

Reptiles of the Jordan River

compiled by Dan Potts, local naturalist, 2008

TURTLES (TESTUDINIDAE)

Slider (Pond)	<i>Pseudemys scripta</i>	rare, exotic
Common snapping turtle	<i>Chelydra serpentina</i>	rare, exotic

HORNED LIZARDS, LIZARDS (IGUANIDAE)

Mountain short-horned lizard	<i>Phrynosoma douglassi hernandesi</i>	rare
Northern desert horned lizard	<i>Phrynosoma platyrhinos platyrhinos</i>	rare
Large-spotted leopard lizard	<i>Gambelia wislizenii wislizenii</i>	rare
Great Basin fence lizard	<i>Sceloporus occidentalis longipes</i>	uncommon
Northern sagebrush lizard	<i>Sceloporus graciosus graciosus</i>	rare
Northern side-blotched lizard	<i>Uta stansburiana stansburiana</i>	rare
Great Basin (tiger) whiptail	<i>Aspidoscelis tigris tigris</i>	rare

SKINKS SCINCIDAE)

Great Basin (Western) skink	<i>Eumeces skiltonianus utahensis</i>	rare
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COMMON SNAKES (COLUBRIDAE)

Western yellow-bellied racer	<i>Coluber constrictor mormon</i>	uncommon
Desert striped whipsnake	<i>Masticophis taeniatus taeniatus</i>	rare
Western smooth green snake	<i>Ophedrys vernalis blanchardi</i>	rare
Utah milk snake	<i>Lampropeltis triangulum taylori</i>	rare
Wandering Western garter snake	<i>Thamnophis elegans vagrans</i>	common
Valley (common) garter snake	<i>Thamnophis sirtalis fitchi</i>	uncommon
Great Basin gopher snake	<i>Pituophis catenifer deserticola</i>	uncommon
Desert night snake	<i>Hypsiglena torquata deserticola</i>	rare
Western long-nosed snake	<i>Rhinocheilus lecontei lecontei</i>	rare

RATTLESNAKES (CROTALIDAE)

Great Basin rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus viridis lutosus</i>	rare
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Ecology

Like amphibians, reptiles have declined greatly in the presence of human development worldwide. Unlike amphibians, reptiles have not been so sensitive to exposure to chemicals, pollution, and global changes in atmosphere, etc. They have, however, been greatly affected by cars killing them on highways, and being killed and eaten by introduced predators including domestic dogs and cats, and raccoons.

Although reptiles have probably never had much of an ecological affect on the Jordan River, they certainly were far more numerous and varied in the past. The only reptile that appears to be holding its own is the wandering Western garter snake. Referred to by some as a

“garden snake”, even this species is in decline, as it has been killed by the hundreds on roads and highways along the Jordan River Corridor.

References:

Western Reptiles and Amphibians, Peterson Field Guides, Robert C. Stebbins, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, NY, 1985, 336 pp.

Inventory of the Vertebrates of the Jordan River State Park, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Report, 2003, 19 pp.