

## **Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake**

*Crotalus adamanteus*

**Range:** Extreme southeastern United States

**Habitat:** Upland dry pine forest, pine and palmetto flatwood, sandhills and

coastal maritime hammocks, grass-sedge marshes and swamp forest, salt marshes and wet prairies during dry periods

**Diet:** Small mammals, especially rabbits and rats, and birds

**Size:** Up to 8 feet (average size is 4-6 feet)

**Reproduction:** After a 6-7 month gestation, the female gives birth to an average of 10 young, which stay with the mother only a few days before setting off on their own. At birth, neonates are venomous.

**Did you know?** The Eastern Diamondback is the largest venomous snake in North America. The largest on record measured close to 8.25 feet and weighed a whopping 34 pounds. They have a very distinguishing pattern on their backs, which consists of 24-35 dark brown to black diamonds, each outlined with a row of cream or yellowish scales.

Eastern Diamondbacks frequently use gopher burrows for shelter, coming out to warm themselves in the sun. They are a terrestrial snake and not adept at climbing. However, they are accomplished swimmers and can travel through saltwater, often for miles, to and from barrier islands.

Due to habitat loss and legalized rattlesnake hunts, this species is on the verge of becoming endangered. Conservation agencies are recommending they be listed as a threatened species.

**WDC's Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake:** Our male Eastern Diamondback was born from wild collected specimens in Georgia as part of a captive breeding program. WDC's female was a gift to the Curator from a private hobbyist in Michigan.

The male has shown some interesting bonding behavior with the female. He tends to get very agitated when we have to move her to clean the exhibit. Both snakes are typically near each other most of the time. This pair has successfully produced offspring. They were donated to a venom research lab where they are given excellent care.

