

CREATURES OF THE CREATOR

Part Ten: The Snake



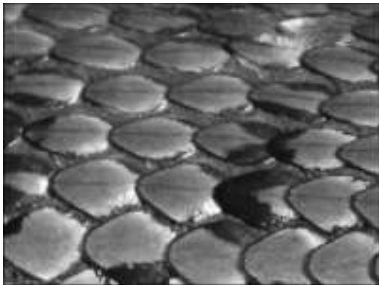
Many people run the other direction when they see this reptile. Because of their quick movements and sometimes poisonous venom, some of us just get jumpy when we find ourselves too close to snakes. Others, on the other hand, keep snakes as pets and enjoy handling them. Into which category do you fall?

Habitat and Range

There are over 2000 species of snake. They live nearly everywhere, ranging across every continent except Antarctica (they cannot live where the ground is frozen all the time). They can be found in deserts and forests as well as in oceans, streams, and lakes. Some live on the ground while others live in trees. If you are not fond of snakes, you would enjoy visiting Ireland and New Zealand as those islands do not have snake populations.

Physical Characteristics

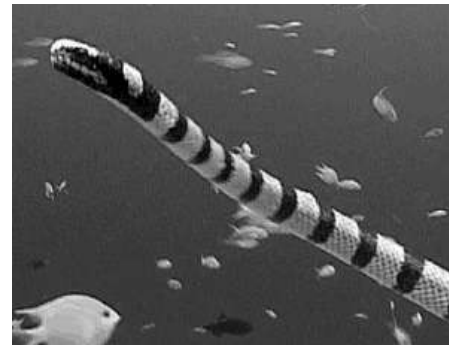
Everyone knows, in general, what a snake looks like. They have a long, flexible body with scales. They do not have legs or feet, but move along by contracting their muscles. Snakes usually move in an undulating movement or in a straight line. If you wondered, snakes move slower than a person can run. The top speed of a snake is about eight miles an hour. Now more about specific characteristics of the snake:



Close-up of snake scales

Scales – Scales are different shapes and sizes depending on the snake. They are made of keratin, the same thing that your fingernails are made out of. They might be grainy, have smooth surfaces, or have ridges (keeled). The scales overlap like the tiles on a roof (except for the head). In general, scales are most useful in helping the snake reduce friction as it moves.

Eyes – A snake's eyes are not covered by eyelids, but rather by clear scales, so the eyes are open all the time. "A snake's vision is mainly used for detecting movement of prey. They have difficulty seeing motionless prey or enemies. Objects probably appear as a blur at 40 feet, but at 10 to 15 feet, the objects appear sharper. The vision of many snakes, like the rattlesnake, is better suited for nocturnal searching. Some species, such as racers and garter snakes, have eyes specialized for daytime activity"¹



Sea Snake

Teeth and Fangs – Most snakes have teeth, but only the poisonous snakes have fangs. Fangs are sharp, long, hollow teeth. They are connected to small sacs in the snake's head that are located behind their eyes. The sacs produce venom which is released in the snake's prey to paralyze or kill it. Sea snakes are thought to be the

most poisonous of all snakes. Other poisonous snakes include Adders, Cottonmouths, Rattlesnakes, copperheads, and Cobras.

Other senses – Smell. Snakes use smell to find their prey. They smell by using their tongues to collect particles in the air and then use a Jacobson organ (like cats) to examine it. "The fork in the tongue gives the snake a sort of directional sense of smell and taste simultaneously. The snake keeps its tongue constantly in motion, sampling particles from the air, ground, and water analyzing the

¹ <http://www.sdgfp.info/Wildlife/Snakes/SnakeInfo.htm>

chemicals found and determining the presence of prey or predators in its local environment."² Vibration. Snakes are sensitive to vibrations in the ground and this way they can detect the approach of other animals. Infrared. Certain snakes have heat receptors allowing them to locate nearby warm-blooded mammals.

Life and Behavior

Most snakes hatch from eggs. The fertilized eggs are deposited in locations that are fairly moist and warm. It can take up to 60 days for the eggs to hatch. Some snakes (like garter snakes and rattlesnakes) give birth to fully developed young, the eggs being hatched inside the mother's body. Snakes usually live from 10-25 years.

All snakes are carnivorous. Since they cannot tear or chew, they swallow their food whole, feasting on small rodents and other animals. A large python is actually able to eat a small deer or antelope! After it eats, a snake becomes dormant while it digests its food. A lot of energy is used in digestion.



Burmese Python

"Snakes are normally timid and secretive. When approached, they usually remain quiet to avoid detection. They may try to escape if given an opportunity. Only when frightened or cornered will they stand their ground."³

Snakes In the Bible

There are several important references to snakes in the Bible, including several that directly relate to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Genesis 3:13-15 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." ¹⁴

² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake>

³ <http://www.sdgap.info/Wildlife/Snakes/SnakeIndex.htm>

So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

- In the Garden of Eden, Satan took the form of a snake to lead both Adam and Eve into sin. God tells the serpent that that he would suffer for this. Who was the offspring of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent? How would He destroy Satan's power?

When Moses was hesitant to lead the Children of Israel as God had directed him to do, God gave Moses the ability to do signs and wonders so that the people would believe He had been commissioned by the LORD. One of the signs involved a snake:

Exodus 4:2-4 Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied. ³ The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. ⁴ Then the LORD said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand.

The famous bronze serpent was a part of God's plan to heal the people of their snake bites in the Old Testament, but it was also a picture of Jesus Christ who would cleanse us all from our sins! Look to *Him* and live!

Numbers 21:8-9 The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

John 3:14-15 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

Selected Resources

http://www.wpclipart.com/animals/snake/snakes_2/snake_2.png

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake_scales

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/content/images/2007/06/04/snakescalegal_400x300.jpg

<http://www.venomoussnakes.net/sea-snake.gif>

<http://42explore.com/snake.htm>