

Dangerous



Photo Bill Branch

Stiletto Snakes

(*Atractaspis spp.*)

Average length
30 cm



There are around 20 species of Stiletto Snakes in central Africa. These are small snakes averaging around 30cm that may reach 80cm. These snakes live underground but emerge on hot humid nights and may be stepped on. With large rotating fangs they cannot be handled safely especially behind the head – they jerk the head sideways and get a fang into the nearest finger. They are blackish brown in colour often with white bellies and are easily confused for a variety of harmless snakes. The venom is potentially cytotoxic causing severe pain, swelling, blistering and necrosis. Antivenom is not available for this snake. There have been human deaths recorded from bites.



Photo Steve Spawls