

Advocates *for* Snake Preservation

Changing how people view & treat snakes



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Hundreds of Children Write To Residents of Sweetwater, Texas Supporting a No-kill Rattlesnake Roundup

Children Want Wildlife Celebrated Instead of Killed

SWEETWATER, Texas, March 7, 2023 – Nearly 1000 residents of Sweetwater, Texas are receiving handwritten letters from children asking them to urge the Sweetwater Jaycees to transform their rattlesnake roundup into a no-kill, educational festival where local wildlife is celebrated instead of slaughtered.

“I am writing to you because I am worried about rattlesnakes,” wrote Madeline, an elementary school student in Seattle, Washington. “Please support making rattlesnake roundups no-kill events!”

Advocates for Snake Preservation (ASP), a charity dedicated to changing how people view and treat snakes, and Team Rattlesnake Rebrand, an honors class at Cal Poly SLO led by Emily Taylor, PhD., provided lesson plans and materials about rattlesnake ecology and wildlife advocacy to teachers, scout leaders, and parents throughout the United States. Through this program, hundreds of children voiced their concerns for rattlesnakes in letters sent to residents of the town that hosts the largest rattlesnake roundup in the world and asked them to pressure the Sweetwater Jaycees to transform their roundup into a no-kill, educational festival.

“Rattlesnakes actually control rodent populations; they reduce the spread of disease,” wrote Maya, a high school student in Apison, Tennessee. “I write to ask you to reconsider attending the rattlesnake roundup this year for the sake of these amazing creatures!”

At these annual roundups, wild rattlesnakes are rounded up by the thousands from their native habitats to be displayed and slaughtered in public spectacles. Professional collectors, not bound by ‘bag’ or ‘take’ limits, are awarded with cash prizes for bringing in the most and biggest snakes. Most snakes are caught by pouring gasoline into their winter dens, which pollutes surrounding land and water and impacts up to 350 other wildlife species.

Conservationists have long criticized rattlesnake roundups, arguing that they contradict principles of science-based wildlife management. There is no evidence that human intervention is needed to regulate rattlesnake populations in Texas or elsewhere; like other wild animals, snake populations are controlled by natural processes like food availability, predation, and disease. Nor is there any evidence that rattlesnake roundups benefit wildlife or the ecosystem. Both ethical hunters and conservation biologists recognize the importance of responsible stewardship over all wildlife and ecosystems.

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“Rattlesnakes are really shy creatures,” wrote Cielo, a student at Aldo Leopold Middle School in Silver City, NM. “Their rattle sound is not one of ferociousness but one of screaming.”

Children, who understand that rattlesnake roundups are cruel and antiquated, are joining conservationists in urging the Sweetwater Jaycees to transform their roundup into a no-kill, educational festival, as many communities have done.

“Growing up in the rural south, I recognize the importance of community festivals to our culture and economy,” said Melissa Amarello, conservation biologist and Executive Director of ASP. “But rattlesnake roundups have been rightfully relegated to a thing of the past in many areas, and the success of those that now celebrate, rather than slaughter, native wildlife demonstrates that we can keep our festivals and the income they generate while protecting our natural heritage.”

For more information, visit www.RattlesnakeRoundups.com.

Advocates for Snake Preservation (ASP) promotes compassionate conservation and coexistence with snakes through science, education, and advocacy. As important predators and prey, snakes are an essential part of a vibrant, functioning planet, but negative attitudes about snakes may be the biggest barrier to their conservation. ASP provides solutions to everyday human-snake conflicts that sometimes end badly for people and often prove fatal for snakes and makes snakes more familiar and less scary by busting myths and sharing stories of what snakes are really like. ASP was founded in 2014 and is based in Silver City, New Mexico. For more information, visit www.snakes.ngo.

Team Rattlesnake Rebrand is an honors seminar for students at the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California. Students learn and test methods for “rebranding” rattlesnakes via public engagement. For inquiries, contact instructor Dr. Emily Taylor (etaylor@calpoly.edu) or public affairs and communications specialist Nick Wilson (nwilso28@calpoly.edu).