

## The Alameda Whipsnake: Claremont Canyon's Threatened Species

by Jerry Kent

ALAMEDA WHIPSNAKES HAVE BEEN FOUND in upper Claremont Canyon and on adjacent UC, EBMUD and EBRPD property along the high ridge lands between Tilden and Sibley regional parks. This gentle, non-poisonous snake (*Masticophis lateralis euryxanthus*), endemic to Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, and nowhere else, gained Endangered Species Act protection when it was listed as a federally threatened species in 1997. The State of California had previously listed it as threatened in 1971.

In May 2013 the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued a biological opinion covering FEMA-funded grant projects (see next page) for fire hazard reduction work in the East Bay hills. This biological opinion describes and analyzes the impact of proposed work on the Alameda whipsnake and its critical habitat, along with a detailed list of mitigations required of UC, Oakland, and EBRPD as recipients of the grant. The full text of this opinion may be found on the Conservancy's home page at [www.claremontcanyon.org](http://www.claremontcanyon.org).



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*ALAMEDA WHIPSNAKE IS SOOTY BLACK with distinct yellow-orange stripes running down each side. These snakes are often small but can reach up to four feet in length. They feed on lizards, rattlesnakes, small mammals and birds. Although the Alameda whipsnake tends to be found in shrub vegetation, they frequently venture into adjacent habitats, including grassland, oak savanna, and, occasionally, oak-bay woodlands.*