



# UNDERSTANDING SNAKES

A LAYMAN'S GUIDE FOR THE GREATER DURBAN AREA



# MAP OF THE GREATER DURBAN AREA



Large venomous snakes (Black Mambas & Cobras) are generally, but not always, found in properties bordering nature reserve/greenbelts. They do not usually venture deep into suburbia.



# INTRODUCTION

The Greater Durban Area has become well-known for its high number of snakes living among human habitation, so much so that there's even been television programmes about the situation. Snakes are constantly making the news in newspapers and on social media.

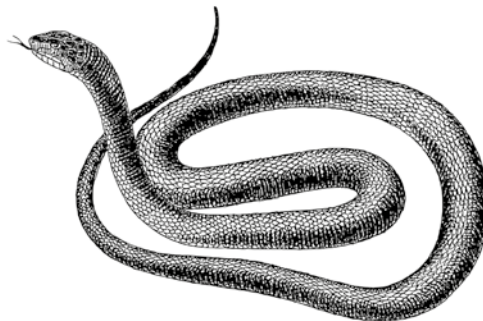
Compared to most city/suburban environments around the world, the Greater Durban Area still has a lot of natural vegetation among the suburbs. We have many nature reserves, conservancies and greenbelts throughout the area. This is great for the environment, which we depend on, and conservation as a whole. However, it does mean that snakes will be a common sight around such areas. Unfortunately for snakes and other wildlife, these natural areas are shrinking, and we continue to encroach upon them. This results in snakes venturing into our homes and places of work, as they have little choice. So in this 'green' region, snake/human conflict is rife. Sadly, a lot of the time, conflict with humans and pets doesn't end well for the snake.

Snakes are animals that have been feared by people since the dawn of time. What people fear, they usually kill. There have been scary movies made about snakes, which instil fear, and there are a whole host of myths, cultural beliefs and legends about snakes, many of which are terrifying. Apart from the terror associated with snakes, there is very little education about them. In schools, all that's really covered on snakes is that they're a reptile with scales.

This does nothing to help people understand snakes better and to overcome their fear and misunderstanding. This is what this book is for – to help people better understand these misunderstood reptiles.

This book is aimed at anyone who lives within the eThekweni Municipality and is a layman's guide. This book will provide you with essential information in the hope of helping you gain a better knowledge of our scaly neighbours. We have covered profiles of 25 species within the municipal range, most of which are frequently encountered around homes, although some more scarce species are covered too. Some of our local snakes are highly venomous, while some are less so. Others are completely harmless to people. We want to help you to be able to identify the snake that has come for a visit!

Besides an understanding of snakes, we hope that this book helps you to gain a healthy respect for them, and encourages you to stop killing these fascinating, environmentally-important reptiles.



# MYTHS AND CULTURAL BELIEFS

There are countless myths surrounding snakes; some are confined to specific cultures, others are widely believed by the majority of people. These myths cause a lot of fear among people, and lead people to kill snakes out of fear. This is why education is so important!

Below, we discuss some popularly-believed myths, and the truths around them.

## GENERAL BELIEFS

### **Snakes want to attack people.**

False! Snakes do not want to attack people, they're more scared of us than we are of them. Snakes only bite people when they feel trapped and threatened.

### **If you run from a snake, it will chase you.**

False! A lion will chase you if you run, but not a snake.

### **Snakes can sense fear**

False! Snakes do not care if you are scared or not. They are scared when they see you, and they just want to get away from you!

### **There's man-eating Anacondas in our rivers and dams.**

False! Don't worry about Anacondas. They only occur in South America, and they do not get nearly as big as what you see in the movies.

### **Juvenile snakes are more dangerous than adult snakes because they can't control how much venom they inject.**

False! Also, an adult snake has large venom glands and, therefore, can inject a larger volume of venom.

### **Snakes do not bite mothers and babies who are breastfeeding.**

False!

### **The only good snake is a dead snake.**

False! The worst myth there is! Snakes have such an important role to play in our environment, and we need to respect that they are animals too.

## SNAKE FAMILY BELIEFS

When a snake is seen, it often causes panic. But people don't just worry about the snake they can see, they worry about the snake/s they can't see!

### **Do snakes move in pairs?**

No. Snakes are solitary animals; they do not have any real relationships with each other. This sounds cold, but they don't really care for each other either – that's just the way they are. A snake's focus is on survival.

Snakes come together to mate at a particular time of the year, and that's when you may see two snakes together, if you're lucky. However, they don't stay together very long, and soon part ways. Sometimes, especially with the harmless green snakes, you may see a handful of snakes together. These will be males pursuing a female in the breeding season, but they'll soon go their separate ways.

### **Do mother snakes look after their young?**

No. When a female snake lays her eggs, or gives birth, she does not offer them any parental guidance or guardianship. She moves off, looking for food to regain the lost weight rather than to defend her young. Again, this sounds cruel, but that's just the way they are – the way nature intended them to be. So when you see a juvenile snake next time, please don't worry about the mother or father being around!

In the Greater Durban Area, there is one exception to this case, and that's the Southern African Python. The mother python remains with her eggs once she's laid them in order to incubate and protect them. But not long after the babies hatch, she leaves them alone to fend for themselves.

### **Do brothers and sisters stick together?**

No. As mentioned, snakes are solitary, and this applies to newly hatched/born snakes as well. They go their separate ways.

## **ZULU CULTURAL BELIEFS**

The Zulu culture is filled with many interesting myths and beliefs about snakes. Sometimes, these stories are made up by elders in villages to prevent children from harming animals, and to prevent them from being harmed by the animals. Unfortunately, these children never learn the truths about these beliefs, and so their fear of snakes never leaves them.

### **The Seven-headed Snake!**

False! There is no such thing. However, people have edited a snake in a photo to show seven heads. This is shared on social media and when people see it, they believe it to be true. It's a hoax.

### **Inkanyamba**

False! It is believed to be a huge snake that lives in dams. When it moves from one dam to another, it apparently forms into a tornado, destroying villages in its wake.

Perhaps this is because the tornados we saw on TV, etc. are in a similar shape to a snake. There is no snake that can turn into a tornado or travel in a tornado, though. It is impossible. A python isn't going to move from one dam to another, which is dozens of kilometres away. It does not move that far. We also do not have huge tornados destroying many villages in KwaZulu-Natal.

### **If you make eye contact with a snake, it can hypnotise and/or kill you.**

False! Nothing happens if you make eye contact with a snake.

### **A snake can stick its forked tongue up your nose and suck your brains out.**

False! As interesting as that sounds, it is far from true. The tongue cannot harm you.

### **If you kill a python and carry its body across a river, it will return to life and kill you.**

False! Remember, though, it is illegal to kill a python.



### **Indlandla (The snake with a feather on its head)**

False! Apparently, it's a Green Mamba that lives in the trees. When you walk underneath the tree that it's hiding in, it moves down and strikes you from above. To prevent this from happening, apparently, a woman can simply carry a large bowl of hot porridge on their heads. But this is not necessary, as there is no snake like this.

This story may have come about from when someone saw a snake shedding its skin. When snakes shed, the skin peels off from the head first. This may resemble a feather.



# THE TRUTH ABOUT SNAKE REPELLENTS

## What can I do to keep snakes away from my property?

This is a question that many people ask. Below are some repellents that are commonly used: Jeye's Fluid/sheep dip/*ushibhoshi*.

These are the most commonly used 'repellents'. People pour them around the house once a week or once a month, with the belief that they keep the snakes away. These strong-smelling, toxic chemicals could be harmful to people and pets, not to mention the environment, if used in an irresponsible manner. They do not repel snakes.

**IMPORTANT:** While they do not repel snakes, if poured directly onto a snake, the snake will suffer a slow, agonising death. Please do not pour these substances on any animal or reptile.

## Commercially bought repellents

Some people spend a great deal of money buying commercial snake repellents, however, they do not actually work in keeping snakes away.

## Specific plants

Wild Garlic (*Tulbaghia violacea*) and Geraniums are the most commonly used plants to try and repel snakes.

## Burning of tyres

Tyres are often burnt when a snake is seen, even when a snake is



on the ground, or underground. This, of course is useless, as the smoke rises.

## Paving over the garden

Some people may pave over their entire garden, ridding it of any plants, in the hope that this deters snakes. This is not a fool-proof method of keeping snakes out. A snake may still pass through; it may come to the house looking for any kind of shelter, or a snake may still visit in search of geckos or rats. It's better to have trees and flowers, not just for 'decoration', but for the benefit of the environment too.

## So what does repel snakes?

Absolutely nothing! Unfortunately, there is nothing you can do to keep snakes away permanently. It comes with the territory of living in this beautiful country. It's not all that bad; after all, it's better than a criminal coming to visit.

## Decrease the chance of snake visits

While there is nothing you can do to repel snakes permanently, there are some things you can do to decrease the chances of snakes coming into your property.

Snakes come into properties looking for food and shelter, so... keep it clean!





*A messy storeroom – a favourite place for a snake to hide in!*

Avoid having piles of rubbish, bricks, rubble, wood or any sort of mess lying around the garden. These sorts of places make for a great shelter for snakes, plus, they often attract rats.

If you have an outdoor storeroom, shed or garage, do try to keep it tidy. Avoid shoving rubbish in there. Packed, messy and rat-infested storerooms are another favourite place for snakes to hide in. Likewise, a house, of a similar nature to what has been described, is also a great hide-out for snakes.

### **Neaten, but don't destroy the garden**

If you don't want snakes slithering into your house, trim back hedges or trees that may be growing against your windows, as this provides easy access for snakes.

Having a garden is well-worth it. An indigenous garden also



*A Green Mamba removed from the fifth storey of a construction site.*

attracts a lot of wildlife, including colourful insects, pretty birds, camouflaged chameleons, singing frogs, etc., and this all makes for great viewing. The odd snake may visit too, to control those animal numbers, but hopefully it will stay in the garden rather than venturing into the home.

### **Windows – open or closed?**

One surely has to open windows to let in some fresh air. Instead of keeping your windows closed permanently because of snakes, perhaps look at having a mesh installed over the window. This will keep snakes, monkeys and maybe even mosquitoes out, and at the same time, it will allow you some fresh air.

Remember that a lot of snakes' homes have been destroyed so you have to show some sympathy for them!



# SNAKE REPRODUCTION

## When is the snake mating season?

For many animals and species of snake in South Africa, spring is the start of the breeding season. September to November is when many species come together to mate. However, some species are different. Black Mambas and Puff Adders, for example, breed in the winter months.

## How does it all happen?

In the mating season, female snakes leave a scent trail behind, which the male snakes will track down. They use their forked tongue for this, which they use for smelling. Once the male snake has tracked the female down, mating takes place. This usually happens in a secluded hide-out, not out in the open.

Snakes generally do not form any kind of relationship, nor do they mate for life. After a day or few (generally), they'll go their separate ways.

## If I see two snakes completely wrapped around each other in the open, is that a pair mating?

Highly unlikely. This behaviour is quite regularly seen in the winter months, and the species most commonly seen behaving in this way are Mambas. Puff Adders and Night Adders have been observed in this ritual too. The two snakes are totally entwined around each other, and they look a bit like they're dancing! This is actually two male snakes fighting over a female. Generally, the snakes do not bite each other during this combat, they just wrestle, throwing one another to the ground. One will eventually become too exhausted to continue, and surrender. It's a marvel to witness.

## What happens once the mother has laid her eggs?

The mother snake will find a safe, hidden and warm place to lay her eggs where there's also usually a little bit of moisture. Once she has laid her eggs, she leaves them, never returning to care for them. So when you see a juvenile snake, don't worry about the mother or father!



*Brown House Snake laying eggs.*

## An exception

The Southern African Python is the one species in the Durban area that is an exception to the above. They actually do show parental care, and amazing care at that.

A mother python will lay her eggs underground, generally (in abandoned animal burrows/tunnels). Unlike other eggs, she stays with them, but not just to guard them.

A Python is an exceptional mother. She will slither out into the open to bask in the sun. Once warm enough, she'll retreat back down the hole and wrap around her eggs. By wrapping her now warm body around her eggs, she incubates them. In fact, without her, the eggs would never hatch. Once the young do hatch, she will stay with them for a short period of time, before leaving them to fend for themselves.

## How many eggs do snakes lay?

It all depends on the species, size and health of the individual, so there's no definitive answer. The common Spotted Bush Snake



*Above, right and below: Black Mambas hatching.*



may only lay four to five eggs, while a large python could lay up to 40 or more. Mambas generally lay 10-25, while the Mozambique Spitting Cobra lays around 20 or so. Egg sizes vary too.

### **What do snake eggs look like?**

Snake eggs are more elongated than a chicken egg, for example, with a soft, leathery shell. Generally, the eggs are stuck together in a clump rather than grouped loosely.

Many people find small eggs in their cupboards, gate motors or even key holes, and worry that they are snake eggs. They're usually gecko eggs, which are tiny round eggs that are not clumped together like snake eggs. If you're digging up your compost heap and find eggs similar in appearance to gecko eggs, except a bit larger, they're most likely from a Tree Agama (the Blue-headed Lizard).

### **How long do the eggs take to hatch?**

Generally, around two months or so. They hatch around the 65-day mark. Some may hatch sooner, others later.

### **Do some snakes give birth to live young?**

Yes! Puff Adders are an example of this. They are viviparous, giving birth to 20-40 babies at a time!



*Hatchling – Southern African Python.*

## WHY SHOULD YOU NOT KILL SNAKES?

Snakes are important for our environment because they help to maintain a balance in nature. Here are a few more reasons why you should not kill snakes.

### It's dangerous!

Think about it: if you inflict pain upon a snake, how do you think it will react? It does not have arms or legs to push you away with. The only way it can defend itself is to bite (apart from spitting cobras, of course). A snake does not want to bite you, normally. However, if you're hurting it, then it will want to bite you.

People have been bitten by snakes such as Black Mambas before, while trying to kill them. Some people have died that way too. So please, for your own health and the health of the environment, do not kill snakes.

### It's cruel

Snakes get beaten to death with sticks, chopped up with spades, have boiling water or petrol poured on them and set alight, are stoned, etc. They suffer terribly at the hands of misinformed

people because they do not understand snakes. One thing we all need to realise is that snakes are animals. Like us, they have a skeleton, albeit different to ours. They have a nervous system and vital organs too. So when we injure a snake, we break their bones, puncture vital organs and cause a tremendous amount of pain. Yes, they certainly feel pain like any of us. We need to understand that, and we need to stop hurting them as they don't deserve to suffer.

In the next chapter, you will read why we actually need snakes, and why killing them will affect our well-being.

Those who don't like snakes may ask, "Why shouldn't I kill snakes?" Well, it's not just because it's dangerous to do so. Snakes are a key link in the food chain, and are very important in our environment. We actually need snakes, believe it or not. They help us out.



*This Black Mamba was beaten and then had boiling water poured on it.*



*This Black Mamba was stabbed with a spear. Through this gaping hole in its body, one could see its lung inflating and deflating as it fought for its life. It didn't make it.*

## Rodent control

Everyone has a rat around the house at some point in time. Often, they're in the ceiling. The House Rat, the most common species around suburbia, is not actually indigenous to South Africa. It is a feral pest species that has established itself all over the world. It poses as an environmental threat, feeding on young birds and indigenous rodent species, as well as bats. It could be considered a threat to agriculture, as it feeds on crops. Around the house, House Rats make noises in the roof, chew through wires, and they can even carry diseases. Snakes are a free, eco-friendly and natural solution to any rat problem! Plus, they control the numbers of our indigenous rodents.

Examples of snakes that feed mostly on rodents: large Brown House Snakes, Black Mambas.

## They don't just eat rodents...

Snakes help to keep a balance in nature and they prevent certain animal numbers from overpopulating, which is crucial in a healthy, functioning environment:

**Frogs** – You may not like the sounds of frogs calling at night, but you should. Not only is that nature's music, but frogs are hugely important in our environment for many reasons, one being that they control mosquito numbers. However, if the frog populations were left to go wild, we would have a shortage of insects, which would be a disaster! Nature is all about balance.

There are a number of snake species that control frog numbers, some of which feed solely on frogs, such as Night Adders and Heralds.



A Brown Water Snake eating a Painted Reed Frog.



Examples of animals that feed on snakes. Left: A Nile Monitor Lizard. Right: Banded Mongoose



**Lizards** – many species of snake feed on lizards. Skinks, Agamas and even chameleons are all eaten by snakes. The Spotted Bush Snake, for example, is particularly important for controlling House Gecko numbers.

Snakes also control the numbers of:

- Birds
- Bats
- Other small mammals, such as dassies, squirrels and even small antelope
- Other snakes
- Some small species, such as Centipede-eaters and Thread Snakes, feed on small invertebrates

## Snakes aren't just predators, they are food too!

While snakes eat many different animals, in turn, they are also food for many different animals, including:

- Birds, such as raptors and herons
- Mongoose
- Genets
- Monitor Lizards
- Other snakes, such as some cobra species

So, if snakes went extinct, we'd have an explosion of rats, too many frogs and lizards, a shortage of insects and a lack of birds and other animals. They are such an important link in the food chain. Without them, we would live in a very unhealthy environment. That applies to all of our native wildlife. We need to protect them all as they all have a place.

# WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SEE A SNAKE?



## If the snake is inside the house...

- Move slowly away from the snake
- Keep calm; it's not there to bite you
- If it's in a room, close the door to keep it contained
- If it's in the living room or kitchen, after moving away from the snake, try to keep an eye on it, watching where it goes. Staying five metres away or further would be a safe distance
- Immediately call a snake catcher

## If the snake is outside, in the garden...

- Move slowly away from the snake. Fast movements frighten it
- Keep calm. There's no need to panic, scream or cry. If you leave the snake alone it will leave you alone
- If you have dogs, lock them away
- Phone a snake catcher for advice, to identify it and/or to remove it
- Please watch the snake from a safe distance of at least five metres, and enjoy the lucky sighting!
- The snake may move out of your property. If it goes into a natural area, let it be. A snake catcher will not be able to track it down in the bush
- If you wish to just leave the snake alone, and let it pass through or relax in your garden, then good on you!

## What should you NOT do if you see a snake?

- DO NOT try to kill the snake. This could easily lead to you being bitten
- DO NOT try to catch the snake yourself
- If you think the snake is harmless, NEVER pick it up with your hands. This is a mistake people often make, and they end up picking up a venomous species
- DO NOT take your eyes off the snake if you are wanting it removed by a professional
- DO NOT pick up dead snakes. It may still be alive, albeit dying, and it could still bite. Some snake species can pretend to be dead. The Rinkhals, found in the Midlands, is the best at this.



Also, if you pick up a dead venomous snake, and the fangs somehow sink into you, you could be in real trouble

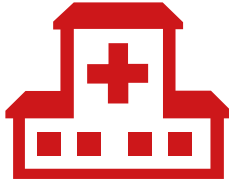
## Some advice for when you call a snake catcher

- Call immediately! Many people only call hours, days or even weeks later. By this time, the snake would have disappeared, and it would be pointless calling for help
- As mentioned, it really helps if you can watch the snake from a safe distance
- Be polite and remain calm. Remember, you're phoning them for help!
- Be patient, as he/she may ask a few questions about specifically where the snake is. Often, the snake could be gone by the time a snake catcher arrives, and so they try to make sure that they won't be wasting their time
- A snake catcher may suggest leaving a harmless species alone, or letting it move away by itself. This is often the best and most convenient option for everyone. Remember, we need snakes in our suburbs, particularly the harmless species
- If the snake has slithered off into dense bush, a snake catcher will likely NOT ever find it, therefore, it is not worth calling one out if the snake has moved off
- Make sure you're calling for a real snake. If you see a snake or think you see a snake, you may panic. This can lead you to confusing random objects for snakes, such as a hosepipe, belt or toy snakes. It's rather embarrassing to call someone to rescue you for one of those objects...
- If you're in an area with no street address, and you're on WhatsApp, learn how to send a WhatsApp location via Google Maps. It's quite straightforward: Tap on the attachments sign, and tap 'Location'. Wait for it to pinpoint your location (you'll see it gets to within metres of you). This can speed up the process of a snake catcher finding your house.



# SNAKE BITE DO'S AND DON'TS

**What should you do if you, or someone around you, gets bitten by a snake?**



**DO NOT:**

- DO NOT cut at the site of the bite in the hope of allowing the venom to bleed out. Venom travels through the lymphatic system, not the blood stream. This is a pointless act and could cause more damage and/or infection
- DO NOT try to suck the venom out. You would be wasting your time
- DO NOT use home remedies (specific creams, plants or crystals). They do not work
- DO NOT use a tourniquet (whether it's a belt, string or bandage) around the bitten leg or arm. This could potentially cause more damage to the bitten limb and it is not proven to be a life-saving technique
- DO NOT try to catch or kill the snake to show doctors what snake bit the person. This could lead to a second bite. A photo taken from a distance could be useful but is not required. Doctors will treat the symptoms and will obtain an understanding of what snake may be responsible
- If you are bitten by a snake, DO NOT go anywhere other than a hospital or at least a clinic. If a Black Mamba, for example, has bitten you, a traditional healer will not be able to save your life

**DO:**

- It should be noted that getting to a hospital is the priority. Not much else matters
- The patient will need to be transported to hospital without delay, either by someone with a valid driver's license or an ambulance
- Try to keep the patient calm, as difficult as this sounds
- Pressure bandages, which can be applied en route to the hospital, can be very effective, if applied correctly



*Above and below: Fingers bitten by a Stiletto Snake.*



- As mentioned, the priority and the simplest action is getting to the nearest hospital!

### Can you buy antivenom to keep with you for emergencies?

No, this would be extremely dangerous. One cannot self-administer antivenom due to the high risk of an allergic reaction, which will cause anaphylaxis much quicker than the actual venom. Antivenom needs to be administered in hospitals only, where any allergic reaction can be controlled.

### Venom in the eyes

The only spitting snake found in the Greater Durban Area is the Mozambique Spitting Cobra. Like all snakes, they'll try to avoid conflict with people, but if they feel that their life is in danger, they will spit, and they're really accurate! If someone gets venom in the eyes...

- The venom needs to be rinsed out immediately. No delays! If not rinsed out immediately, the venom can cause permanent damage to the eyes
- Water works best. If you have a hosepipe, turning that on low pressure and holding it into the open eye is very efficient, albeit uncomfortable. Keeping the eyes open under a running tap works well too, as does gently squeezing a water bottle into the eyes
- Milk is an old wives tale and should not be used. If you're desperate, urine can even work, but wouldn't you rather run to a tap or even a stream?
- After rinsing for 10-15 minutes, the pain should subside
- Go to a doctor for a check-up to be safe. Don't take chances with your eyes!
- Should you get venom on your skin, you'll be okay, just wash it off. If you were to get spat at, and the venom lands on a fresh graze or open wound, you should seek medical attention as this could be dangerous



*A vial of polyvalent antivenom.*



*Stiletto Snake bite.*

# VENOM TYPES

Snakes have venom to kill their prey, not people. Of course, people who get bitten by venomous species will probably feel the effects of the venom.

It's important to note that not all snakes are venomous. The majority are not! Non-venomous snakes may kill their prey via constriction, where they wrap their body around the prey, squeeze, and stop it from breathing.

Snakes are not poisonous, they are venomous. Do you know the difference between poison and venom? Venom is injected (like medicine in an injection), and poison is secreted (like from plants and some frogs).

Below are descriptions of the three venom types found in our local snake species.



## Cytotoxic venom

Cytotoxic venom is a cell destroying venom, and can cause extensive damage if left untreated. Symptoms usually include swelling, blistering, pain and tissue damage (necrosis).

**Examples of species with cytotoxic venom:** Puff Adder, Rhombic Night Adder, Mozambique Spitting Cobra and Bibron's Stiletto Snake.

## Neurotoxic venom

Neurotoxic venom effects and shuts down the nervous system, causes paralysis and eventually respiratory failure. Symptoms include, slurred speech, drooping eyelids, difficulty in breathing, nausea and weakness. Bites from species with neurotoxic venom generally don't cause a lot of pain.

**Examples of species with neurotoxic venom:** Black Mamba, Green Mamba and Forest Cobra.

## Hemotoxic venom

Hemotoxic venom affects the blood's clotting mechanism, and if left untreated, it can cause devastating effects such as bleeding from all orifices (including cuts), internal bleeding, and eventually brain haemorrhaging. Initial symptoms include headache and nausea.

**Examples of species with hemotoxic venom:** Boomslang and Vine Snake.

## What is a dry bite?

A dry bite is when a venomous species bites someone but does not inject any venom. It's a warning bite. The bitten person is very lucky in such a case! In fact, a large percentage of snakebites are actually dry bites.

## Snake venoms are being used for medicine!

Scientists have been looking at how snake venom can be used in the manufacture of drugs to treat serious human illnesses for some time now. It has been discovered that there are properties within snake venom that can be used in drugs that are effective as chronic painkillers and blood pressure tablets, and they have manufactured such drugs. More research is being done into what else snake venom can treat.



# SNAKES AND PETS

Unfortunately, when snakes do find themselves in our yards, they often clash with cats and dogs. Although cats kill many snakes, they seem to know which ones to avoid (generally). Dogs, however, do not. Their instincts kick in, and they either rush to attack the snake or sniff at it. It doesn't usually end well, and they're often on the receiving end of a venomous species.

## How do you know if your dog has been bitten by a snake?

- Because dogs generally kill the snakes, despite having being bitten, you'll more than likely discover the snake's body, or pieces of it. Or, you may hear your dog barking wildly in the garden and find that they're after a snake. This, of course, will give you your answer straight away
- The snakes responsible for the most bites on dogs around Durban are Night Adders and Stiletto Snakes. Their cytotoxic venom causes swelling, so that is one of the first symptoms to look for (usually around the dog's face)
- If your dog is drowsy and becoming seemingly paralysed, as well as vomiting, this could mean that it has been bitten by a Mamba
- Snakebites do not generally cause foaming at the dog's mouth

## What do you do if your dog has been bitten by a snake?

- It's quite simple really – immediately transport it to the vet

(see veterinary clinic contact details on pg 59). Time is of the essence! There is not much else you can do

- DO NOT wait to see if the dog's condition worsens
- DO NOT try any home remedies

## What do you do if your dog has been spat at by a Mozambique Spitting Cobra?

- This is not easy at all, particularly with large dogs, but please try to rinse some of the venom out of their eyes. It's usually a two-or-three-man job to restrain the dog and then rinse the eyes out. But if you can just rinse out a little, that would be really beneficial
- Transport the dog to the vet

## If your dog is bitten by a snake, whose fault is it?

No one. It is an accident. Snakes do not want to attack dogs; they only bite back in self-defence. It's not really the dog's fault, as they just act out of instinct to protect what's theirs.



# IDENTIFYING SNAKES

Identifying snakes is not always easy as unfortunately, contrary to popular belief, there are no distinctive features to distinguish venomous snakes and non-venomous snakes.

## HIGHLY VENOMOUS SPECIES



*Black Mamba.*

## VENOMOUS SPECIES



*Rhombic Night Adder.*

## MILDLY VENOMOUS SPECIES



*Natal Black Snake.*

## NON-VENOMOUS SPECIES



*Brown Water Snake.*

There is a diagram that gets shared around social media, apparently showing the difference between venomous and non-venomous snakes. For example, it tells you to look at pupil shape, and it alleges that if the pupil is round, it is non-venomous. Mambas, Cobras and Boomslang have round pupils, so this is terrible advice. You have to learn to identify the common snakes in your area.

When trying to identify the snake from a safe distance, ask yourself the following questions:

- What colour is it?
- Does it have any patterns or markings?
- What approximate size is it?
- Has it got a somewhat shiny or matt appearance/tyre-like appearance?
- Is it moving around in the day (diurnal) or at night (nocturnal)?
- Any other noticeable behaviour?

\* Some snakes may move during the day and night, or a diurnal snake may move at night if disturbed, and vice versa.

You can look the snake up in this book or describe the snake to a snake catcher using the answers to these questions.

### Scales and skins

Some snakes have what are known as keeled scales, which are scales with a ridge in the middle, giving the snake a somewhat rough feel to it. Snakes with such scales (Puff Adders, Boomslangs and Egg-eaters) do not have a shiny appearance.

### Identifying skins

Snakes often 'leave' their shed skins lying around homes. Snakes shed their skin because the skin does not stretch as the snake grows. Juvenile snakes, who are growing at a more rapid rate than

adults, may shed up to 10 times a year or more. Adult snakes may only shed one-to-four times a year, depending on the species. Identifying a shed skin is not always easy. You have to look for keeled or smooth scales, head shape and maybe even a scale count on the head. Some skins are easier to identify than others. Spotted Bush Snake skins are very thin and about a metre long, and often hang from rafters. Black Mamba skins are huge and quite dark. Those are just two examples.

### Snake sizes

When describing a snake to a snake catcher, try to give as detailed a description of the snake as possible. Many people will over exaggerate if they see a snake, and a 20cm Brown House Snake suddenly becomes a 2m Black Mamba! This page will help you to understand lengths and sizes better.

One centimetre is 10 millimetres

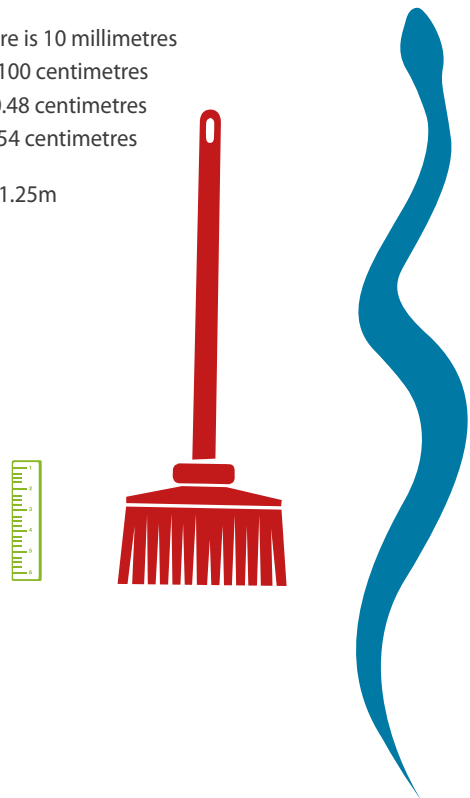
One metre is 100 centimetres

One foot is 30.48 centimetres

One inch is 2.54 centimetres

Broomstick – 1.25m

Ruler – 30cm



## GREEN SNAKES – IS EVERY ONE A GREEN MAMBA?

To some people, yes! Every green snake is a Green Mamba or a Boomslang. But in the Greater Durban Area, we actually have four other green snake species, which are all harmless. The harmless green snakes are far more commonly seen than the Green Mamba.



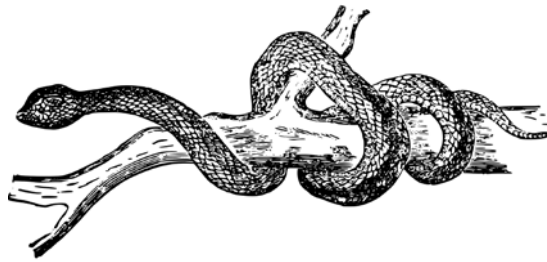
*Green Mamba.*



*Left: Boomslang (highly venomous) – note the oval shaped head.  
Right: Spotted Bush Snake (non-venomous) – note the orange iris.*



*Left: Eastern Natal Green (non-venomous) – note the bright yellow underside.  
Right: Western Natal Green (non-venomous) – note the blue-ish tinge and dark eye.*



*Left: Green Mamba (highly venomous) – plain, emerald green on top and beneath.  
Right: Green Water Snake (non-venomous) – much more slender than a mamba, the nose usually has a faint yellow tip and the belly is white.*

# BLACK MAMBA

*Dendroaspis polylepis*



## What do they look like?

One of the most obvious features of an adult Black Mamba is its impressive size. At a distance, people can mistake them for pythons (they lack the patterns of the python) or even a large PVC pipe. An adult Black Mamba is often as thick as a man's wrist, potentially thicker. They also have a matt appearance. The average length of an adult Black Mamba is 2.2-2.5m, although they have been recorded reaching lengths of over three metres long, but such specimens are exceptionally rare. Juveniles, upon hatching, measure between 40-50cm long, and they don't stay small for very long! In fact, juvenile mambas are rarely encountered, probably due to their nervous nature, small size and because they grow so quickly. Individuals less than a metre long are very seldom seen.



2.2m-2.5m

To see a Black Mamba up close, you'll realise that they're more of a grey/brown colour. However, at a distance, they do look black.

Their colour darkens towards the tail, which is black. They have a white belly and their face is mostly white too.

## How the Black Mamba got its name

The name Black Mamba comes from the inside of the mouth, and that's what you'll see if a Black Mamba is cornered and threatened. In such situations, this snake will open its mouth up and gape at the attacker, exposing the pitch-black colouration inside its mouth. It's a very intimidating sight! When it does this, it does not mean it's about to attack; it's merely a warning. Take notice of it, and back away. The famous 'coffin-shaped head' is not a feature you should intentionally look for, as it involves getting close to the snake. It is also not distinctive, as just about any snake could have a coffin-shaped head.





### Similar species?

The snake most often confused for a juvenile Black Mamba is the harmless Herald Snake. The Herald is similar in colour, however, their distinctive features are the darker head than the body, the white speckles and occasionally the orange/red lips (not all specimens have this). Not much else can resemble an adult Black Mamba.



### Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

Black Mambas are common in and around large nature reserves such as the Palmiet, Paradise Valley, Roosfontein, Krantzkloof, Silverglen and North Park nature reserves. They are not restricted to reserves but occupy most valleys around Durban and are common around Queensburgh, Westville, Reservoir Hills, Newlands, Verulam, Mount Moreland, Tongaat, Shongweni, Inanda, Molweni and in other parts.



Generally, they avoid very built-up areas and colder valleys such as Everton, Gillitts, Springside (Hillcrest), although it does not mean that they're not there. They're also not often found in the coastal forests where their relative, the Green Mamba, is found.

They are usually seen outside human dwellings, however, they do occasionally venture into homes. Ceilings, messy homes and storerooms are favourite hiding places for them where there is warmth, shelter and usually food.

### Nocturnal or diurnal?

Black Mambas generally move in the daytime. They are sometimes seen at night, but this is when they have been disturbed in homes.

### How venomous are they?

There's no debating the fact that Black Mambas have a potentially deadly bite. A full envenomation from a Black Mamba on a human without treatment would definitely be fatal. They possess a fast-acting neurotoxic venom that causes symptoms such as dizziness, nausea and vomiting. However, most patients who do receive bites survive them IF they have received urgent medical attention. It is very unlikely that it would kill someone in minutes.

### Are they really as aggressive as they're made out to be? Will they attack?

No, not at all! Black Mambas are widely believed to be highly aggressive snakes that will not hesitate to attack and kill you. What is said about mamba behaviour is mostly over exaggerated and false. When a Black Mamba sees a human approaching, all it wants to



do is get away. They're very nervous and shy reptiles. Seeing a Black Mamba in the wild is a real treat and privilege. Their sharp senses mean that you usually just catch a glimpse of them as they disappear into the bush at speed. They will always try to flee rather than fight. Even when cornered, they don't just attack. They'll gape at you and possibly spread a narrow hood and hiss. They will give you a good warning, and desperately hope that you will leave them alone.

However, you should, of course, NEVER push your luck with a mamba. Attempting to kill or capture it is extremely dangerous, and doing this could easily lead to a bite. Treat them with the respect that they command, and let them be.



### What do they eat?

Rodents (particularly House Rats and young Cane Rats), dassies, birds, bats, squirrels, feral kittens, domestic rabbits and guinea pigs. Black Mambas are highly efficient hunters. They are fast, agile and excellent climbers – their prey's worst nightmare!

### Are they territorial?

Technically, they're not territorial as they don't actively demarcate their 'area' nor do they defend it. They sometimes do, however, become resident in an area. They may find an area where there is a safe hiding place and a nice basking spot with an abundance of food. Often, they'll reside in such places and become creatures of habit. Some people have lived with them in their gardens or roofs for months, maybe even years, yet only seeing them on occasion.





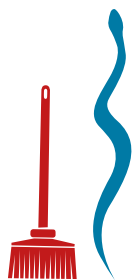
## GREEN MAMBA

*Dendroaspis angusticeps*, isiZulu: *iMamba eluhlaza*



### What do they look like?

Green Mambas are a bright emerald green – probably the most beautiful shade of green there is – and their belly is a lighter shade of green. Like the Black Mamba, they too have a matt appearance. The general size of adults is 1.5-2m, but they can grow to just over 2.5m in length. They are powerful snakes, typical of a mamba, with a fairly thick body, as opposed to the harmless green snakes. They also appear to have a cheeky grin, not that you should get close enough to admire a snake's facial expression, but maybe if you have binoculars, you'll notice this.



1.5m-2m



### Similar species?

The common and harmless green snakes, such as the Spotted Bush Snake, Natal Green Snakes and Green Water Snakes, are often confused for the Green Mamba. These snakes, however, are much more slender and smaller

and have either a white or yellow belly, unlike the green belly of the mamba. The Spotted Bush Snake has distinctive spots, and some Natal Greens have clear black markings going down their body too, unlike the plain green of the Green Mamba.

Male Boomslang grow to a similar size to Green Mambas, but have a much more rounded head with larger eyes, and they also have black bands/markings going down their body.

### Are they venomous?

As beautiful as this snake is, please admire it from a safe distance. They have a predominantly neurotoxic venom very similar to that of the Black Mamba, and bites could well be fatal. Urgent medical attention is required.

Fortunately though, bites from this species are rare due to their shy nature and arboreal habits.





### Where in the Greater Durban Area are the found?

Green Mambas are not nearly as common or widespread as popularly believed. They are generally only found along our coastline, in the thick coastal forests, seldom venturing just a few kilometres inland. So, location is one factor you can take into consideration when trying to identify a green snake in the garden. However, in saying this, a few specimens have been caught and seen around North Park Nature Reserve (Northdene), indicating that there could be a small population there. A couple have also been caught around the Silverglen Nature Reserve (Chatsworth). North of Durban, they are most often seen around Umhlanga and further north. South of Durban, they are sighted on the Bluff occasionally, although not too often. They become more common further south from there.

### What do they eat?

Nestling birds, bats and rodents.



### Green Mambas in trouble!

Picture our KZN coastline. What was once pristine, coastal forests are now largely developed areas. This is a continuous trend. Hotels, resorts, beach houses and restaurants are constantly being built where coastal forests once grew. So, due to their limited range and habitat destruction, Green Mamba numbers have been in decline and are listed as vulnerable.

If you are on holiday on the South or North Coast and you are lucky to see a Green Mamba, enjoy the sighting. They truly are exquisite animals. Listen out for the birds making alarm calls. If you hear a colony of weavers going crazy, there's a good chance that there is a Green Mamba trying to raid a nest or two.



# MOZAMBIQUE SPITTING COBRA

*Naja mossambica*, isiZulu: *Imfezi*



## What do they look like?

They're a light brown colour on top and usually a pinkish orange colour underneath. Underneath the 'neck' area are orange or yellow and black bands. You'll see this if you get too close to a cornered cobra, which is not something you should try! They spread that impressive, iconic hood when threatened as an intimidation tactic.

Size-wise, adult Mozambique Spitting Cobras generally grow up to around 1.2-1.3m in length. However, Durban produces some of the largest specimens on record. Individuals at 1.5m long are not uncommon. An individual in Northdene measured 1.75m. In 2017, the largest specimen of this species was caught, also in Northdene – a whopping 1.81m long.



1.2m-1.3m

## Similar species?

Large specimens are sometimes mistaken for Black Mambas, but the orange/yellow and black markings on the neck region can be seen even while the cobra is on the move. Mozambique Spitting Cobras are also browner than mambas. Their head is more rounded and their face is light brown in colour, as opposed to white.

They are sometimes even confused for Brown House Snakes but they are a uniform brown on top of the body and don't have any markings on top like the House Snake. Plus, if it hoods up, you'll know what it is straight away!

## What do they eat?

Toads, rodents, lizards and even other snakes – they're not fussy!





### Are they venomous?

Yes, highly venomous. They have a cytotoxic venom that can cause terrible necrosis, and it could well be fatal if left untreated. The Mozambique Spitting Cobra is actually responsible for most snakebites each year in South Africa. This is not because they like the taste of people! It's because they are so common and widespread, and also because they have the tendency to venture into homes. They are often encountered in and around homes where they may be looking for food or shelter. This is where accidents happen. So, contrary to popular belief, they don't just spit.



### Where in the Greater Durban Area are the found?

They are widespread in the area, occurring in and around most reserves and conservancies.

### Defensive geniuses!

The Mozambique Spitting Cobra's amazing ability to spit is simply genius; what a clever way for an animal to defend itself. They only

spit if they feel that their life is in danger. They spray venom into the eyes of an attacker to blind it while they make a quick getaway. They are remarkably accurate, and they can spray their venom up to two-to-three metres away (juveniles cannot spit as far). They spray the same venom that they use to bite with. This species, unlike many others, does not need to hood up to spit. They can spit just as accurately if they're lying down as they would while hooded up. They can even spit when a snake catcher has their head restrained.

### Important!

**Should you encounter this snake at close-quarters, please try to keep still, or at least move back very, very slowly. Should they feel threatened, they'll spit at any fast movements.**

**There are many spitting cobras found throughout Africa and even in Asia, but this is the only spitting snake found in the greater Durban area.**



## BOOMSLANG

*Dispholidus typus*, Boomslang is the Afrikaans word for 'Tree Snake'



### What do they look like?

Describing what a Boomslang looks like is a bit more complicated than it is with most other species. Physically, you can identify Boomslang by their large, oval-shaped heads. They have large eyes too, but many species may appear to have large eyes, so identifying them in this manner can be tricky. The head is a more noticeable feature. They also have keeled scales. Colour-wise though, identifying this species is also difficult because of the different colour variations. Boomslang are one of the few snake species where you can tell males and females apart by simply looking at them. \*This is a general rule of thumb; there are exceptions.

**Males** – Upon reaching adulthood, male Boomslang in KZN turn a bright green colour, generally with black bands going down their

bodies. Their bellies are green too. In the Upper Highway Area, they seem to have more broad black bands than in other areas. They're truly stunning! They may even have shades of blue mixed in with the green.

**Females** – Female Boomslang are a dull brown colour, with no markings or patterns. Their bellies are generally a lighter shade than on the top.

**Juveniles** – This is where it can get confusing. Colour-wise, juvenile Boomslangs look nothing like the adults and you cannot distinguish between males and females as they're all the same colour – grey/brown, with a dark, broad stripe running down the spine and a yellow-coloured throat. When they inflate their throats under threat, bits of electric blue show between the scales, but



1.2m-1.5m

it's the eyes that are the most distinguishable feature of juvenile Boomslang: they have large, bright, emerald green eyes, which are very noticeable. When they're approaching the metre mark, this is when their colours will shift to green or remain brown. They also lose the green-coloured eyes and yellow markings on the throat.



### Similar species?

Female/brown Boomslangs are often mistaken for Black Mambas, however, Boomslangs have a more rounded head than the mamba and they don't grow as large. Male/green Boomslangs may be mistaken for Spotted Bush Snakes but they are far larger. Remember, the 'green ones' only turn green when they're around a metre long, by which time they're much thicker than most Bush Snakes.



### Did you know?

Male Boomslangs in the Cape look a lot different to our green males in KZN. There, the males are yellow and black in colour. In South Africa, Boomslangs have been split into two sub-species: *Dispholidus typus typus*, which occurs in the Cape, and *Dispholidus typus viridis* in KZN.



### What do they eat?

Nestling birds, chameleons and other lizards, and occasionally rodents. These snakes are often seen raiding bird nests.



### How venomous are they?

Drop for drop, Boomslangs are thought to have the most toxic venom of any snake in Africa. They possess a potent hemotoxic



venom that prevents the blood from clotting. If left untreated, patients could end up bleeding to death. That sounds gruesome, but know that the antivenom for this species is highly effective. Also, bites are extremely rare from this species. It is usually handlers who are bitten. If in the trees or in some shrubs in the garden and left alone, they are of no threat to you or your family.

### Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

Boomslangs are not a commonly seen species due to the fact that they spend their life in the trees. In saying this, they are occasionally encountered around homes (mostly in gardens), and can potentially be seen in most parts of the Greater Durban Area. However, they are most commonly seen in the Upper Highway Area and further inland, and there is a relatively healthy population in the Field's Hill region. They do pop up in other areas too, occasionally.



## VINE OR TWIG SNAKE

*Thelotornis capensis*



### What do they look like?

As their name suggests, they look exactly like a vine or twig. Their camouflage is uncanny and spotting one in a tree or shrub requires some luck!

They're slender snakes, with adults usually being around a metre long. Their colour doesn't vary too much, nor do their patterns, although some individuals may have bolder and brighter markings on the body, which is mottled shades of brown/grey. The top of the head is generally a light green colour, which aids their camouflage. The only feature that isn't camouflaged is their tongue; it's a bright red or orange colour, which is very pretty really. They sometimes hold it out, which can give their presence away. Interestingly, they have keyhole-shaped pupils.



1m



### Similar species?

There's no other snake that looks like this species.

### Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

They're found in and around most nature reserves around Durban and are spotted in properties bordering these reserves. The Palmiet, in Westville, seems to have a particularly healthy population. They have become extremely common in the coastal forest areas north of Umhlanga.

### Diurnal or nocturnal?

Diurnal.

### What do they eat?

Nestling birds, lizards, including chameleons, occasionally small rodents, and they love feeding on green snakes of the genus *Philothamnus* (e.g. Spotted Bush Snakes).

### How venomous are they?

Highly venomous. They have a potent hemotoxic venom, much like that of the Boomslang, yet the antivenom for Boomslang



bites is not at all effective for Vine Snake venom. So, there is no antivenom for this species, but bites can still be treated. Bites from Vine Snakes are extremely rare, and cases where they actually envenomate are almost unheard of. Fortunately, most bites turn out to be dry bites.

Like Boomslangs, they are shy snakes that are very reluctant to bite. Gardeners have accidentally grabbed or bumped into this species, and the snake has just reacted by fleeing, not biting. If really irritated, they'll give you a warning by inflating their necks, trying to make themselves look bigger.





# PUFF ADDER

*Bitis arietans*, isiZulu: *iBululu*



## What do they look like?

Puff Adders are heavily-bodied snakes with a large, fist-like head. There's a misconception of Puff Adders being fat, but they're not really – they are actually very muscular snakes. Generally, they move slowly but if they feel threatened, they can move at surprising speeds in an attempt to escape.

Another obvious feature of the Puff Adder is the chevron or arrow markings going down their bodies. Their body is covered in keeled scales, giving them a very rough or scaly-looking appearance. The colour variation among Puff Adders varies across the country, and it does in KZN too. In some parts, like the Upper Highway Area of Durban, Midlands and Drakensberg, for example, they're a stunning yellow and black colour. Although juveniles are more dull, Puff Adders brighten up with



1m

age. In other areas, such as northern KZN, they tend to be a more dull colour – a drab mixture of brown and grey.

## Similar species?

Puff Adders are most often confused for the Rhombic Night Adder, the latter being far more common in and around Durban. Night Adders have pentagon/diamond-shaped markings running down their brown or sometimes grey body, which is very distinctive as opposed to the Puff Adder's chevrons. They also have quite a bold 'V' marking behind the head, whereas the Puff Adder does not. Puff Adders have a larger and far more distinctive head, as opposed to the slender, less noticeable head of the Night Adder. Both species hiss and puff if threatened, although the Puff Adder makes a lot more noise!





### How venomous are they?

Highly venomous! Puff Adders possess a destructive cytotoxic venom, causing massive swelling, tissue damage, bruising and pain. The Puff Adder's bite can well be fatal if left untreated but because antivenom is available and effective, we experience few fatalities in South Africa.



### What do they eat?

Rodents, toads, lizards, and they've been recorded as feeding on other snakes. These snakes are ambush predators, lying in wait for their prey to scuttle past. So when seen on a pathway, know that it is not there waiting for you to stand on it! It's an efficient, energy-saving hunting method so the myth of them being lazy is indeed a misconception.



### Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

Around Durban, Puff Adders are not a common species, and they generally occur further inland. The Upper Highway Area

(Assagay, Summerveld, Cato Ridge) is where they are more common than most other areas, as this is where there are more suitable habitats for them (grasslands and savannahs). In fact, they are absent in most parts of the Greater Durban Area.

### Did you know?

The Puff Adder holds the record for the most amount of babies produced in one go. A specimen in a zoo in Europe gave birth to 156 babies! That was exceptional, though.



### Lightning-fast strikers!

The Puff Adder is known as one of the fastest-striking snakes around, especially in South Africa. However, it does face stiff competition around the world. Either way, it's not a speed you want to test. There's a popular myth whereby they're believed to have the ability to strike backwards. They can't exactly fold over backwards to strike, but they spin around incredibly quickly to do so!



# BIBRON'S STILETTO SNAKE

*Atractaspis bibronii*



## What do they look like?

The Bibron's Stiletto Snake does not look like your typical venomous snake (like a Puff Adder or cobra). It's a small species (with adults averaging lengths of 30-40cm) with a somewhat inoffensive appearance. They have a small, non-distinctive and fairly blunt head with beady little eyes. Their tail ends in a sharp spine, which they use to frighten attackers. For example, should you grab the tail of this snake, it digs its spine into your hand, making you think you've been bitten, and the snake hopes you will then drop it.



30cm-40cm

They're a blackish/brown colour and the belly is a lighter shade of brown.

This snake's behaviour could also give away its identity. When threatened, Stiletto Snakes arch their neck up, with their face usually

down against the ground. This is their 'strike position', and it's unique to the species. From that arched position, the head swipes side to side if provoked, and that's how it strikes. It does not strike forward like the average snake. The reason it does this is because it has long fangs that protrude out the sides of its mouth. So swiping sideways is an efficient way of biting the attacker.

**WARNING:** Do not be fooled by this snake's 'harmless' appearance!

## Similar species?

Unfortunately, a number of snakes may resemble the Stiletto Snake. Sometimes people mistake them for Brown House Snakes or Heralds, but if you look at the information about these two species, you'll notice that it's quite easy to distinguish between them.



The snakes they perhaps most closely resemble are docile Natal Black Snakes. Natal Black Snakes though, are pitch black in colour, and they're a uniform black all over. They also grow much larger, with adults growing to a metre long, or more.

Common Wolf Snakes look similar too, but they have white speckles all over the sides of their body, which are quite easy to see. They also have a more flattened head shape.



### Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

Stiletto Snakes are found throughout the Greater Durban Area. They spend much of their time beneath the surface, under rocks and rotten logs. They're most active during the rainy season, particularly before and after storms.

### Do not touch this snake!

The Bibron's Stiletto Snake has a cytotoxic venom. Although not considered life-threatening, this small snake can pack a painful punch! Symptoms include terrible pain, swelling, blistering and tissue damage. In severe cases, people have lost a portion of their finger (which was bitten).

Just about all the bites that this species is responsible for, occur when people pick them up, thinking that they're harmless. Fearing for its life, this snake will not hesitate to bite, sometimes more than once.

There is absolutely no safe way to handle the Stiletto Snake. Holding them behind the head is flawed, due to the way in which they can twist their heads and poke your fingers with those long fangs. Holding these snakes by the tail is extremely dangerous too, as they swing wildly, easily 'stabbing' your finger in the process.

This is an interesting snake that can be observed, but must be left alone.



# RHOMBIC NIGHT ADDER

*Causus rhombeatus*



## What do they look like?

The Rhombic Night Adder is generally a light or greyish/brown colour, with dark diamond-like markings going down the body. Adults can become quite stocky, with a non-distinctive head – not what you would imagine an adder head to look like. On top of their head is a clear 'V' marking. Adult Night Adders are usually just over half-a-metre long.



## Similar species?

The Rhombic Night Adder is most often confused for a Puff Adder. In the Durban area, Puff Adders are, for the most part, found only in the Upper Highway Area. Puff Adders have a distinctively large head, and the body has chevron/arrow markings going down the body. They also tend to be yellow and black in colour, with a much larger body. Another



50cm-60cm

reason why Night Adders are mistaken for Puff Adders is because they also hiss and puff when threatened.

## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

This is a widespread and common species throughout the area; it's the most common venomous snake species around Durban.

## Diurnal or nocturnal?

Believe it or not, Night Adders are far more active in the day, where they are seen on the move, basking or feeding. They are not often encountered at night, despite their name.

## What do they eat?

Night Adders feed exclusively on toads (the big, brown croaking frogs).





### How venomous are they?

A bite from this species should be taken seriously. There's never been a recorded fatality from a Rhombic Night Adder bite, however, bites can still cause a great deal of pain and swelling, and one should not delay in getting to hospital in the event of a bite.



### Did you know?

Night Adders have the 'Adder' name, but they fall into their own genus, *Causus* (not *Bitis* like most adders). Interestingly, Night Adders lay eggs and they usually lay  $\pm 20$ . Most other adders give birth to live young.



# NATAL BLACK SNAKE

*Macrelaps microlepidotus*



## What do they look like?

They are pitch black with a shiny appearance – a uniform black colour on top and underneath. They've got rather broad and blunt heads, which is perfect for burrowing under loose soil.

They can grow to just over a metre long.

## Similar species?

The Stiletto Snake most closely resembles this species. However, the Stiletto's face, sides and belly are a lighter brown colour, more so than the darker body, whereas the Natal Black Snake is pitch black all over.



80cm-1m

## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

Generally, only in the Highway Area, but they are becoming more common in the Upper Highway region. They're active during overcast and rainy weather.

## What do they eat?

Frogs (especially Rain Frogs), lizards and rodents.

## Are they venomous?

Yes, although little is known of the venom, it is not considered to be of medical importance. Besides, this species is extremely reluctant to bite. They're really docile, and the most they do is let off a bad smell as a deterrent to predators.



# SHORT-SNOUDED GRASS/WHIP SNAKE

*Psammophis brevirostris*



80cm-1m



## What do they look like?

This species can grow up to lengths of a metre or more. They're light brown in colour, with a striped appearance. The top of the body is generally a bit darker than the sides, and along the spine runs a very thin stripe (which isn't solid). Running along each side of the body is a broad, pale stripe. The belly is a pale yellow colour.

It is one of the fastest moving snakes in the country!

## Similar species?

There are other species of the genus that could be mistaken for the Short-snouted Grass Snake, but they do not occur in Durban. Around Durban, they are most often confused for Black Mambas and sometimes even cobras. They're much lighter in colour than mambas, with stripes. The Mozambique

Spitting Cobra is plain brown on top, with a far more rounded head than the Grass Snake.

## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

They favour grassland areas, and so they are found in and around such areas within the region.

## Are they venomous?

Short-snouted Grass Snakes do have a mild venom but it has no or very little effect on humans. They can inflict a fairly painful bite, though, if grabbed. If grabbed by the tail, they may perform a crocodile-like 'death roll', which ends in them losing the end of their tail in order to get away, much like a gecko.

## What do they eat?

Rodents, lizards and other snakes.





# HERALD SNAKE

*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*



## What do they look like?

As adults, they're usually around 60-70cm. Juveniles are tiny when they hatch, around 12cm long. These snakes are usually grey in colour, sometimes olive brown, with white speckles on their bodies. The backs of their heads are black, making their whole head sometimes appear black. This, along with the white speckles, are key ID features.

Another easy way to identify the Herald is by its behaviour. When confronted, this snake will flatten its head out, coil up, and strike repeatedly, sometimes making a short hissing sound. The aim is to intimidate a threat but really, it's all talk and no action.

## Red or White-lipped Herald?

Many people think that there's two species of Herald Snakes. The Red-lipped, and the White-

lipped. They are, in fact, the same species. Some have a bright orange/red lip, in others, it's very feint or pale – it's just colour variation.

## Similar species?

Due to their grey colouration, Herald Snakes are most often mistaken for Black Mambas. Remember though, Heralds have white speckles and their heads are darker in colour than their bodies. This is not the case with mambas. Hatchling mambas, which are  $\pm 60$ cm and rarely seen, usually do not hesitate to open up their mouth, exposing the pitch-black colour inside. The Herald doesn't gape like that. Rather, it flattens its head and strikes.

## How venomous are they?

Although a bite from this snake is commonly believed to leave you with a nasty headache, this is not true. The Herald Snake is harmless



50cm-60cm



to humans and pets (unless your pet is a frog). Heralds do have a very mild venom, meant for prey, but it has no effect on humans.

### Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

This is one of the most common snakes around, and is found throughout the Greater Durban Area.

### What do they eat?

Frogs! They may take lizards occasionally too, but frogs are definitely their favourite prey item. So if you have a pond in your garden and walk around it at night, you may just spot one of these little snakes.



# BLACK-HEADED CENTIPEDE-EATER

*Aparallactus capensis*



## What do they look like?

They are small snakes, seldom growing over 25cm in length.

Their most distinguishing feature, for which they get their name, is their black head. The top of their head is black, and this leads down to the neck. The black marking runs around the neck, almost like a necklace. This is very clear to see in light brown-coloured specimens (the norm). Some are a bit darker than others, in which case, the black head isn't always that clear.



20cm



## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

This is a widespread and common species, although they spend much of their time under rocks, logs and in termite mounds. They are quite often found swimming in swimming pools after falling in.

## Are they venomous?

Yes, however, they are still considered harmless due to the venom being extremely mild. Due to their size, they also struggle to bite people. They're usually docile snakes.



## What do they eat?

The name gives that away! It's got a very specific and unusual diet of centipedes (not millipedes). Bizarrely, the snake occasionally gets eaten by the centipede, so the tables do turn!



# SPOTTED BUSH SNAKE

*Philothamnus semivariiegatus*



## What do they look like?

They're a thin, green snake, with black spots/speckles going half-way down their body. Adults grow to just under a metre in length and they have a pale yellow belly. In the sun, you may notice a turquoise colour between their scales, which looks exquisite. It is an extremely fast-moving snake.



## Similar species?

The Spotted Bush Snake is very closely related to the Natal Green Snake and Green Water Snake. They are not nearly as speckled as the Bush Snake, though. Green Water Snakes are plain green, while Natal Greens may have some black markings. The belly of the Green Water Snake is white, while on the Eastern Natal Green, it is bright yellow, unlike the pale yellow belly of the Bush Snake. Bush Snakes also have an orange iris.



80cm-1m

Because they are green, Bush Snakes are often incorrectly identified as Boomslangs or Green Mambas (more often the latter). Both of these species are much larger than the Bush Snake, for starters. For more information on these two species, have a look at them on pages 27 and 23.

## The most common snake in Durban!

**Spotted Bush Snakes are very common visitors to suburban gardens; they are by far the most commonly encountered snake in the greater Durban area!**

**They are often seen on walls, in the rafters, garages, shrubs near windows, air vents, behind air-conditioners, on burglar guards, in postboxes, on curtain rails, on/in driveways and security gates. They can be seen anywhere in the house and they seem to enjoy bathrooms too. This is a species that has adapted well to suburbia as there's plenty of hiding places and food.**



### What do they eat?

Their favourite food is House Geckos, which are plentiful in and around homes in Durban, hence why this species does so well here.



### Did you know?

These snakes are often seen in elevated positions in homes. Because of this, in the Zulu culture, they are believed to be sent from the ancestors to keep an eye on the family, or they are believed to be actual ancestors in another form. So, these snakes are considered to be somewhat sacred to those who believe this and are not usually killed.



### Are they harmless?

Yes, Spotted Bush Snakes are non-venomous, completely harmless to adults, children and pets. However, if picked up, a Bush Snake will probably bite multiple times, which feels like a sharp pinch. Don't try it though!



### A welcomed visitor

This is actually a lovely little snake to have roaming around the garden, or outside of the house. Without the ability or will to harm anyone, they are of no medical concern, plus, they make sure you don't have too many geckos. They're also a treat to see! They are truly beautiful snakes.



# NATAL GREEN SNAKES

Eastern: *Philothamnus natalensis natalensis*, Western: *Philothamnus natalensis occidentalis*



## What do they look like?

Natal Green Snakes are a bright green colour with a bright yellow belly and a slender build. They grow to around a metre in length.

The Western Natal Green generally has a blueish tinge on its face and parts of the body, unlike the Eastern Natal Green. The Western Natal Green's eyes are almost plain black, whereas the Eastern has a yellow iris.



## Similar species?

As expected, due to its colouration, Natal Greens most often are confused for Green Mambas. When trying to differentiate between the two, the first thing you can look at is where the snake has been spotted. Remember, Green Mambas are generally strictly a coastal species. So if you're in the Upper Highway area, you should not be seeing a Green Mamba in your garden. Natal Greens have a yellow belly, whereas the belly of a Green Mamba is green.



80cm-1m

Natal Greens closely resemble Spotted Bush Snakes. They have the same build and they are in the same genus. Distinguishing between the two of them is more difficult than it is to distinguish between a Natal Green and Green Mamba. Spotted Bush Snakes generally have bolder spots/stripes, which run half-way down the body, and they have an orange/red iris.

## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

The Eastern Natal Green is generally found on the coastline, being particularly common from Umhlanga northwards. The Western Natal Green is sometimes seen further south, by Amanzimtoti, and then further inland (around Field's Hill and further west).

## What do they eat?

Frogs and lizards.



# GREEN WATER SNAKE

*Philothamnus hoplogaster*



## What do they look like?

Green Water Snakes are a beautiful light green colour, with no spots or markings on their backs. The tips of their snouts are often yellow, especially in juveniles. The bellies of these snakes are usually a pale white colour.



## Similar species?

As expected, due to their colouration, they are most often mistaken for Green Mambas. When trying to differentiate the two, the first thing you can look at is where the snake has been seen. Remember, Green Mambas are generally strictly a coastal species. If the snake is climbing, you should be able to get a view of the belly. If it's green, it will be a mamba, if it's white it will be a Green Water Snake. Baby Green Mambas are rarely seen.



60cm

## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

A widespread species, which are quite common around water sources.



## What do they eat?

Frogs and lizards.



# BROWN HOUSE SNAKE

*Boaedon capensis*



## What do they look like?

Brown House Snakes are a light-to-dark-brown colour, with a beautiful, pearl-white belly. They have cream-coloured stripes running down the body, with the two main ones starting at the snout, and running along either side of the head, forming a narrow, light 'V' marking. Some have more patterning than others. Older specimens tend to be darker in colour. Brown House Snakes generally have a rather shiny appearance.



90cm-1.1m

Female Brown House Snakes grow to be around 1.1m long, while males are considerably smaller (this is not the case with all snakes). Large specimens often have a few scars on the body, sustained from rat bites upon constricting them.

## Similar species?

Metre-long specimens are sometimes mistaken for Black Mambas. They don't have that matt appearance though, and faint markings are usually visible (whereas mambas have no markings).

Younger specimens are quite distinctive with the bold patterning. Some specimens are so boldly marked and patterned that they are mistaken for pythons.



## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

They are common and widespread; they're not called House Snakes for nothing! This is one of the most common snakes found in gardens, as well as in and around homes. During the day, they're usually found under





any sort of cover that can be found around houses, e.g. piles of wood, rubble, bricks, asbestos, dustbins, etc.



### What do they eat?

This has to be one of the best snakes to have in the garden as adult Brown House Snakes are excellent for rat control! Youngsters feed mostly on lizards. Brown House Snakes are also known to lurk around bird feeders, catching incoming birds drawn to food. They're clever snakes!

### Diurnal or nocturnal?

Brown House Snakes are awake at night-time, where they actively hunt down their prey.



### Venomous or non-venomous?

Brown House Snakes have no venom and, therefore, cannot cause any harm to people. Despite this, they should never be picked up, nor should any snake. House Snakes are not shy to bite in self-defence but the bite has no ill effects. This snake is best left alone in gardens to do their job.



## OLIVE SNAKE

Previously known as Olive House Snake, *Lycodonomorphus inornatus*



### What do they look like?

Juvenile specimens are a very dark colour, almost appearing black, but with an olive tinge. Adults are usually a lighter olive colour, but are also often quite dark. The bottom half of adults' jaws are white, which can be a fairly obvious feature. This snake can grow to over a metre long.



### Similar species?

In physique, they look very much like Brown House Snakes, except they lack the cream-coloured stripes/patterns. Adults are occasionally mistaken for Black Mambas, like most dark snakes, but this snake is shiny rather than matt.



80cm-1m

### Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

Generally in the Upper Highway Area.



### What do they eat?

Rodents, lizards and other snakes.



### Are they venomous?

No, this species is harmless.



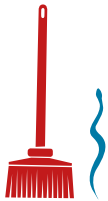
# SPOTTED ROCK SNAKE

*Lamprophis guttatus*



## What do they look like?

Spotted Rock Snakes are light brown in colour, with distinctive, large, dark, round spots going all the way down their body, which often appear to be arranged in pairs. They have some patterns on the head too. The head can flatten out, which is used to intimidate attackers, but this also helps them to hunt in narrow crevices. They grow to just over half-a-metre long.



50cm-60cm



## Similar species?

They could only be confused for Rhombic Night Adders, but they have much more slender bodies, and the patterns are circles rather than diamond-like.

## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

They are an elusive species found in the Upper Highway Area, although one was recently found in Reservoir Hills. They generally live in and alongside cliffs where they hunt in crevices. You would be very lucky to have this secretive snake in your garden or home! They do have a habit of visiting homes for geckos, though.



## What do they eat?

Mostly lizards, but also small rodents and small, nesting birds.



## Are they venomous?

No. They are also very reluctant to bite.



# BROWN WATER SNAKE

*Lycodonomorphus rufulus*



## What do they look like?

On top, they are a dark-to-light- brown colour. The belly is usually a cream colour, with some specimens having a really pretty pinkish-coloured belly. Adults are usually around  $\pm 60$ cm.



## Similar species?

Brown House Snakes look quite similar to the Brown Water Snake, however, they lack the stripes/patterns on top of their body, and have a more cream-coloured belly.



## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

They are common and widespread throughout much of South Africa. As their name would suggest, they are usually found close to water. They are commonly seen climbing reeds in ponds that are occupied by a healthy frog population!

## What do they eat?

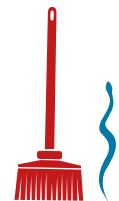
They favour frogs, but are not a fussy snakes! They will also eat lizards, rodents and even fish and are surprisingly powerful constrictors.

## Are they venomous?

No, and they are very reluctant to bite. However, if handled, they may give off a defensive musk, which smells horrid!

## Did you know?

The Brown Water Snake's isiZulu name is *lvuzamanzi*. In the Zulu culture, *lvuzamanzi* is believed to be very dangerous and is feared. It is said that should you be bitten by *lvuzamanzi*, you need to go and drink from the nearest river. *lvuzamanzi* may refer to other species as well, but the belief about the treatment is simply not true. Drinking from a river can't counteract venom in any way, and nowadays that could be very dangerous to do too!



50cm

# SOUTHERN AFRICAN PYTHON

Previously known as Rock Python, *Python natalensis*, isiZulu: *iNhlawati*



## What do they look like?

The Southern African Python grows to lengths of four-to-five metres long, making it the largest snake in the country. At these lengths, they can weigh between 40-60 kilogrammes. Juveniles and sub-adults are beautifully coloured and patterned, with shades of brown, yellow and black. Adults tend to be a lot darker, with faded colours and patterns.



## Similar species?

This species, especially as adults, cannot be mistaken for any other species.



## Are they venomous?

Southern African Pythons have no venom. However, because they have rows of large, needle-like teeth, a bite from a large python can be extremely painful, and may need light medical attention.

Specimens growing large enough to kill people are extremely rare, if not wiped out within the eThekweni municipality. They do not hunt people. If left alone, this species is considered harmless.

## What do they eat?

Many animals are on the menu for this giant species! They can take down small antelope such as duiker or bushbuck. Other mammals include monkeys, dassies, cane rats and other rodents, including porcupine. Birds (big or small), monitor lizards and even young crocodiles are also targeted. If there's a shortage of natural prey, pythons may hunt domestic animals such as goats, chickens, rabbits or even dogs and cats. Pythons are incredibly powerful snakes, and once they've wrapped their coils around their prey and start constricting them, there's no escape.



3m-3.5m





### Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

Pythons are not nearly as common as what they once were decades ago. They have been wiped out from many areas in which they used to occur. Nowadays, they are more often encountered in areas such as Inanda, Shongweni and further north in areas such as Ndwedwe, Ballito. In areas like Inanda, wild prey is scarce due to excessive hunting, and so they feed mostly on domestic animals (especially chickens).

### A protected species!

Killing pythons is a criminal offense, as it is protected by law in an attempt to stop so many being killed for their skin, which is used for handbags and boots. Pythons are also sought after in the muthi trade, and are killed in their numbers for this. Similar to another of Africa's protected species, the rhino, people are killing this species because they believe it can do something for them, when in actual fact, it has no effect at all. There are no medicinal properties in pythons. Apart from killing them, keeping and selling them is also illegal.

### Magnificent mothers!

Southern African Pythons are the only snake species in the area that actually care for their young. As you will have read, snakes generally lay their eggs/give birth and then leave them, but the python is different. A while after mating, the mother snake usually lays her eggs underground, often in old animal burrows. She then remains with the eggs, guarding them from predators. Not only that, she actually helps to incubate them. In fact, without her, the eggs would never hatch. The mother python will slither out onto the surface to bask, and after a few hours, moves back to her eggs, coils around them, and incubates them using her now warm body. Upon hatching, she still stays with her young for two-to-three weeks, after which she finally leaves. The juveniles then have to fend for themselves like any other snake.



# SOUTHERN BROWN EGG-EATER

*Dasypeltis inornata*



## What do they look like?

A yellowish/brown colour, with the belly being a similar but lighter colour. Egg-eaters have keeled scales that give them a matt rather than shiny appearance. They have a fairly small, blunt head. This species can grow up to a metre long. If threatened, they may coil back, flatten out their head and strike repeatedly.



## Similar species?

It's not too difficult to distinguish this species from others, but they perhaps look most similar to the Brown Water (shiny appearance and pinkish belly) and Brown House snakes (which have cream-coloured stripes).



60cm-70cm

## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

In most parts of the area. They're not all that often seen, unless you breed chickens or other birds!



## Are they venomous?

No, and they lack teeth to bite you with.



## Diurnal or nocturnal?

Nocturnal.



## Amazing feeders!

Southern Brown Egg-eaters only feed on bird eggs. Reptile eggs are not included in their diet.

Snakes can eat prey much larger than their own head. This is thanks to their elastic jaws. The bottom jaws are not joined together by bones; they're attached by ligaments, which allow the jaw to stretch out enough to swallow prey much larger than their head. The egg-eater is perhaps one of the best examples of this. An adult egg-eater's head is about the size

of an average adult human's index finger, yet they can stretch their jaws over a large chicken egg!

When snakes eat, they generally digest the whole prey item, including bones. Egg-eaters are different. Once they've got their jaws around the egg, they use muscles to push the egg up against sharp bones on their spine, cracking the egg. They 'drink' the contents of the egg, and regurgitate the crushed up shell in a 'package'.



*A Southern Brown Egg-eater feeding on a large chicken egg.*





# COMMON WOLF SNAKE

*Lycophidion capense*



## What do they look like?

A blackish/brown colour with what looks like white speckles along the sides of the body. The scales on the sides are white-edged, which give them that speckled appearance. The belly is white and the head is quite elongated and compressed. They are small snakes, growing to only 30-40cm in length. They get their name from their teeth, which are relatively long and recurved.



30cm



## Similar species?

The Stiletto Snake, however, the Stiletto has a much more rounded head and lacks the 'speckles' on its sides.



## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

They are widespread and considered common, yet they're not all that often seen.

## What do they eat?

Mostly skinks (smooth-scaled lizards).

## Venomous or non-venomous?

Non-venomous, and they are also extremely reluctant to bite.

## Diurnal or nocturnal?

Nocturnal.



## BIBRON'S BLIND SNAKE

*Afrotyphlops bibronii*



### What do they look like?

The Bibron's Blind Snake looks a bit like a giant earthworm, except if more closely inspected, you will notice smooth, shiny scales. You will also notice tiny, black eyes and a very blunt head. They're a light brown or pinkish-brown colour, and grow up to lengths of 30-40cm.



### Similar species?

It would be hard to confuse this species for any other, although you could perhaps mistake it for a Stiletto Snake. However, Stilettoes are a lot darker in colour, with larger and more obvious scales and eyes too.



30cm

### What do they eat?

Like the Thread Snake, they mostly feed on ant and termite larvae.



### Can they bite?

No, they are completely harmless. This snake spends most of its time underground, emerging only after heavy rains. They very rarely venture into homes.



# BLACK FILE SNAKE

*Gonionotophis nyassae*



## What do they look like?

File Snakes have a unique body shape – they are triangular in shape with a hardened ridge along their spine. Black File Snakes, as their name suggests, are black, although their belly is generally white. They have a flattened, broad head. They're not large snakes, with adults averaging lengths of 30-40cm.



## A rarity!

This is arguably the rarest snake in the Durban area. Most records of this species are from the north of Durban (Umhlanga northwards). There are recent records of this species within the Durban area, namely from Reservoir Hills and Springfield. So you'd have to be really lucky to see this species around Durban! They become more common in northern KZN, but are scarce there too.



30cm-40cm

## Are they venomous?

No, they are not. It is an extremely docile snake. However, it could be confused for the Stiletto Snake. This snake may not have a harmful bite, but the smell it gives off is disgusting and pungent, used to deter predators. It works!



## What do they eat?

Lizards and other snakes.



# THREAD/WORM SNAKE

*Leptotyphlops spp*



## What do they look like?

As their name suggests, like a piece of thread or a worm! Adults average 10-15cm in length. When you look at them, it's hard to believe that they actually are snakes. Their smooth scales give them a very shiny appearance. When threatened, they wriggle around in a panicked manner, which is quite an easy feature to look for.



10cm-15cm

## Are they dangerous?

This is a question many people ask about this snake. No, they don't have venom and even if they did, they'd have a hard time biting you with that tiny mouth!



## Where in the Greater Durban Area are they found?

Common and widespread throughout the Greater Durban Area.



## What do they eat?

Ant and termite larvae. Thread/Worm Snakes are often found inside homes, even in homes where one has to climb stairs at the entrance. This is strange, because not only are they miniscule, they spend most of their time underground, usually only emerging after rains. A lot of the time, it seems like a mystery as to how they get inside. Perhaps they follow ants and termites?



There's no need to call a snake catcher for this one! Simply sweep it outside with a broom.

# EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

## Snake catchers in the Greater Durban Area

**Nick Evans** (Greater Durban Area) – 072 809 5806  
**Duncan Slabbert** (Greater Durban Area) – 082 851 4069  
**Warren Keith Dick** (Durban South) – 072 211 0353  
**Donovan Carstens** (Durban South) – 071 839 9225  
**Caitlin Mary Elizabeth Hunt** (Amanzimtoti) – 084 205 4677  
**Kloof & Highway SPCA** – 031 764 1212/After hours – 073 335 9322  
**Phezulu Safari Park** (Upper Highway) – 031 777 1000  
**Tristan Dickerson** (Upper Highway) – 082 490 2713  
**Byron Zimmerman** (Upper Highway) – 082 894 6783  
**Shane Pike** (Upper Highway) – 062 265 8434  
**Ian Sandison** (Upper Highway) – 083 635 1312/083 253 2445  
**Nick Liebenberg** (New Germany and surrounds) – 082 782 3145  
**Dylan Leonard** (Durban North and surrounds) – 074 918 1181  
**Jason Arnold** (Durban North and surrounds) – 082 745 6375  
**James Wittstock** (Durban North and surrounds) – 072 566 6355



## Who to call when someone has been bitten by a snake

### Snakebite Advisory Group

**Dr Tim Hardcastle:** 082 468 1615  
**Dr Jenna Taylor:** 083 631 4816  
**Dr Sharadh Garach:** 082 495 0135  
**St Augustine's Casualty:** 031 268 5559  
**Nick Evans:** 072 809 5806



**Netcare 911:** 082 911

**MTN Emergency Number:** Dial 112 or dial 083 112 from another network

## Who to call if a dog or cat has been bitten by a venomous snake


**Nick Evans** - 072 809 5806  
**Westville Veterinary Clinic** (24 hours): 031 267 8000  
**Hillcrest Veterinary Clinic** (24 hours): 031 765 3221  
**Ashburne Veterinary Clinic** (24 hours): 031 562 1037





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of Southern Africa*. Struik Publishers, Cape Town.





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