

FAQS *Concerning* **RATTLESNAKE ROUNDUPS** *in the Southeast*



Q: How many rattlesnake roundups are there in the southeast?

A: There are currently two in the southeast, one in Alabama and one in Georgia. There are several out west in Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico.

Q: What snake species are persecuted by rattlesnake roundups?

A: Mainly the Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake (EDB or Crotalus adamanteus) and to a far lesser extent the timber/canebrake rattlesnake (Crotalus horridus). Other species are targeted in the western roundups

Q: How are the snakes collected for the roundups?

A: The primary method collectors use is to drive snakes out of their hiding places by blowing gasoline fumes down Gopher Tortoise burrows and other subterranean retreats. Others are pulled out with treble hooks attached to the end of a hose or a tube or even dug out. Each of these methods harm the tortoise and all of the other species that use this retreat. Some of these are rare species that have legal protection like the Gopher Frog and the Eastern Indigo Snake.

Q: What happens to the snakes after the roundups?

A: Currently one buyer purchases the snakes alive from the Georgia roundup and slaughters them at another location out of sight of the general public. The hides are then used to make clothing accessories, souvenirs and curios.

Q: Are rattlesnake roundups necessary to control snake populations?

A: Absolutely not, the EDB has declined over its entire geographic range. The decline is due to habitat destruction and persecution by humans. People are very rarely bitten by rattlesnakes in the southeast.

Q: Are rattlesnake roundups beneficial to the local communities that host them?

A: Yes, they generate revenue that is often used for charitable purposes. However, wildlife festivals that do not harm wildlife can be equally as profitable and more beneficial because they actually educate the public.

Q: Are rattlesnake roundups educational?

A: No. The proponents claim that they are educating the public but research has shown that they are spreading myths about the snakes. The people who handle the snakes in front of the public are not trained nor educated about the biology of the snakes or the snake's environment.

Q: Can anything be done to stop rattlesnake roundups?

A: Two communities in Georgia voluntarily changed their rattlesnake roundups to festivals that celebrated wildlife and educated the public. These festivals still raise money for the local communities while not harming ecologically sensitive species. Captive rattlesnakes are on display for the public to observe and these specimens are not harmed after the event.

Q: Why should people value rattlesnakes?

A: Rattlesnakes are important predators of rodents and therefore help to keep small mammal populations under control. Snake venom is a complex mixture of many biologically active compounds. Many of these are useful in medicine and are being used to treat high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. Severe decline or disappearance of these snakes reduces or eliminates this important medical resource.



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