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Do snakes rattle your nerves? The joys of warm-weather riding!

About a third of the way up Old LaHonda Kevin spotted this guy, at first hiding at the edge of the road before deciding to come out and show some skin. Skin and a bit of tail which might sound like a male fantasy but probably not in this case. This guy was the right size and, I think, coloring, for a rattlesnake, and pretty sure I saw a rattle at the end of the tail (you can barely make out the appearance of the rattle in the inset). That plus a little bit of aggressiveness as he raised his head about a foot off the ground. Not your typical gopher snake behaviour, but rattlesnakes typically have a wider head.

Click on image for closer shot of the snake's head, to help identify as either Gopher or Rattlesnake (looks more like a Gopher Snake head under closer inspection)

The original plan went to pieces when Kevin developed quite a nasty headache prior to the ride (a "cluster" headache I'm told it's called), but, somewhat against his wishes, I did get him out on the road. He was giving me the silent treatment until we got about a third of the way up Old LaHonda when he yells to me, "Did you see the snake?" No, I hadn't seen it, but he circled back to show me where it was (although between the time he'd seen it and then went back to find it, the snake had literally holed itself up in a hole in the embankment, but eventually came back out to find out what was going on).

This guy was pretty big, and pretty mobile. The warm weather gets them moving faster, but also a bit more aggressive, so that, once settled into the drainage area along the side of the road, he lifted his head up about a foot or so, definitely trying to strike a threatening pose. Normally, I remove snakes from the roadway so they don't get run over, but thankfully this guy wasn't in the road (close though) and besides, I'm not going to play around much with what might be a good-sized rattlesnake. So instead we stayed around for a bit, warning anyone riding up the hill to stay to the other side of the road (since this guy was easily within striking distance of an uphill cyclists' legs). Check this out for a prior ride where we came across a no-question-about-it rattlesnake.

Eventually we moved on, heading over the top of Old LaHonda and down the other side to San Gregorio. The original plan had been to head to Pescadero and return via West Alpine, but that wasn't going to happen, not with Kevin still feeling a bit under the weather, so instead we went north to Los Lobitos, took in that nasty steep section and then looped back to Tunitas.

Only 47 miles with about 5100ft of climbing, but still a nice ride, and enough to keep my weight about two pounds below where it was last year.