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## Rattlesnake Roundup

Greg Young

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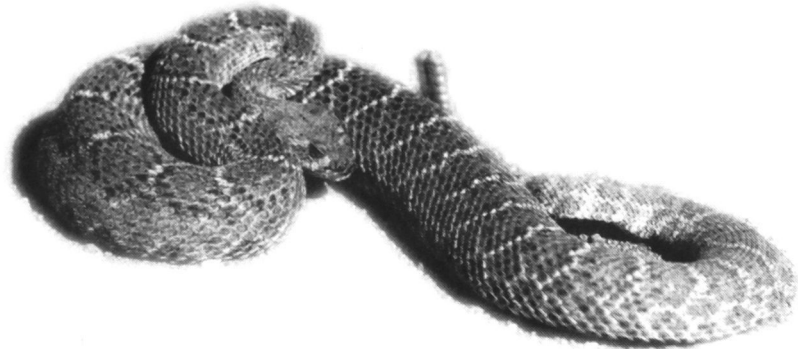
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# Rattlesnake Roundup

by Greg Young

Each year I hear the commercial:  
“Come to the world’s largest rattlesnake roundup.”  
I consider taking the family to eat fried snake flesh,  
to marvel at handlers milking venom into jars.  
Neighbors tell me rattlers are not aggressive.  
“You’ve lived here all your life,” they say,  
“walked right by them without knowing it.”  
I think of how March is early snake season,  
how in June I will wade through waist-high weeds,  
lift hay bales from the shadows in the barn.

Week-enders flock to Sweetwater, Texas.  
I see them on the six o’clock news, families  
dressed in shorts and sandals. A little girl in dog ears  
taps the glass. Tomorrow is the last day to see them  
before they end up as a belt buckle or a trophy—  
a coiled diamondback mounted on a board, encased  
in glass, displayed at eye-level in an executive suite.  
More will taunt them before their appointed time.  
They will cheer the rattlesnake queen, chew  
the rubbery meat. I’ll stay home, wear boots,  
step lightly, shake the rattle in my gourd.



*Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall*

