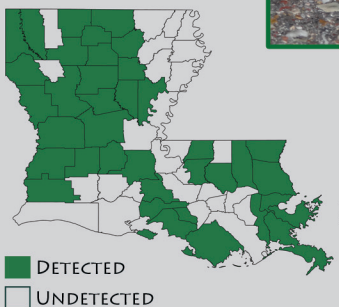
DEKAY'S BROWNSNAKE (STORERIA DEKAYI)

- **NONVENOMOUS**
- ADULTS APPROXIMATELY 8-16 IN.
- TAN/BROWN TO REDDISH COLOR ON TOP WITH PLAIN BELLY; LIGHTER STRIPE DOWN MIDDLE OF BACK, OFTEN WITH CROSSBARS
- SMALL BLACK/BROWN MARK BELOW EYE OR DARK STREAK BEHIND EYE
- COMMONLY FOUND UNDER LEAVES OR OTHER COVER IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN HABITATS
- EAT WORMS, SNAILS, SLUGS, AND OTHER INVERTEBRATES



PYGMY RATTLESNAKE (SISTRURUS MILIARIUS)

- **VENOMOUS**
- ADULTS APPROXIMATELY 11-20 IN.
- STRONG PATTERN OF TAN/BLACK/GREY BLOTCHES AND BANDS
- DARK BAND FROM EYE TO REAR OF JAW
- SMALL RATTLE ON A BLACK TAIL TIP
- AMBUSH PREDATORS THAT OFTEN STAY HIDDEN IN COVER
- EAT FROGS, LIZARDS, SNAKES, AND SOMETIMES MAMMALS



Remember, the best way to be safe around snakes is to respect their space. You should never handle a snake of unknown identification. This infographic does not include several other small snake species. Visit L.A.R.E.'s webpage to learn more about these species and others!