

Wildlife on Mount Baldo

Snakes



Snakes are “cold-blooded” (*ectothermic*) animals. This means they are unable to generate heat internally and need to get sufficient quantities of it from the environment for their vital functions. As a result, snakes have a limited need for nourishment: many species are able to fast for long periods of time. When it’s cold they slow down, becoming torpid, which may lead to true hibernation. The most common species on Mount Baldo are the asp viper and the green whip snake.



Asp viper

Order_ *Squamata*
 Suborder_ *Serpentes*
 Family_ *Viperidae*
 Genus_ *Vipera*
 Species_ *Vipera aspis* L.

An asp viper can be up to 80 cm long. You can recognize it from its elliptical vertical pupils, the upturned tip of the snout, the tail, which is distinct from the body, and the colour that ranges from light gray to reddish-brown. The dorsal color pattern is varied (zig-zag stripes, spots or uniform). Asps lives in cool sunny places, in areas with poor plant growth, meadows, pastures and especially rocks. They feed on mice, lizards and small birds. If they are not disturbed, asp vipers will not be a threat to humans: their bite is rarely fatal.



Green Whip Snake

Order_ *Squamata*
 Suborder_ *Serpentes*
 Family_ *Colubridae*
 Genus_ *Hierophis*
 Species_ *H. viridiflavus* Lac.

The green whip snake has a black back with greenish-yellow streaks, and a yellowish belly. Adults can reach 120-130 cm in length. It’s a daytime snake, very agile and fast, a good climber and a good swimmer. If disturbed, the green whip snake will quickly attempt to flee to a safe shelter; it defends itself by biting but its bites are not at all dangerous, as this snake is not venomous. It feeds on other reptiles, bird eggs and nestlings of small mammals and amphibians.

