

# Myths and Mysteries of the Mohave Green (Rattlesnake). Michael D. Cardwell

21 Mar 2018, 7:15, Ward 3 Conference Room, 1510 E Grant. Pre-meeting dinner at Rubios, 2906 N Campbell, 5:30.

Mike Cardwell has been fascinated as long as he can remember by creatures that others unreasonably fear. Mike began school as an undergraduate biology major and soon became a recognized authority on rattlesnakes, despite the distraction of a 32-year law enforcement career. In particular, Mike became passionate about finding answers to refute the many peculiar beliefs about “Mohave Greens.” While still a police administrator, Mike participated in several rattlesnake and snakebite research projects at Loma Linda University and conducted the first long-term radiotelemetry study of wild Mohave Rattlesnakes, which was prominently featured in Animal Planet’s *Venom ER* television series (2004). Upon leaving law enforcement, Mike completed an MS in ecology, evolution, and conservation at Cal State Sacramento with a thesis on changes in behavior by Mohave Rattlesnakes during drought. He now enjoys an appointment as adjunct researcher with San Diego State University and recently authored the 44-page Mohave Rattlesnake account for the book *Rattlesnakes of Arizona* (2016). Mike is also co-editor of *The Biology of Rattlesnakes* (2008) and served on the expert panel that revised the Wilderness Medical Society treatment guidelines for pitviper bites (2015).



Few creatures have provoked as much fear and folklore as the Mohave Rattlesnake (*Crotalus scutulatus*). For decades, the species has been frequently identified as the deadliest and/or most aggressive of rattlesnakes, not only in popular literature but in field guides, medical manuals, and other seemingly dependable publications. Mere mention of “Mohave Green” often generates bizarre stories about the species’ origin or behavior that are sometimes picked-up and spread by local news media.

Growing up in California’s Mohave Desert and studying Mohave Rattlesnakes for fifty years has given Mike Cardwell unique insight into this species’ behavior, ecology, and lethality, as well as the abundant folklore surrounding them. Mike will explain the origins of such mistaken assertions as Mohave Rattlesnakes being some sort of recent hybrid or that they are more deadly than other rattlesnakes. He will also share interesting facts about the early taxonomy of *Crotalus scutulatus* and the connection between the species’ type specimen and America’s military history and the so-called Apache Wars of the 1860s.

