

## News Release

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For Immediate Release

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# Snakes Sunbathing at Naples Zoo

## Plus Snake Safety Resources for Business, Schools, & Parents

According to years of polling data\*, snakes are among Americans' top fears - just ahead of public speaking. One can only imagine what the fear rating would be for walking among deadly snakes while talking in front of an audience. Far from being a nightmare scenario, however, it's part of daily life for the professionally trained staff at Naples Zoo at the new Snake Sunbathing exhibit.

Each day for about half an hour, Zoo staff create a casual environment for guests to observe deadly reptiles when they release a variety of reptiles inside a circle of Zoo guests. And while the guests are safely on the outside of a smooth wall, the handlers stand inside with anything from copperheads to canebrakes and sometimes even Gila monsters or a 14' reticulated python. Some guests even go home with a great souvenir photo when one of the handlers borrows a camera for an up close shot of an Eastern diamondback rattler. While carefully monitoring the reptiles as they slither around, the handlers answer questions and provide useful information about snakes.

Florida is home to over 40 native snake species including six varieties of venomous snakes -- four of which make their home in Southwest Florida. Even so, encountering one is rare for most people. But knowing what to do when it happens can be crucial. To better educate residents and visitors about living safely with these beneficial wildlife species, Naples Zoo premiered the Serpents: Fangs & Fiction Show in 2004, but recently Zoo Director David Tetzlaff felt the need to do more to help educate guests about our cold-blooded neighbors.

"People always seemed to have more questions than we had time for after the Serpents show," explains Tetzlaff who is also one of the handlers. "By adding the Snake Sunbathing, we now have more time to speak with guests, calm their fears, or sometimes help instill a needed awareness of what's living around them."



## **Does your child's school or daycare have an action plan if a child is bitten by a snake? What about your business, association, or recreational sports team?**

Beyond the daily shows and new Snake Sunbathing, Naples Zoo also offers online resources for businesses, schools, organizations, and parents to put together their own action plan for the *extremely rare* but very real possibility of a venomous snake bite. Most people only have a passing knowledge of what to do and it's often wrong based on old TV shows and movies. Naples Zoo offers documents and links at [www.napleszoo.org/snakes](http://www.napleszoo.org/snakes) to inform you as you make up your individualized plan.

You'll also pick up some simple information like how to tell the difference between a non-venomous king snake and a venomous coral snake. Forget the poems about red, black, and yellow that you can forget or confuse in an emergency. Just remember a traffic light. If red is next to yellow -- stop. It's a coral snake and its venomous.

Naples Zoo is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization located at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road across from the Coastland Center mall in the heart of Naples. In addition to innovative presentations like Serpents: Fangs & Fiction and Planet Predator, the Zoo offers a historic botanical garden and many rare animals. Guests board the Primate Expedition Cruise to glide by islands inhabited by monkeys, lemurs, and apes living in natural habitats. Admission includes all shows and the boat ride (\$19.95 adults age 13+ / \$11.95 children 3 to 12, under 3 free. Twenty-five cents of each admission goes to the *Naples Zoo Conservation Fund* to support regional and international conservation projects.) Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult at least 18 years of age.

Visitors can also pick up a healthy lunch and snacks at the SUBWAY® Cafe and shop for wild gifts at tame prices in The ZOO Gift Shop. Pursuing its mission to delight guests with the wonders of the natural world to inspire the conservation of our planet's remaining wild areas and their wondrous inhabitants, the Zoo welcomes guests daily from 9:00 to 5:00 with the last ticket sold at 4:00. Zoo memberships and discount tickets are available at [www.napleszoo.org](http://www.napleszoo.org) or call (239) 262-5409.

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**Print quality photos of Snake Sunbathing at [www.napleszoo.org/press](http://www.napleszoo.org/press)**

\*Polling Reference: [www.gallup.com/poll/1891/Snakes-Top-List-Americans-Fears.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/poll/1891/Snakes-Top-List-Americans-Fears.aspx)

