



SNAKES OF THE BREEDE ESTUARY

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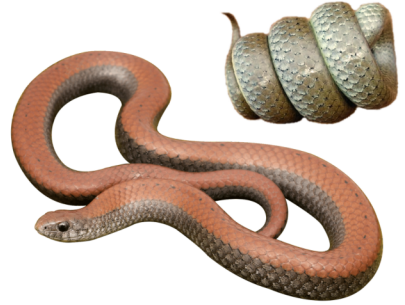
HARMLESS SNAKES

Common Slug-eater

Dubertia lutrix

Slug-eaters are common and harmless. They enjoy damp habitats such as gardens where they feed on snails and slugs. When Slug-eaters feel threatened they roll up into a tight spiral and conceal their head, much like a roll of tobacco, hence their Afrikaans name is 'Tabakrolletjie'.

Avg 35 cm
Max 43 cm



Brown House Snake

Boaedon capensis

Brown House Snakes are very common around human dwellings. They are harmless, nocturnal snakes that prey on small vertebrates such as mice, frogs, bats and birds. A useful characteristic to help identify a Brown House Snake are the distinctive light stripes on either side of its head that run from its snout, along the top of its eyes towards the back of its head.

Avg 90 cm
Max 1,5 m



Light stripes
above the eyes

Mole Snake

Pseudaspis cana

Mole Snakes are constrictors that feed on a variety of small rodents and birds. This snake does not have venom, but can inflict a painful bite. Adults grow large and thick and are usually dark brown or black in colour. Its pointed snout is well adapted for burrowing in soft sand and searching underground for food. This snake is often preyed upon by predatory birds and other snakes. Many individuals are killed by vehicles while basking on tarred roads.

Avg 1.4 m
Max 2 m

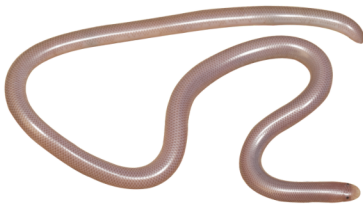


Beaked Blind Snake

Rhinotyphlops lalandei

Delalande's Beaked Blind Snakes are harmless burrowing snakes that may be found in soil under rocks or logs, in deserted termite mounds or on the surface at night, especially after rain. They have slender, cylindrical bodies, a beaked snout, and a chequered pattern on their backs. Blind snakes feed largely on termites and other small invertebrates.

Avg 30 cm
Max 35 cm



DANGEROUS SNAKES



Cytotoxic venom

Puff Adder

Bitis orientans

Avg 90 cm
Max 1,4 m

A highly venomous, slow-moving and bad-tempered snake that will hiss or puff when disturbed. Puff Adders are well-camouflaged to their environments with dark chevron markings down their backs and small triangular heads. These snakes are very common in the Breede River region. When preying on rats and mice Puff Adders wait in ambush and remain motionless for hours, making them responsible for the majority of serious snakebites across Southern Africa. Their potent cytotoxic venom destroys their victim's tissue and blood cells, causing severe pain, swelling and sometimes blistering at the site of the bite. Puff Adders carry their eggs internally, and give live birth to 20-40 young.

Cape Cobra

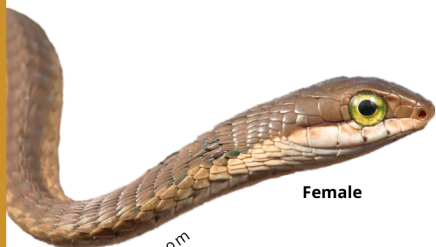
Naja nivea

Avg 1,4 m
Max 1,6 m

Cape Cobras vary in colour from near black to dark or light brown, beige, yellow or speckled while juveniles have a dark band on their throats. Cobras are active during the day and may climb trees in search of food. When threatened this snake will stand its ground and spread its neck to make a broad hood. The Cape Cobra uses potent neurotoxic venom to catch prey, making it highly dangerous. The venom acts on the victim's nervous system, shutting down vital organs within hours.



Neurotoxic venom



Female

Haemotoxic venom



Male

Boomslang

Dispholidus typus

Avg 1,5 m
Max 2 m

Boomslangs are tree snakes with a long, slender body and large eyes. Adult males in the Breede River region are typically black and yellow in colour and females are light to olive brown. This back-fanged snake is shy and seldom bites. When it does, it uses potent haemotoxic venom to immobilise its prey, resulting in severe internal bleeding. Although the venom is extremely potent, it is slow-acting and may take more than 24-48 hours to produce serious symptoms. When threatened the Boomslang traps air in its throat to appear larger.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

Common Egg-eater

Daspeltis scabra

Harmless

Avg 75 cm
Max 1.1 m



Egg-eaters are harmless and virtually toothless snakes that feed on birds' eggs. This nocturnal snake is non-venomous and will

coil and uncoil itself when threatened, rubbing its scales together to create a hissing or rasping sound similar to some adders. It will also flatten its jaw and strike out rapidly, exposing its dark purple mouth.

Rhombic Night Adder

Causus rhombeatus

Dangerous

Avg 60 cm
Max 1 m



Night Adders on the other hand are mildly venomous and are often mistaken as Common Egg-eaters due to their similar rhombic markings. Despite its name, night adders are both diurnal and nocturnal, and prefer damp environments. Other distinguishable characteristics between Night Adders and Egg-eaters are that Night Adders have one distinct dark "V" marking on their heads, and medium sized eyes with round pupils. Egg-eaters can have more than one dark "V" marking on their heads and have vertically slit pupils.

Juvenile Mole Snake

Pseudaspis cana

Harmless

At Birth:
20 - 31 cm



Juvenile Mole Snakes are far more patterned and colourful compared to when they are adults (dark brown / black). Unfortunately, harmless juvenile Mole Snakes are mistaken for other venomous snakes, such as the Rhombic Night Adder and the Spotted Skaapsteker. Mole Snakes can be identified by their pointed snouts and small heads which they use to burrow in soft sand.

Spotted Skaapsteker

Psammophylax rhombeatus

Venomous

Avg 85 cm
Max 1,4 m



The Spotted Skaapsteker is a mildly venomous, quick-moving snake that actively hunts its prey of rodents, lizards, birds, frogs and other snakes. It is a nervous snake that dashes for cover where it is well camouflaged. 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.