



ASI SNAKE BOOKLET

COMMON SNAKES OF MONTAGU

Copyright: Johan Marais - African Snakebite Institute
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SNAKE COURSES

The ASI offers both public and corporate snake courses.

Public courses take place at various venues throughout South Africa.

The corporate training is done on-site, both in South Africa, as well as in 19 African countries.

We pride ourselves on teaching only the safest snake handling methods, to ensure the safety of both the handler and the snake.

We offer a range of different course options, including snake awareness, first aid for snakebite, venomous snake handling, venomous snake handling bootcamps, as well as advanced first aid for snakebite, advanced venomous snake handling and a reptile photography course.

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www.AFRICANSNAKEBITEINSTITUTE.com



INTRODUCTION

The African Snakebite Institute is the leading training provider of Snake Awareness, First Aid for Snakebite and Venomous Snake Handling courses in Africa as well as the largest distributor of quality snake handling equipment, snake PPE and snakebite first aid kits. Our aim is to spread snake awareness as far and wide as possible, which is why we've launched our new free E-Book series.

Our CEO, Johan Marais is a well-known herpetologist with over 40 years of experience with snakes. He has worked at various reptile facilities and has collaborated on a variety of scientific studies with some of the world's leading herpetologists. He is also one of Africa's most prominent authors of snake books and has written the best-sellers *A Complete Guide to Snakes of Southern Africa*, *Snakes and Snakebite in Southern Africa* and *First Aid for Snakebite*, to mention just a few.



COMMON SNAKES OF MONTAGU

The Western Cape has 40 different types of snakes. Montagu has around 18 species of snake. Of these three species are considered potentially deadly, two species are considered dangerous and one species can inflict a painful bite. We've listed the common species in this booklet, showing venomosity, key ID features, full distribution, and snakebite info for venomous species.

Snakebite is problematic with most bites reported from the hot, wet regions in the eastern part of the country. More than 4,000 snakebites are reported annually with over 1,000 victims being hospitalised. Of those around 60% show signs of envenomation and the remaining 40% show no symptoms – these are referred to as dry bites or may be bites from mildly venomous or harmless snakes. In a recent 5 year survey of 879 snakebite cases in Zululand, nearly 98% of victims showed typical signs of cytotoxic envenomation – largely Mozambique Spitting Cobra, Puff Adder, Common Night Adder and Stiletto Snake bites. Despite their relative frequency, if treated correctly in hospital, these bites are rarely fatal. Most bites occurred in the early evening in the warm wet summer months from November to April/May. Around 84% of the bites were inflicted well below the knee. Less than 11% of these victims received antivenom and none of the bites in this survey were fatal.

Generally speaking we have 10 – 12 fatal snakebites a year in South Africa and these are invariably caused by the Black Mamba and Cape Cobra. Both of these snakes have a potent neurotoxic venom that may quickly affect breathing.

SNAKE HANDLING EQUIPMENT

The African Snakebite Institute is the leading provider of quality snake handling equipment in Africa. View our range online [here](http://www.AFRICANSNAKEBITEINSTITUTE.com).



COMMON SNAKES OF MONTAGU



Montagu has around 18 species of snakes. Three species are considered highly venomous. Two species can give a bad bite and one might require stitches. Five species are mildly venomous. Seven species are harmless to humans.

HIGHLY VENOMOUS

Has caused human fatalities

VENOMOUS

Painful bite, but does not require antivenom

MILDLY VENOMOUS

Not thought to be harmful to humans

HARMLESS

Not dangerous to humans



Cape Cobra - adult
(*Naja nivea*)



Cape Coral Snake
(*Aspidelaps lubricus*)



Boomslang - male
(*Dispholidus typus*)



Puff Adder
(*Bitis arietans*)



Karoo Sand Snake
(*Psammophis notostictus*)



Spotted Skaapsteker
(*Psammophylax rhombatus*)



Spotted Harlequin
(*Homoroselaps lacteus*)



Red Adder
(*Bitis rubida*)



Common Slug-eater
(*Duberrina lutrix*)



Dwarf Beaked Snake
(*Dipsosa multimaculata*) - photo Marius Burger



Herald Snake
(*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*)



Mole Snake
(*Pseudaspis cana*)



Brown House Snake
(*Boaedon capensis*)



Spotted Rock Snake
(*Alopecion guttatum*)

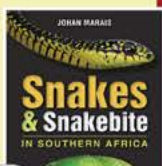


Common Egg-eater
(*Dasypeltis scabra*)



Delalande's Beaked Blind Snake
(*Rhinotyphlops lalandei*)

JOHAN MARAIS is the author of various books on reptiles including the best-seller *A Complete Guide to Snakes of Southern Africa*. He is a popular public speaker and CEO of the African Snakebite Institute. The African Snakebite Institute (ASI) offers a variety of courses including Snake Awareness, Scorpion Awareness and Venomous Snake Handling. ASI is accredited by the International Society of Zoological Sciences (ISZS) and Travel Doctor-approved service provider. The courses are also accredited by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). ASI is the largest provider of quality snake handling and safety equipment in Africa.



FREE ASI SNAKES APP

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EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

IN THE EVENT OF A SNAKE BITE

- 1 Keep the victim calm, immobilized and transport the victim to the closest hospital **without delay**.
- 2 If the victim stops breathing, resort to artificial respiration or make use of a Bag Valve Mask.
- 3 Call the Poison Information Centre help-line for further advice: 0861 555 777.

DO NOT

- ... apply a tourniquet.
- ... cut and suck the wound.
- ... use ice or very hot water.
- ... give the victim alcohol.
- ... apply electric shock.
- ... inject antivenom randomly. Antivenom (if required) must be administered by a doctor in a hospital environment.

Download the high resolution poster [here](https://www.asiorg.co.za).

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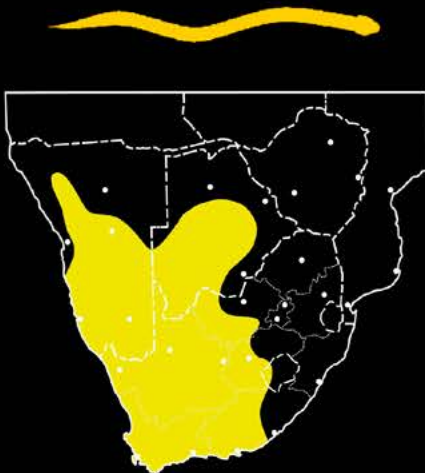
HIGHLY VENOMOUS



Cape Cobra

(*Naja nivea*)

Maximum Length:
2.3 m



Other names:

Geelslang, Kaapse Kobra, Koper kapel

This snake varies in colour from near black to dark or light brown, beige, yellow or speckled while juveniles have a dark band on the throat. The Cape Cobra is easily confused with the Mole Snake and the Black Spitting Cobra. It is by far our most dangerous cobra and with the Black Mamba it accounts for the majority of fatal snake bites in South Africa. The Cape Cobra may stand its ground if threatened and is quick to form a hood and bite. It occurs largely in the Cape provinces but extends into the Free State, Northwest, southern Botswana and Namibia. The venom is potentially neurotoxic causing progressive weakness and may affect breathing rapidly. Victims need urgent hospitalisation and in a severe bite antivenom is essential.



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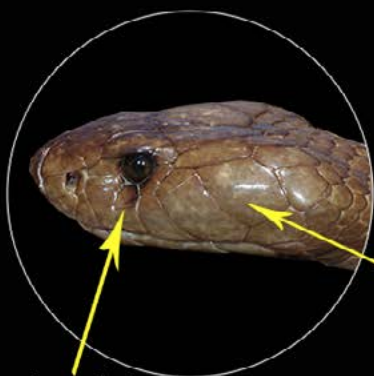
ASI EASY ID

Cape Cobra (*Naja nivea*)

HIGHLY VENOMOUS

Average length: 1.2 - 1.6 m. Maximum length: 2.3 m

Can be confused with: Mole Snakes, Black Spitting Cobras, Snouted Cobras



Often has a dark mark under the eye

Chunky cheeks for venom storage

Varies in colour from light yellow to brown, gold and black.
Often a speckled mix of colours

Spreads an impressive hood

Juveniles have a dark band on throat



Ventral scales often visible on sides

Belly usually same colour as the rest of snake

Usually have dark tipped tails

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Snakebite Profile

Cape Cobra

Naja nivea



Risk of Bites

The Cape Cobra is commonly encountered in suburbia, especially in areas where rodents are abundant. If cornered, it is quick to rear up and form a hood and if approached closely will bite readily.



Most Bites

Most victims are bitten on the lower leg or on a hand, often when attempting to capture or kill the snake.

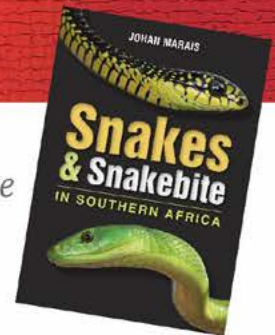


Symptoms & Venom

A potent and fast-acting neurotoxic venom that is quite similar to Black Mamba venom in its effects. It results in pins and needles in the lips, nausea, excessive sweating, drooping eyelids, difficulty in swallowing and eventually drowsiness and muscle pain followed by paralysis and respiratory failure. Some victims also experience some swelling. In severe cases victims become unresponsive within less than one hour.

See pages 49-51

– *Snakes and Snakebite in Southern Africa* (2024).



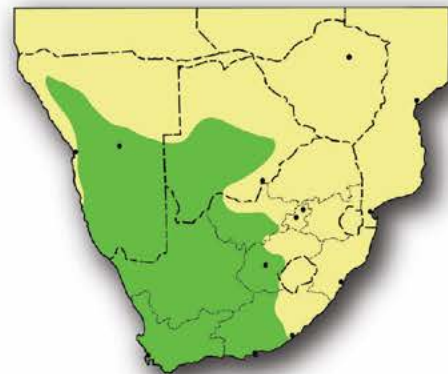
First Aid

Immobilise and reassure the patient, who must lie down in a rescue position. Immediately arrange transport to a hospital with emergency facilities. If far from a hospital, apply a pressure bandage (Page 19 of *Snakes and Snakebite in Southern Africa*). Resort to artificial respiration if the victim stops breathing.



Medical Treatment

In cases of severe envenomation patients are intubated and ventilated if they are not breathing. They are treated with 12-15 vials of SAVP Polyvalent antivenom. Additional vials of antivenom may be required at a later stage. Even after receiving antivenom, patients may remain unresponsive for a day or two.



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HIGHLY VENOMOUS



Boomslang (*Dispholidus typus*)

Maximum Length:
2.1 m



Other names:

Boomslang

The Boomslang is largely tree-living but may descend to the ground to bask. In trees it poses no threat to humans as it is extremely reluctant to bite, and bites are rare. Juveniles are grey with a massive emerald, green eye but change to the adult colours around a length of 1 m. Most males are bright green, sometimes with black between the scales, but in the Cape Provinces they are usually black above with green, yellow or orange sides. Females are usually brown to grey in colour. Boomslang venom is haemotoxic and compromises the blood clotting mechanism, causing uncontrolled bleeding if not treated. The South African Vaccine Producers manufacture a monovalent antivenom for bites from Boomslang that is very effective.



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ASI EASY ID

Boomslang (*Dispholidus typus*)

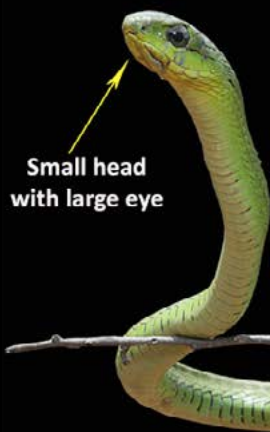
HIGHLY VENOMOUS

Average length: 1.2 m. Maximum length: 2.1 m

Often confused with: Black Mambas, Green Mambas, green snakes and sand snakes

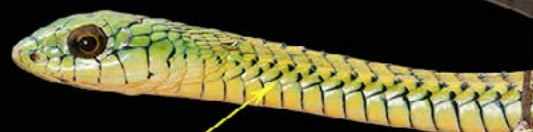
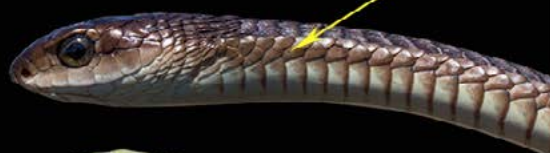


Females are normally olive grey to brown or brick red in colour



Small head with large eye

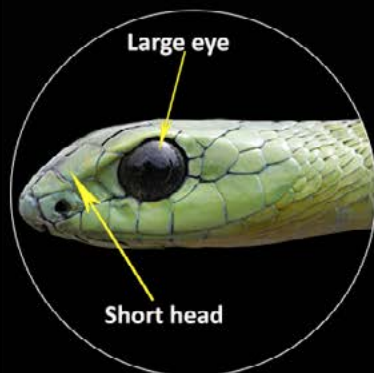
Scales are keeled giving snake a rough texture



Most males are green in colour



Males in the Cape are usually black above with yellow, green or orange sides



Large eye

Short head



Juveniles have big emerald green eyes

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SNAKEBITE PROFILE

BOOMSLANG

Dispholidus typus



Risk of Bites

Bites are not common in South Africa. This snake lives in trees and shrubs and interactions with humans are infrequent. It is a placid snake that only bites when provoked or handled. If spotted, it is quick to flee higher up into trees.



Most Bites

Bites occur when a basking snake is accidentally stepped on or grabbed, or when it is handled.

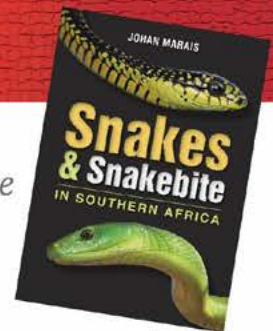


Symptoms & Venom

Drop for drop the Boomslang has the most potent venom of any snake in Africa. It is slow-acting, but potentially haemotoxic and symptoms include bleeding from the bite site, the nose, mucous membranes and internal bleeding.

See pages 79-81

– *Snakes and Snakebite in Southern Africa* (2024).



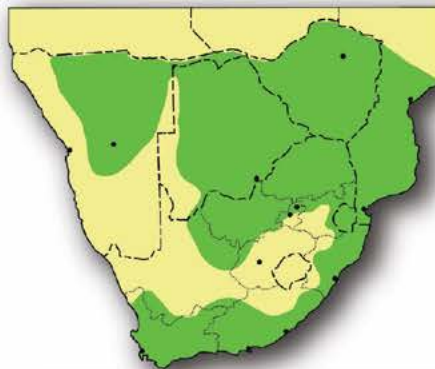
First Aid

Immobilise and reassure the patient. Elevate the affected limb. Promptly transport the victim to the nearest hospital that has emergency facilities. Avoid all other first aid remedies including bandages.



Medical Treatment

In cases of severe envenomation patients are treated with monovalent Boomslang antivenom. The initial dosage is two vials but, in some cases, a third vial may be required. This antivenom is produced by the South African Vaccine Producers. It is a Schedule 4 drug, therefore a script is required should one wish to purchase it. It comes in a 10 ml vial and must be refrigerated. It has a three year shelf life.



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HIGHLY VENOMOUS



Puff Adder

(*Bitis arietans*)

Maximum Length:
1.4 m



Other names:

Pofadder, Imbululu

The Puff Adder is widespread over much of southern Africa and further north into Africa. It is a heavy-bodied snake that relies on its excellent camouflage and is reluctant to move. Much of its life is spent in camouflage mode and recent research has shown that when hiding, the Puff Adder will not hiss or strike when approached, as this would give away its presence. It is an ambush hunter that will coil up into a striking position and await its prey. This can last several days or even weeks. Toads are lured closer with flicking of the tongue. Puff Adder venom is potently cytotoxic, causing severe pain, swelling, blistering and in many cases severe tissue damage. Polyvalent antivenom is effective.



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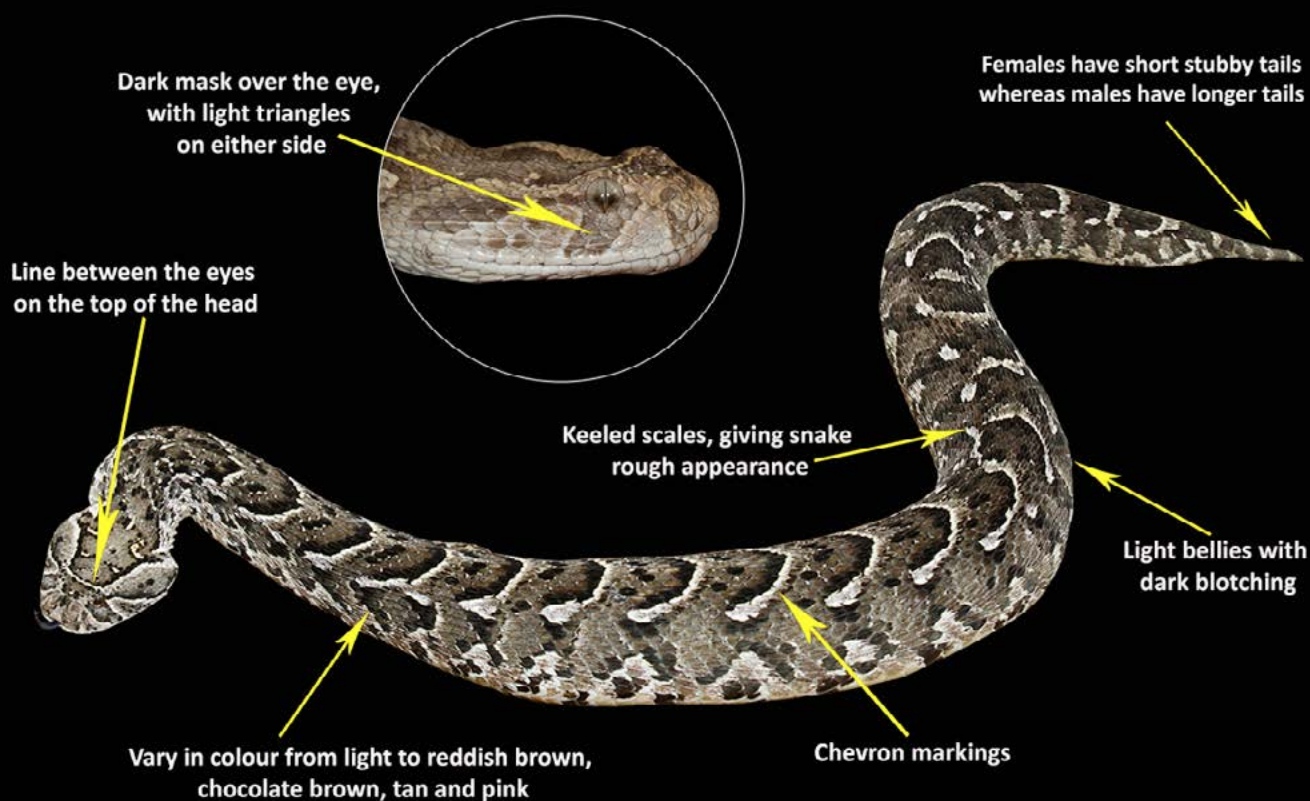
ASI EASY ID

Puff Adder (*Bitis arietans*)

HIGHLY VENOMOUS

Average length: 90 cm. Maximum length: 1.4 m

Often confused with: night adders and Berg Adders



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SNAKEBITE PROFILE

PUFF ADDER

Bitis arietans



Risk Of Bites

Bites are common as this snake is widespread throughout most of southern Africa. Along with the Mozambique Spitting Cobra, these two snakes account for the majority of serious snakebites in southern Africa. Dogs are at risk and often get bitten when attempting to kill the snake.



Most Bites

Most victims are bitten at night when accidentally stepping on the snake, but bites are also inflicted during the day when the snake is basking. Most bites are on the feet or lower legs.

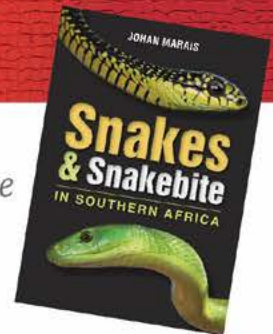


Symptoms & Venom

The venom is potently cytotoxic as well as haemotoxic. Symptoms include severe pain, progressive swelling, bleeding from the fang punctures, blistering and tissue damage. The lymph nodes may also be affected. Dogs may perish after a bite from this snake, unless treated with polyvalent antivenom, if required.

See pages 26-28

– *Snakes and Snakebite
in Southern Africa*
(2024).



First Aid

Immobilise and reassure the patient. Elevate the affected limb and remove tight clothing and jewelry. Promptly transport the victim to the nearest hospital that has emergency facilities. Avoid all other first aid remedies including bandages.



Medical Treatment

In cases of severe envenomation where there are clear signs of progressive swelling, which extends more than 10-15cm per hour above the bite site, doctors will treat such bites with 6 ampoules (or more) of polyvalent antivenom. Anti-inflammatories (NSAID's) and antibiotics are not indicated in the short term. Fasciotomies are rarely justified and should generally be avoided. In cases where patients suffer tissue damage, surgery may be required but rarely in the first few days.

Fatalities are rare.



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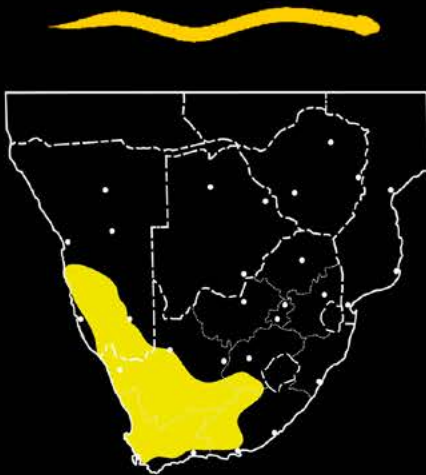


VENOMOUS



Cape Coral Snake (*Aspidelaps l. lubricus*)

**Maximum Length:
60 cm**



Other names:

Koraalslang, Koraalkobra

A colourful nocturnal snake that is widespread in the drier western part of southern Africa. It shelters under rocks during the day and moves around at night, often seen crossing roads. The Cape Coral Snake inhabits outcrops and stony, dry, sandy regions in arid savanna, Karoo scrub, Fynbos and desert. If confronted it will lift its head off the ground, flatten the neck region and hiss while striking out repeatedly. This snake may be confused with the harmless Tiger snakes of the genus *Telescopus*. A popular snake in the illegal pet trade. Its venom is predominantly neurotoxic and may affect breathing. There is no antivenom for the bite of this snake and bites must be treated symptomatically.



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ASI EASY ID

Cape Coral Snake (*Aspidelaps lubricus lubricus*)

VENOMOUS

Average length: 35 cm. Maximum length: 60 cm

Often confused with: Spotted Harlequin Snakes and tiger snakes



Large rostral
scale

Tear under eye

Black bars
on throat

Spreads a
narrow hood
when threatened

Colour red to orange
with black crossbars

Belly yellowish-white
with black bars

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Snakebite Profile

CAPE CORAL SNAKE

Aspidelaps lubricus lubricus



Risk of Bites

Bites to humans are not common. This snake inhabits rocky outcrops and dry sandy areas. It is quick to form a hood, hiss and strike repeatedly when startled or cornered.



Most Bites

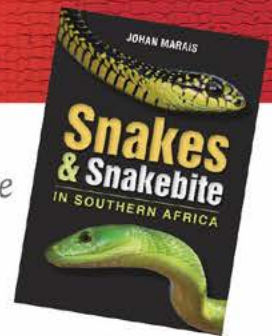
Bites are not common, except for incidents where snake keepers are bitten by captive snakes.



Symptoms & Venom

The venom is predominantly neurotoxic. Symptoms may include pain and swelling. There is no antivenom for the bite of this snake. No human fatalities have been recorded.

See pages 70-71
– *Snakes and Snakebite
in Southern Africa*
(2024).



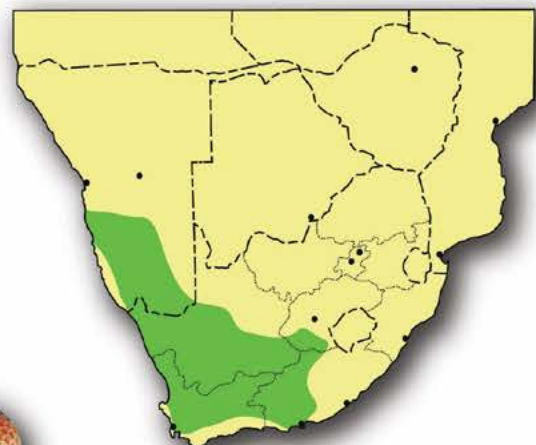
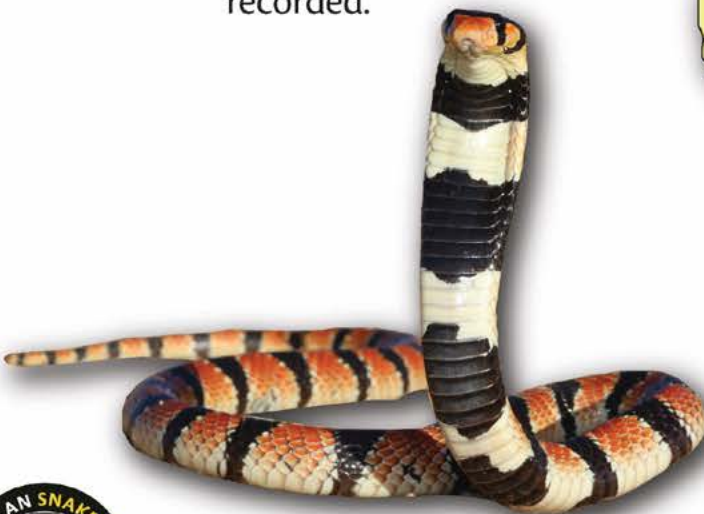
First Aid

Immobilise and reassure the patient and elevate the affected limb. Promptly transport the victim to the nearest hospital that has emergency facilities. Avoid all other first aid remedies including bandages.



Medical Treatment

There is no antivenom for bites from this snake, and doctors will treat symptomatically.



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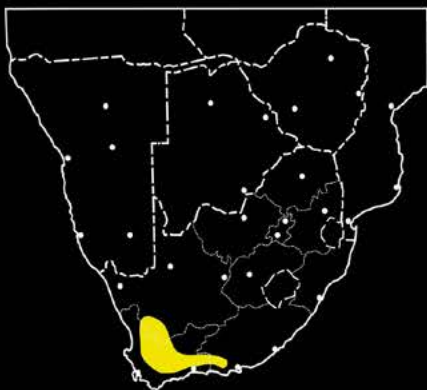


VENOMOUS



Red Adder (*Bitis rubida*)

Maximum Length:
44 cm



Other names:

Rooiadder

A small adder averaging around 30 cm with a maximum length of 44 cm. The Red Adder is endemic to the Western Cape and adjacent Northern Cape as well as the western Eastern Cape, where it inhabits rocky mountain slopes and gravel flats in the Klein Karoo and Fynbos.

Like many other small adders, it is largely active in the early mornings and late afternoons and is fond of hiding under shrubs or rocks. The horns, if present, are highly reduced. It feeds on lizards, mainly geckos, skinks, agamas and lacertids but also takes small rodents.

The venom of this snake is thought to be like that of other small adders, causing pain and swelling.



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ASI EASY ID

Red Adder (*Bitis rubida*)

VENOMOUS

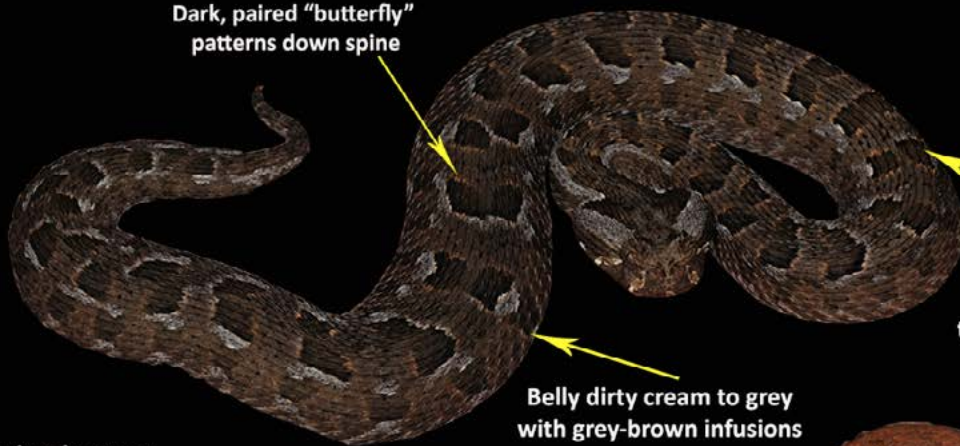
Average length: 25 - 30 cm. Maximum length: 44 cm

Often confused with: Berg Adders, Puff Adders



Distribution is important

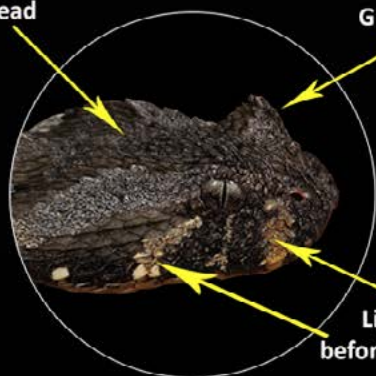
Dark, paired "butterfly" patterns down spine



Varies in colour from well-patterned with black and grey to a patternless, brick-red form

Belly dirty cream to grey with grey-brown infusions

Dark triangle on top of head



Greatly reduced horns above eyes

Light streaks before and after eye



Photo © Bill Branch

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SNAKEBITE PROFILE

RED ADDER

Bitis rubida

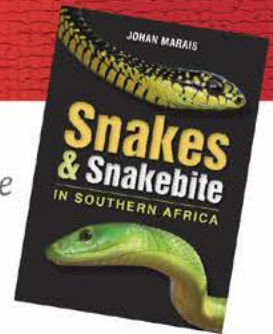


Risk of Bites

This snake has a limited distribution in South Africa and bites are extremely rare.

See pages 18-22

– *Snakes and Snakebite in Southern Africa* (2024).



Most Bites

Due to its limited distribution, bites would most likely be to people trying to catch or photograph a snake.



Symptoms & Venom

Little is known about the venom of this snake. It is largely cytotoxic, causing pain and swelling.



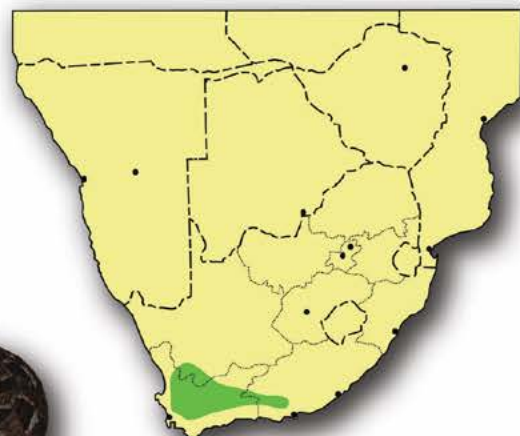
First Aid

Immobilise and reassure the patient and elevate the affected limb. Remove tight clothing and jewelry. Transport the victim to the nearest hospital or doctor for pain management. Avoid all other first aid remedies including bandages.



Medical Treatment

There is no antivenom for bites from this snake, and doctors would treat a bite symptomatically.



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CAN INFLICT A NASTY BITE



Mole Snake (*Pseudaspis cana*)

Maximum Length:
2.1 m



Other names:
Molslang

The Mole snake is a muscular day-active snake that spends much of its time down rodent burrows in search of food. It is widespread and occurs throughout most of Southern Africa. It is often encountered in the Cape, but not seen commonly elsewhere in the country. Individuals vary from black to dark brown, medium brown, light brown or even brick red, while the juveniles have bright markings. This snake is not venomous but does have pin-sharp teeth and is capable of quite serious bites that may even require stitches. Mole Snakes are often confused with the Cape Cobra and the venomous stiletto snake even though it does not resemble them.



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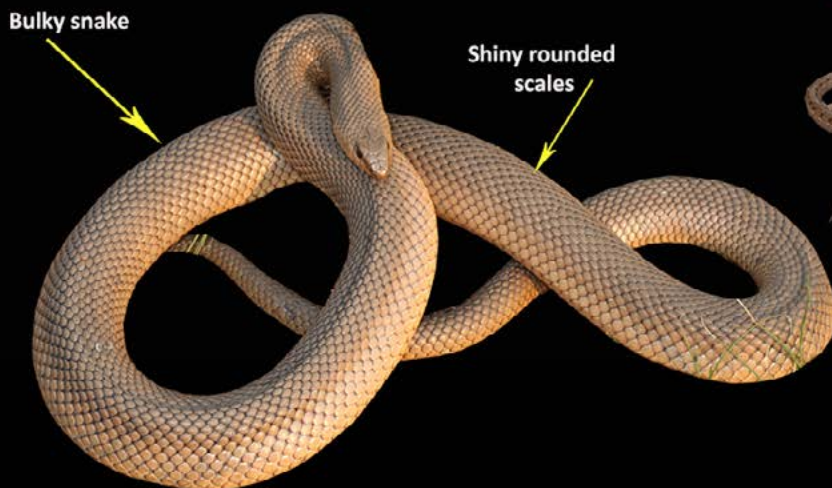
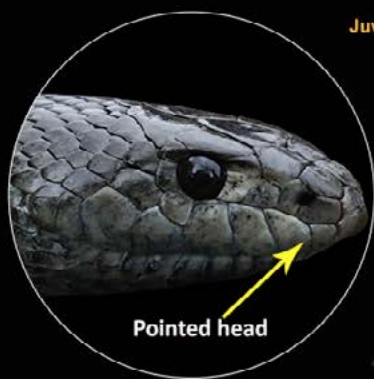
ASI EASY ID

Mole Snake (*Pseudaspis cana*)

NON-VENOMOUS, BUT CAN INFLICT A NASTY BITE

Average length: 1.2 m. Maximum length: 2.1 m

Often confused with: Cape Cobras, and Snouted Cobras.
Juveniles are often confused with egg-eaters, night adders and skaapstekers



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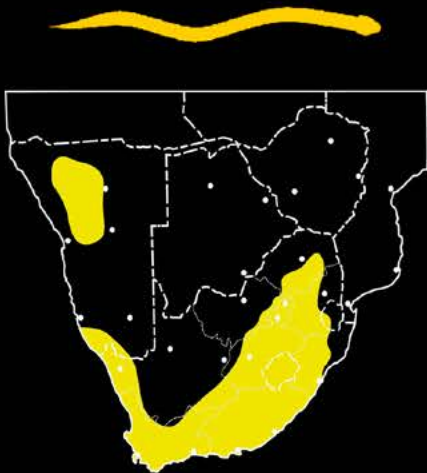


MILDLY VENOMOUS



Spotted Skaapsteker (*Psammophylax rhombeatus*)

Maximum Length:
1.4 m



Other names:

Rhombic Skaapsteker; Gespikkelde Skaapsteker

A fast-moving diurnal snake that inhabits grasslands, fynbos, moist savanna and semi-desert areas. It is a nervous snake and is quick to escape, either into a bush or grass tuft or under a rock. The name 'Skaapsteker' came from the mistaken belief that these abundant snakes accounted for sheep deaths, when the actual culprit was probably the Cape Cobra. This is also one of few African snakes that coil around and protect their eggs – the Southern African Python being the other. The Spotted Skaapsteker feeds on rodents, lizards, birds, frogs and other snakes. The venom of this snake is mild and poses no threat to humans.



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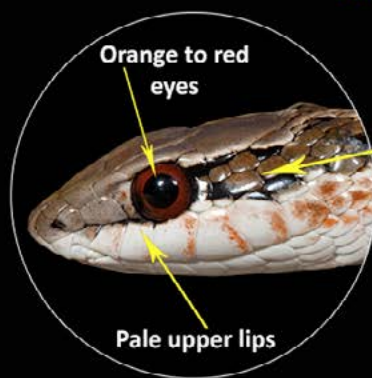
ASI EASY ID

Spotted Skaapsteker (*Psammophylax rhombeatus*)

MILDLY VENOMOUS

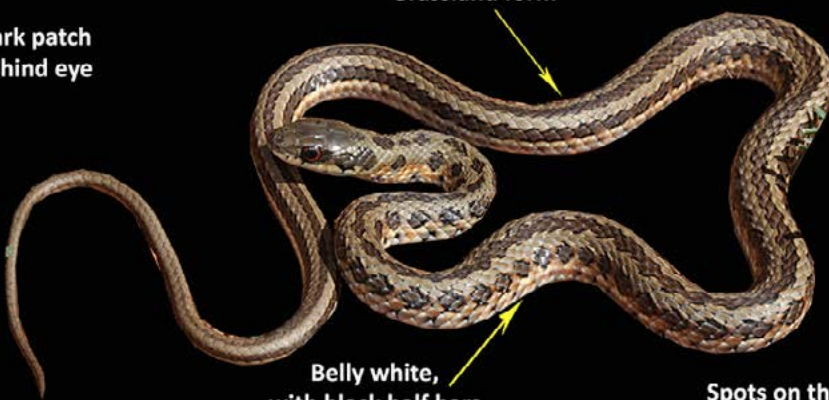
Average length: 40 - 60 cm. Maximum length: 1.4 m

Often confused with: other sand and grass snakes and Striped Skaapsteker



Dark patch behind eye

Grassland form



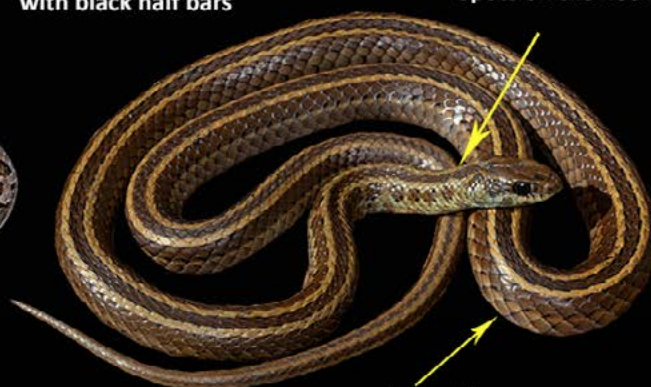
Belly white, with black half bars

Spots on the neck

Cape form



Cape form has red and blue flecks



Striped form

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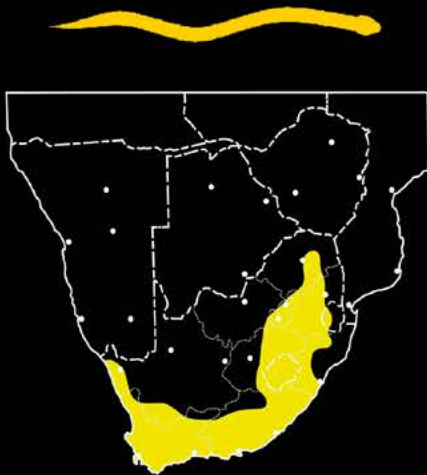


MILDLY VENOMOUS



Spotted Harlequin Snake (*Homoroselaps lacteus*)

Maximum Length:
65 cm



Other names:

Gevlekte Kousbandjie

This colourful little snake averages 30 – 40 cm with a maximum length of 65 cm. It varies greatly in colour, depending on locality, and is found in fynbos, lowland forest, moist savanna and grassland. The Spotted Harlequin Snake is quite common in some areas and is found in deserted termite mounds, under rocks and logs or building debris. When exposed it will wriggle violently to escape. It feeds on legless skinks, blind snakes, other snakes and small lizards. Little is known of the venom of this snake, but bites where the snake has been allowed to chew have resulted in pain, swelling and discoloration as well as painful glands. Swelling subsides within 2-3 days.



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ASI EASY ID

Spotted Harlequin Snake (*Homoroselaps lacteus*)

MILDLY VENOMOUS

Average length: 40 cm. Maximum length: 65 cm

Often confused with: Cape Coral Snakes and Aurora House Snakes



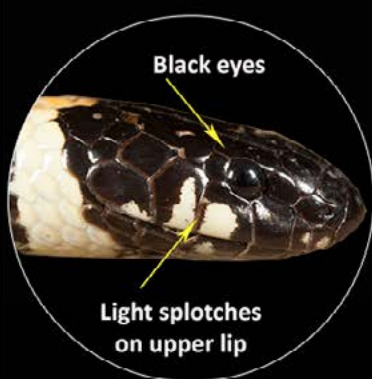
Grassland form usually black
in colour with yellow spots



Yellow to orange central line
of spots down the length of the snake

Striped form has dark
banding on head and neck

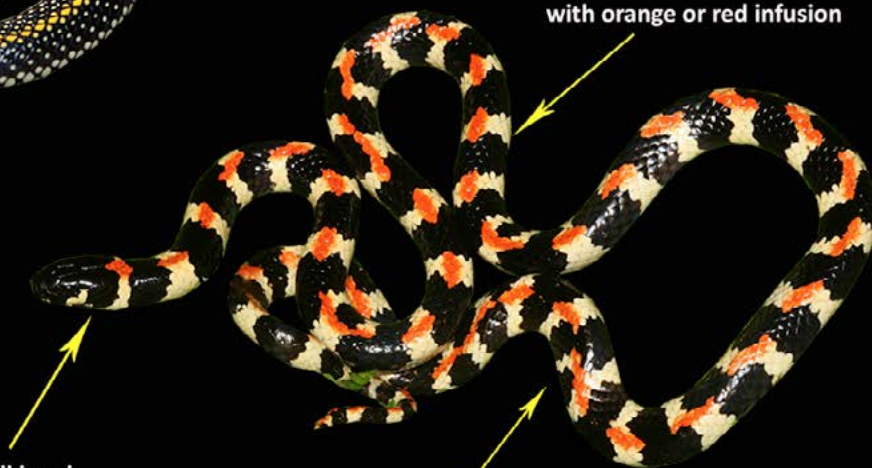
Standard form is a black snake
with yellow transverse bands,
with orange or red infusion



Black eyes

Light splotches
on upper lip

Small head



Dusky yellow belly
with grey infusions

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MILDLY VENOMOUS



Dwarf Beaked Snake

(*Dipsina multimaculata*)

Maximum Length:
50 cm



Other names:

Dwerghaakneusslang

A small well-patterned snake that averages 30-35 cm but may reach 50 cm in length. This species varies in colour, from tan-brown to reddish with darker splotches. There is usually a light V on the base of the head.

It lives on gravel plains with dispersed bushes in the Namib Desert, Karoo scrub and arid savanna. It usually hides at the base of a bushes or rocks and will disappear down a hole if disturbed. It hunts lizards, ambushing them under bushes. It is a docile snake but may assume a coiled position when threatened, mimicking the Horned Adder. The venom of this species has little effect on humans.



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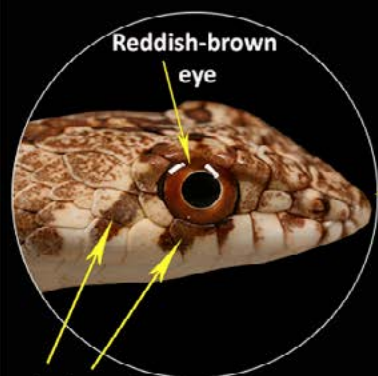
ASI EASY ID

Dwarf Beaked Snake (*Dipsina multimaculata*)

MILDLY VENOMOUS

Average length: 30 - 35 cm. Maximum length: 50 cm

Often confused with: Juvenile Mole Snakes, skaapstekers, dwarf adders



Reddish-brown
eye

Sharp, pointed face

Rough, textured
appearance

Pale buff to ash-grey
or light greyish to reddish-brown above,
with darker blotches

Dark angled
blotch below
and behind eye



Belly pinkish-cream
to white with
dark spots

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MILDLY VENOMOUS



Karoo Sand Snake (*Psammophis notostictus*)

Maximum Length:
1 m



Other names:
Karoo Sandslang

A slender snake that averages 40-60 cm with a maximum length of just over 1 m. It is very fast moving and active in the day when it hunts for lizards, including lacertids, skinks and agamas, but will also take small rodents. In some areas it is by far the most common snake and prefers hard, stony ground. Many individuals are killed by vehicles while crossing roads. It is widespread, occurring in the western Free State, western half of the Eastern Cape, Western Cape and much of the Northern Cape and Namibia, extending into Angola. The Karoo Sand Snake is easily confused with some of the other Sand and Grass snakes. It is mildly venomous and poses no threat to humans.



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ASI EASY ID

Karoo Sand Snake (*Psammophis notostictus*)

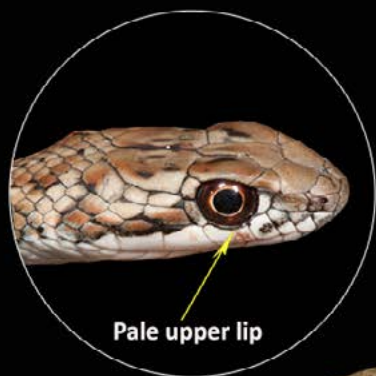
MILDLY VENOMOUS

Average length: 75 - 90 cm. Maximum length: 1 m

Often confused with: other sand snakes



Distribution is important



Pale upper lip

Long, thin tail

Darker U-shape
behind the eye

Stripes down
body

Dappled line
down spine

Light section either
side of the eye

Belly usually off-white
to yellow in colour

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MILDLY VENOMOUS

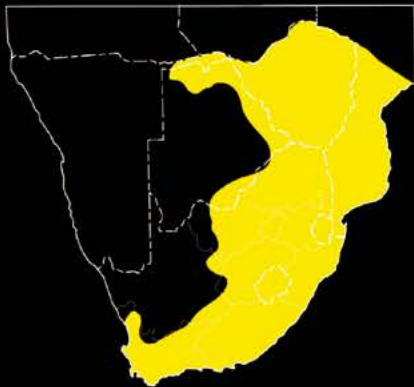


Photo Luke Kemp

Herald Snake

(Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia)

Maximum Length:
1 m



Other names:

Rooilipslang, Red-lipped Snake

A nocturnal snake that frequents suburban gardens, especially those with water features. It is a toad specialist and often eats toads that look far too large to swallow. The Herald Snake is usually greyish to olive-grey in colour, but some individuals are quite dark. The head is always darker than the body and there may be white speckles on the body. In parts of the range the upper lip is bright red, orange or yellowish to white. When threatened, this snake puts up quite a show, drawing the head back into a striking position with the mouth agape and the head flattened. It is mildly venomous and poses no threat to humans or domestic animals.



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ASI EASY ID

Herald Snake (*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*)

MILDLY VENOMOUS

Average length: 40 - 60 cm. Maximum length: 82 cm

Can be confused with: juvenile mambas and cobras



Head is distinctly darker
in colour than body.

Dark temples with
iridescent sheen

Dark temples

Upper lips can be red,
orange or white

Body usually light brown,
grey to olive grey

White speckles down the body

Belly is usually white,
to mother of pearl cream

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HARMLESS



Common Slug-eater (*Duberria lutrix*)

Maximum Length:
43 cm



Other names:

Gewone Slakvreter, Tabakrolletjie

A small snake that averages 30 – 35 cm. It feeds exclusively on snails and slugs and locates them by following the slime trail. The Common Slug-eater favours damp localities in the south-eastern half of southern Africa.

During the day it seeks shelter under rocks, logs and grass tufts and emerges in the evening to hunt. It is reluctant to bite and if threatened will defecate and secrete a foul-smelling substance simultaneously. It also has the peculiar habit of rolling up into a tight spiral with the head concealed, like a roll of tobacco, hence the Afrikaans name. This small slow-moving snake is not venomous and poses no threat to humans.



Luke Kemp



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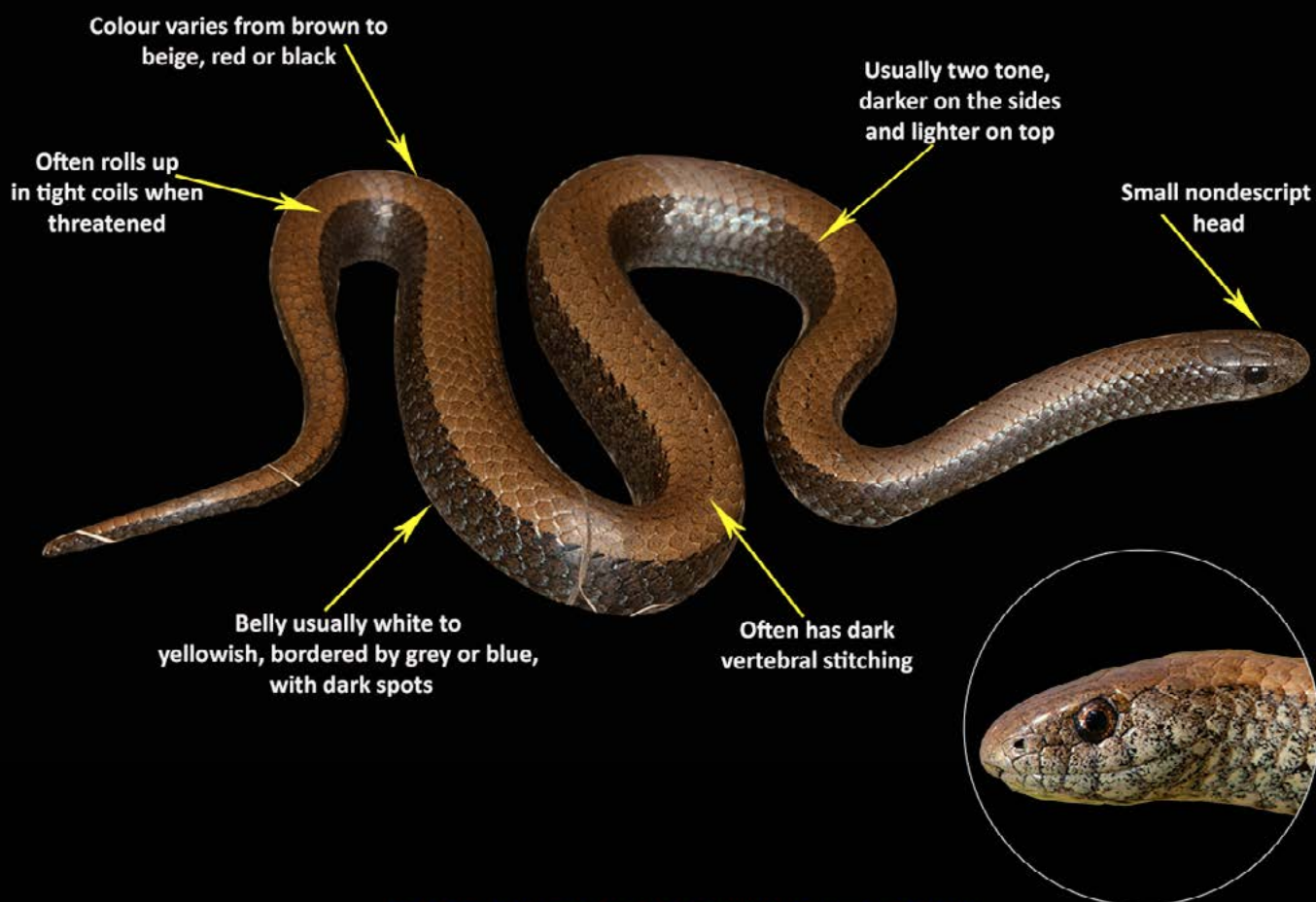
ASI EASY ID

Common Slug-eater (*Duberria lutrix*)

HARMLESS

Average length: 35 cm. Maximum length: 45 cm

Often confused with: Juvenile Cape Cobras



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HARMLESS



Brown House Snake

(*Boaedon capensis*)

Maximum Length:
1.5 m



Other names:

Bruin Huislang

The Brown House Snake, true to its name, frequents human dwellings where it feeds largely on rodents and lizards. It is completely harmless and relies on muscle power to constrict its prey. It is widespread in South Africa and very common in suburban gardens.

This snake is active at night and is relatively slow-moving. Most individuals are medium to dark brown with a mother-of-pearl belly and two light lines on either side of the head – one from the nose through the top of the eye to the back of the head and the other from the back of the eye to the angle of the jaw. The Brown House Snake comes in a variety of shades of brown, often with mottling of white along the neck.



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ASI EASY ID

Brown House Snake (*Boaedon capensis*)

HARMLESS

Average length: 55 cm. Maximum length: 1.5 m

Can be confused with: Slug-eaters



Varies in colour from light brown to reddish brown, chocolate brown, tan and pink

May have mottled markings down the neck

One light line from the nose through the top of the eye to the back of the head

A second light line from the back of the eye to the angle of the jaw

Belly is generally a pearl colour



Note the lines above and below the eye



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HARMLESS



Common Egg-eater (*Dasypeltis scabra*)

Maximum Length:
1.16 m



Other names:

Rhombic Egg-eater, Gewone Eiertvreter

A common snake throughout most of southern Africa except for true desert and closed canopy forests. It averages around 50 cm and is well adapted at climbing trees. It is most abundant in thornveld and grasslands where it can be found in any situation. It is nocturnal, spending most of the day hiding beneath rocks or under loose bark. When agitated, it will coil and uncoil while striking out viciously. The rubbing scales create a rasping sound similar to a hiss. It is completely harmless, and the teeth are reduced. It feeds exclusively on birds' eggs. It may be confused with the venomous Common Night Adder.



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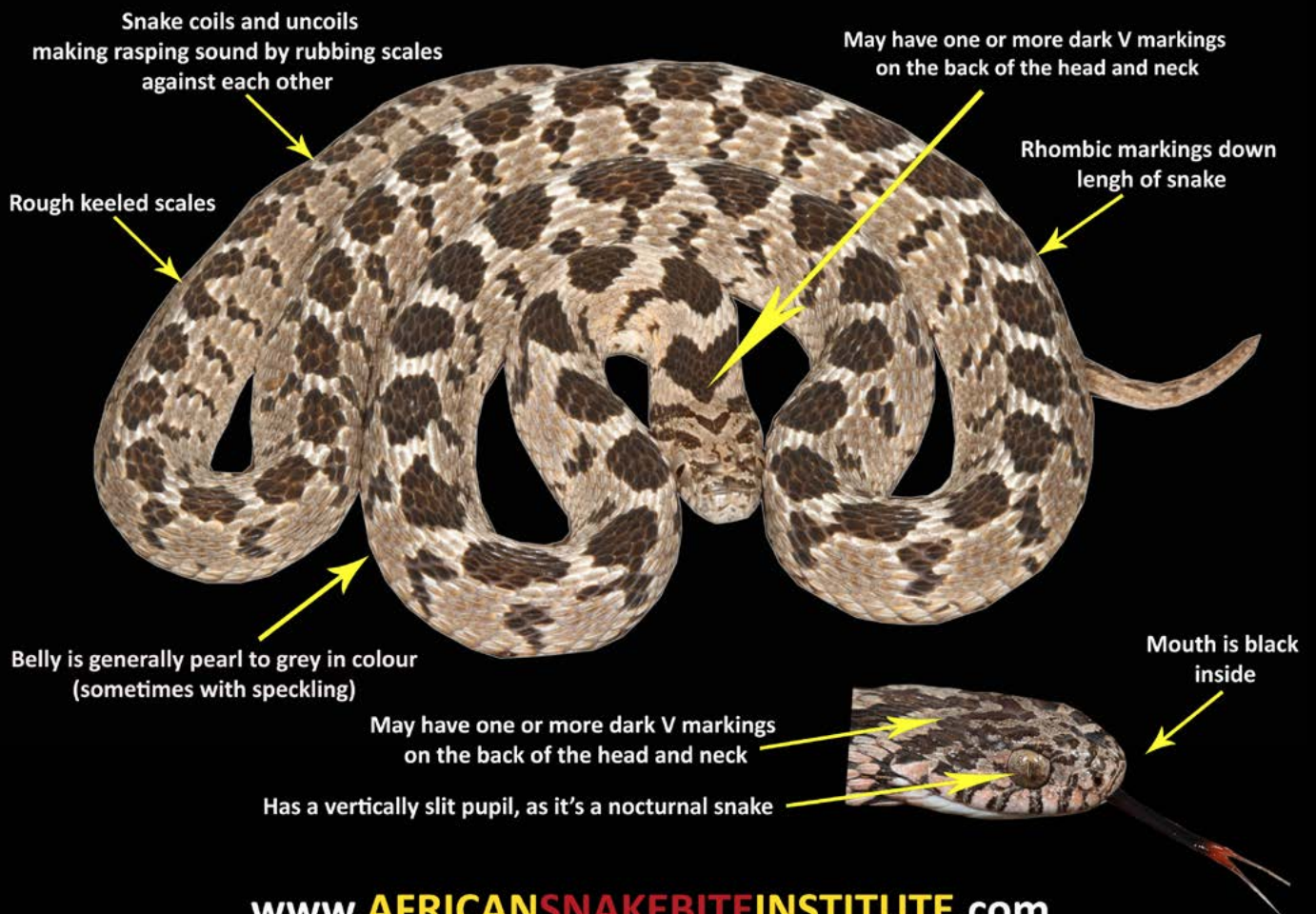
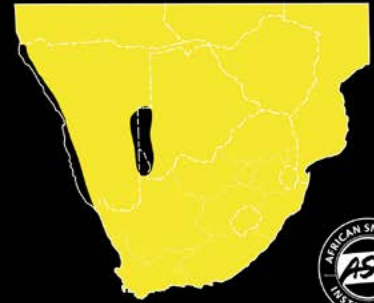
ASI EASY ID

Common Egg-eater (*Dasypeltis scabra*)

HARMLESS

Average length: 55 cm. Maximum length: 1.16 m

Often confused with: Common Night Adders



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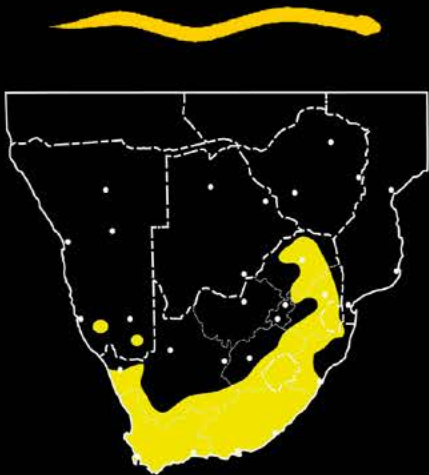


HARMLESS



Spotted Rock Snake (*Lamprophis guttatus*)

Maximum Length:
72 cm



Other names:

Gevlekte Rotsslang

A smallish snake that averages under 50 cm in length but may reach 72 cm. The Spotted Rock Snake is a secretive snake that inhabits narrow rock crevices where it feeds on lizards, mainly geckos but may also take rodents and nestling birds. It hunts at night and may be found crossing roads. Over much of its range it is quite rare, but in some areas it is abundant. There is a great deal of colour variation throughout the range of this snake, with most individuals being a yellowish-brown to pinkish-grey above, with reddish-brown to dark brown blotches or spots arranged in adjacent alternate pairs, that may form a zig-zag pattern down the back. This snake is harmless.



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HARMLESS



Delalande's Beaked Blind Snake (*Rhinotyphlops lalandei*)

Maximum Length:
35 cm



Other names:

Delalande se Blindeslang

A widespread burrowing snake that spends most of its life underground in search of ants and their eggs. Individuals may be found in soil under rocks or logs, in deserted termite mounds or on the surface at night, especially after rains. They are pale pink to dark-slate or grey-brown in colour. Each scale is pale-edged giving it a checkered effect. The young are pink or flesh-coloured. It is a small snake with adults averaging around 25 - 30 cm, with a maximum size of about 35 cm. They are easily confused with other blind snakes or worm snakes. Blind snakes are preyed upon by birds and a variety of snakes including the Spotted Harlequin Snake.



Jake Kemp



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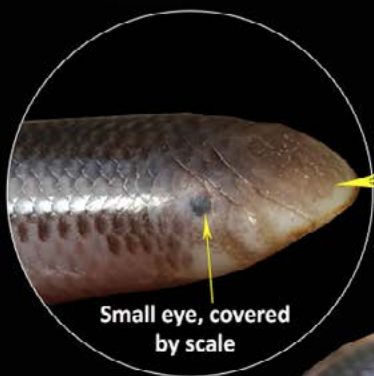
ASI EASY ID

Delalande's Beaked Blind Snake (*Rhinotyphlops lalandei*)

HARMLESS

Average length: 30 cm. Maximum length: 38.5 cm

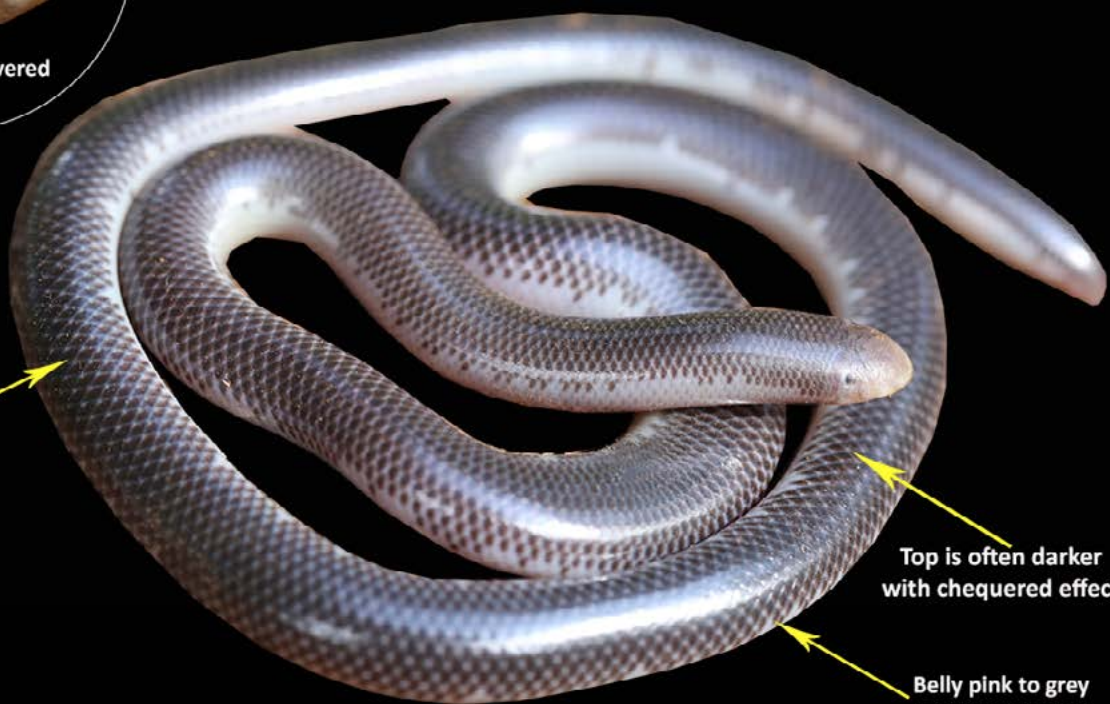
Often confused with: stiletto snakes and Bibron's Blind Snakes



Large rostral scale
which does not
quite extend to the eye

Small eye, covered
by scale

Colour varies from
pink to mauve.
Juveniles are
flesh-coloured



Top is often darker
with chequered effect

Belly pink to grey
or straw-coloured

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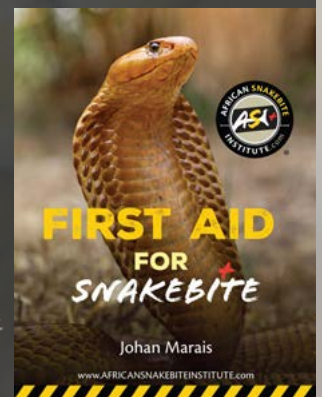
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IN THE EVENT OF A SNAKEBITE, DO NOT...

- ✦ Do not try to cut or suck out the venom. Never cut the bite site as cutting may do far more harm than good. Sucking does not remove significant amounts of venom.
- ✦ Do not apply any electric shock therapy. Shock treatments have been tested extensively and have been shown to have no effect on the outcome of the bite. Electric shocks do not neutralise snake venom.
- ✦ Do not apply a tourniquet. Many people are bitten by harmless snakes or venomous snakes that do not inject sufficient venom to cause serious damage. Arterial or venous tourniquets are not advised in most bites as venom is transported largely through the lymphatic system and not through veins. There is little evidence that a tourniquet could be life-saving following a snakebite.
- ✦ Do not apply heat, ice, lotions or potions. Apart from cleaning the bite site with water and applying a sterile gauze dressing nothing should be applied to the bite. Very hot water does not neutralise snake venom.
- ✦ Do not inject antivenom as a first aid measure. Most snakebite victims do not require antivenom and the polyvalent antivenom is only effective for the bites of certain potentially deadly snakes. If required, antivenom must be injected intravenously by a medical doctor and usually in large quantities. As victims may go into anaphylactic shock when injected with antivenom, adrenaline and other drugs may also be required. Anaphylactic shock is a serious medical condition which may be fatal if not treated promptly.

FIRST AID KITS

We stock a wide range of First Aid for Snakebite Kits, as well as Smart Pressure Bandages, Resuscitators, and first aid books. View the range online [here](#).



FIRST AID FOR SNAKEBITE



IN THE EVENT OF A SNAKEBITE, DO...

- ✦ Do get the victim to a hospital as soon as possible and in a safe manner. This is by far the most important first aid measure. For medical advice in a snakebite emergency, call the African Snakebite Institute **+27 (0)82 494 2039**.
- ✦ Do keep the victim calm. Often easier said than done as people tend to panic in a snakebite emergency. Many snakebite victims go into shock, experience a drop in blood pressure and may even become nauseous and faint. If possible, do not allow the victim to walk, run, jump etc. Bear in mind that more than 99% of snakebite victims that are hospitalised within a few hours survive their snakebites.
- ✦ Do remove jewellery as well as tight clothing. If bitten on the hand/arm/foot/lower leg, remove rings, bangles, bracelets, watches, anklets and any other tight jewellery including tight clothing.
- ✦ Do administer artificial respiration if patient stops breathing. In serious snakebite cases involving snakes with predominantly neurotoxic venom, like the Black Mamba or Cape Cobra, the victim may soon experience difficulty with breathing, even within 20 minutes. This is a very serious medical condition and assisted breathing could be life-saving. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation may be beneficial in the short term, but the proper use of a Bag Valve Mask is far better in such an instance.

SPITTING SNAKES

- ✦ The common spitting snakes in South Africa are the Mozambique Spitting Cobra or M'Fezi and the Rinkhals. In the western parts of the country these are replaced by the Black Spitting Cobra. These snakes spray their venom up to a distance of three metres and do so in self-defence to temporarily blind their attacker so that they can make a quick escape.
- ✦ Although spitting snakes accurately aim for the eyes, the venom diffuses into a spray over a wide area and may get onto your hair, face, arms and chest. Venom in the eyes is very painful and must be flushed or diluted as quickly as possible. The production of tears starts this process, but as a first aid measure, flush the eyes with water or a weak (normal) saline solution. The idea is to flush away any excess venom. Transport the victim to a medical doctor, who will examine the eyes for corneal damage and prescribe antibiotic eye drops to prevent secondary infection. There is no reason to use diluted antivenom – it has no proven benefits and may cause an allergic reaction.
- ✦ If treated quickly, the chance of permanent damage to the eyes is extremely remote.

SNAKEBITE EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Netcare Ambulance: 082 911

ER24 Ambulance: 084 124

Provincial Ambulance: 10177/112

African Snakebite Institute: +27 (0)82 494 2039

HOSPITALS AROUND MONTAGU

Montagu Hospital

Tel: 023 614 8100

(-33.797822, 20.122941)

12 Hospital St, Montagu, 6720

Swellendam Provincial Hospital

Tel: 028 514 1141

(-34.024516, 20.449789)

Drostdy st, Swellendam, 6740

Carewell Robertson Private Hospital

Tel: 028 050 2266

(-33.806586, 19.899357)

10 Johan de Jong In, Robertson, 6705

Robertson Hospital

Tel: 023 626 8500

(-33.801926, 19.890644)

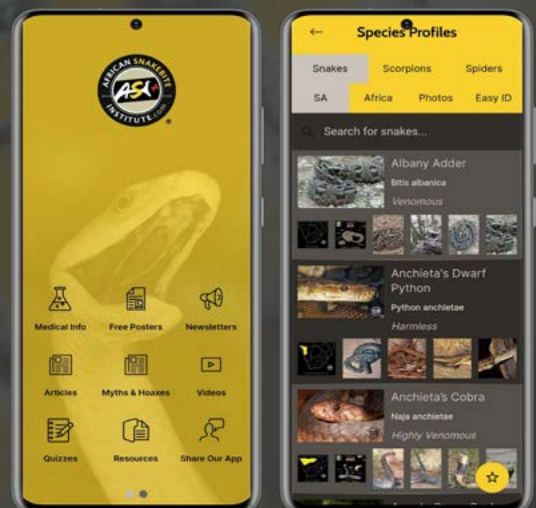
Van Oudtshoorn St, Robertson, 6705



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The ASI team travels thousands of kilometres a month, often to remote parts of southern Africa, for both snake awareness and venomous snake handling training and for reptile surveys.

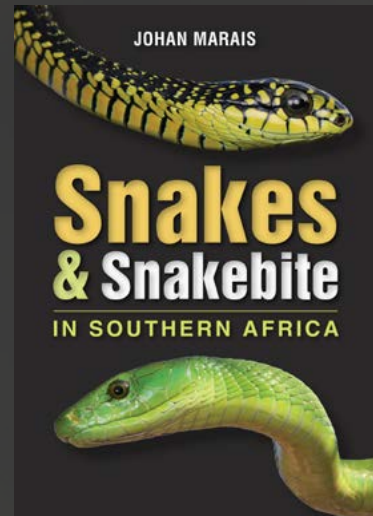
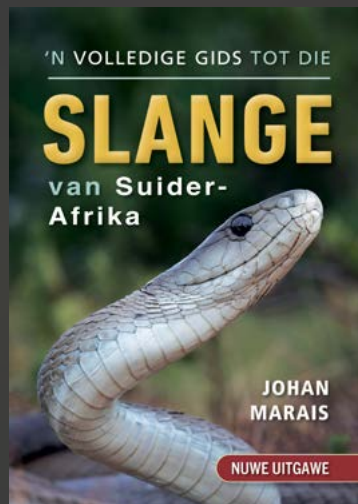
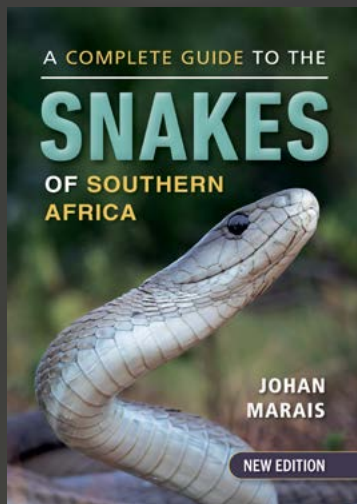
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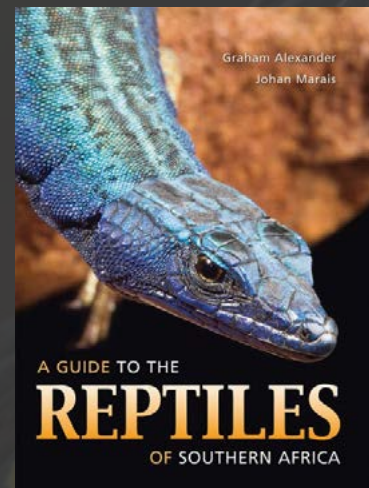
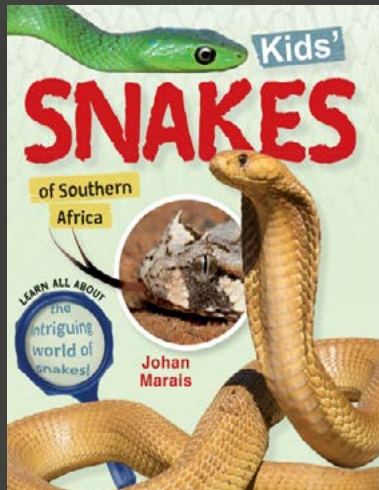
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Snake Handling Equipment: +27 60 957 2713 or info@asiorg.co.za

Snake Identification: +27 72 979 1249 or support@asiorg.co.za

Snakebite Emergencies: +27 82 494 2039

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