

On my routine foot patrol last Friday afternoon at Lake Calavera, I came across a long, but rather thin, Pacific Diamondback stretched out on the trail. It's rare to see one this time of year, especially on a mostly cloudy and relatively cool day. Normally it's not a big deal to come across a rattlesnake in the field; this was my first sighting of the year.

My interest was piqued as I approached it and saw it was quite lethargic. I figured it had probably come out of hibernation early for the season due to warmer than usual temperatures. The lack of sun on that day made me think it was attempting to "energize its batteries." I was concerned both for the snake and public safety, fearing it may get run over by a bike or that someone may get too close and risk getting bitten.



When I hike the trails I always carry a good, thick pair of leather gloves as I never know when they might come in handy. I tossed one of my gloves near the snake to scare it enough to get off the trail and into the safety of the brush. The glove landed right next to it, and the previously lethargic rattler became startled. Instead of slithering off the trail, it went straight into my extra large glove for cover! I looked inside the glove, and there it stayed, seeming somewhat content, but coiled and ready to strike. I had trekking poles with me and prodded the "glove" from a safe distance, fully expecting the snake to make a run for it. Instead, it just hunkered down. The Preserve was quiet and nobody was around. Now what, I asked myself? I can't leave a glove on the trail with a deadly angry rattlesnake in it!

Moments later, along came two regular Calavera hikers, Gwen and PJ. I explained the situation and asked them if they could help me get my glove back. Gwen was a bit afraid, but PJ was all in! I planned to pinch the glove by the fingers with the tips of my trekking poles, and then shake it out into the brush while they got a picture of this with my camera phone. Easier said than done!

Keep in mind the rattler deep inside my glove provided all the drama as it continued to rattle away (recall the "Jaws" theme, Dun, dun, dun, dun... like that!). It was kind of weird holding a

squirring, buzzing glove, but in the end, I got a good shake and it came partway out. PJ got the picture, and the snake took to the safety of the brush.

Over the years I have had many opportunities to take pictures of rattlesnakes, but this one takes the prize! This presented more of a snakeskin fashion shoot as it was modeling my glove with the perfect backdrop, its natural habitat (the snake's, not the glove's). I had to get a shot of this!



PS: The picture of the rattler coming part way out of the glove seems as though it is suspended. The picture came out in such a way that the poles I was using were covered by the fence and the sign. Enjoy!

Todd

