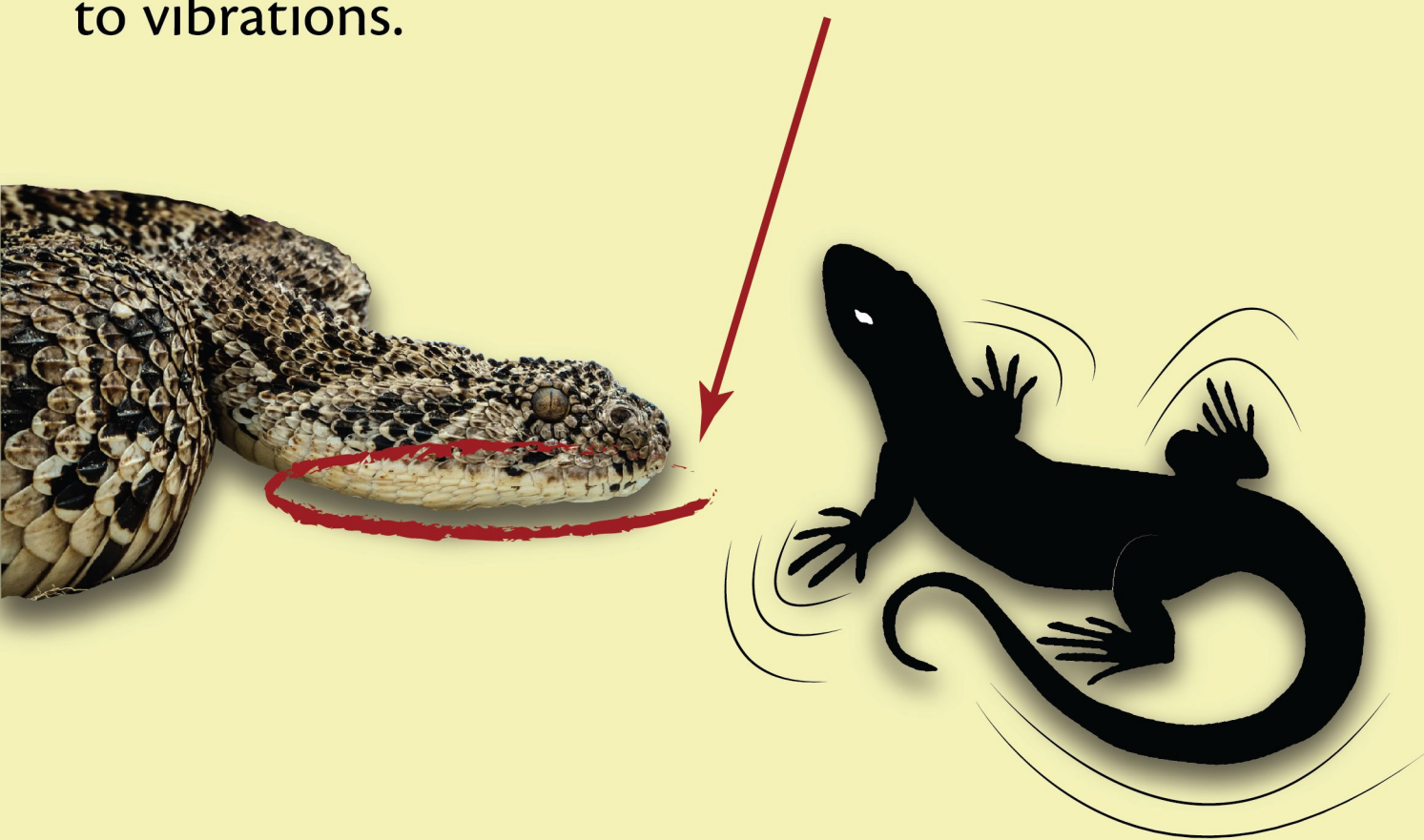


HOW SNAKES SENSE THEIR PREY

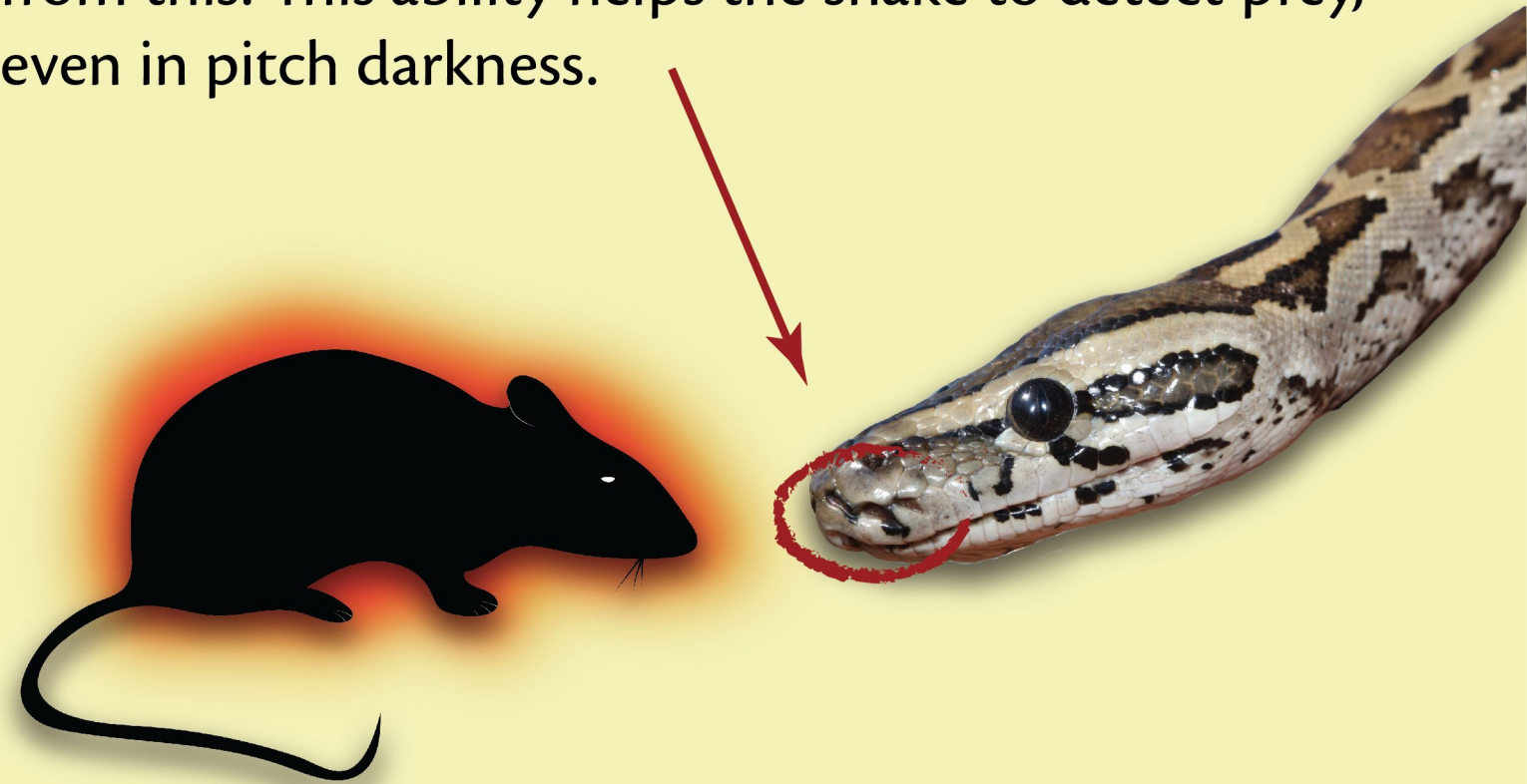
VIBRATION

Snakes do not have external ears and cannot hear most sounds. They do, however, have an inner ear. Many snakes rely on vibrations transmitted from the ground and air to their lower jaw bones which is transmitted to the inner ear. Many snakes are sensitive to vibrations.



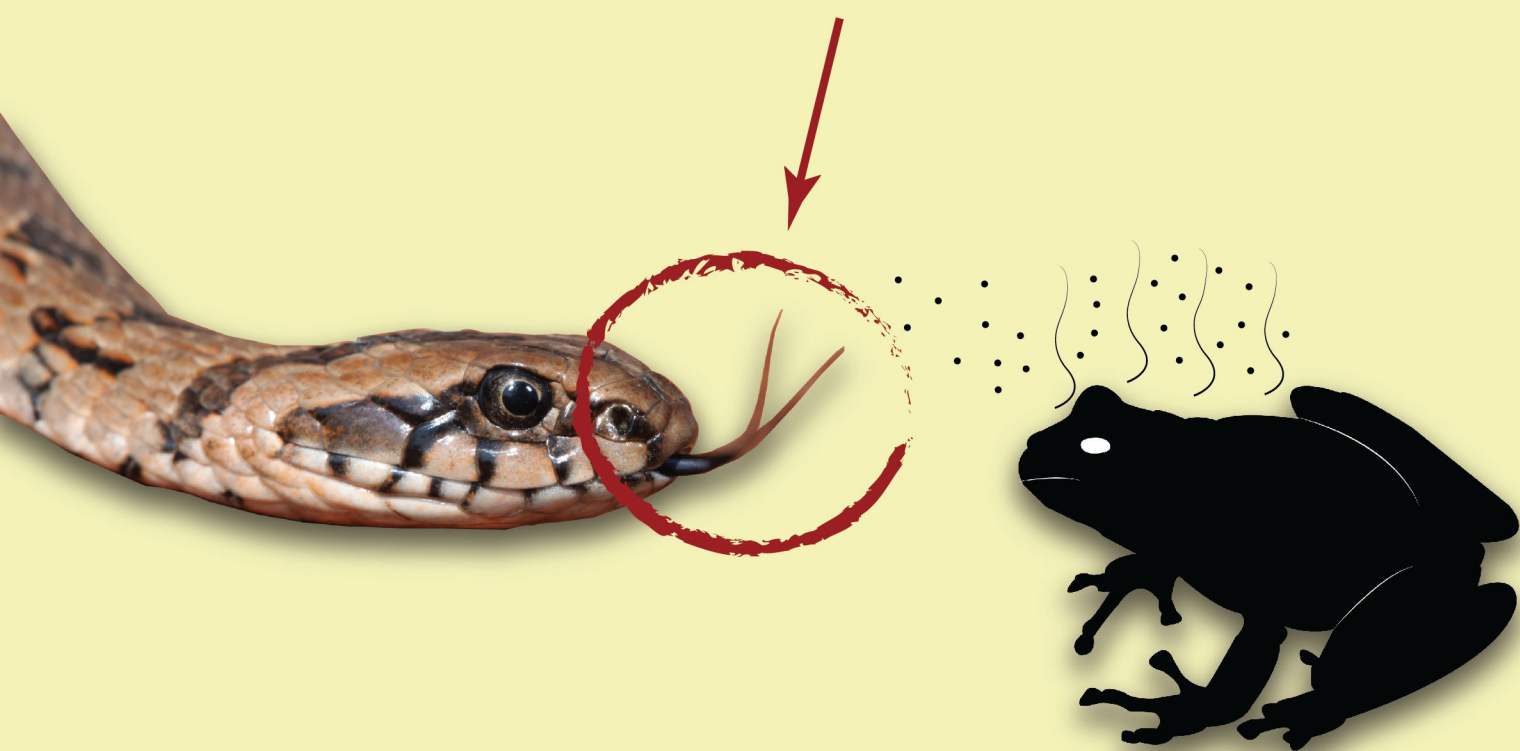
HEAT SENSE

The ability to sense infrared has evolved independently in pit vipers, boas, and pythons. In Africa, only the pythons have heat-sensing pits located just above the mouth on either side of the snout. The pits enable snakes to detect thermal radiation from their environment around them and they can form a picture from this. This ability helps the snake to detect prey, even in pitch darkness.



SMELL

Snakes use their tongue for smelling. The tongue can pick up molecules in the air and these are processed in the mouth by a special organ called the Jacobson's organ, which tells the snake what it is smelling. A snake's tongue cannot sting or hurt you in any way. Snakes can also detect smell through their nostrils.



VISION

In general, snakes have good vision but it's better developed in tree-living snakes than in burrowing species. Snakes do not have eyelids and their eyes are always open, even when they are sleeping. They have a thin scale covering the eye to protect it. Most snakes can see in black and white, and only some can see in colour.

