

SUPER SNAKES

Masters of disguise, skilled hunters and champion eaters, there are more than **2,500 species** of snakes slithering around the world. Check out these **SSSS-urprising** facts...



DID YOU KNOW...?

The British Isles has three native snake species – the grass snake, the smooth snake and Britain’s only venomous snake, the adder!

SNAKES SMELL WITH THEIR TONGUES

Can you smell that mouse? Well, a snake uses its *tongue* to help it smell. It flicks its long, forked tongue to pick up chemical molecules from the air, ground or water. The tongue carries the smelly molecules back to two small openings – called the Jacobson’s organ – in the roof of the snake’s mouth where it’s analysed. Mmm, lunch!

Yum... This Amazon tree boa smells with its forked tongue!

SNAKES CHANGE THEIR SKIN

Snakes literally *grow* out of their skins! Every few months, most start rubbing against the ground or tree branches and, starting at the mouth, they slither out of their tight skin. Like a sock, the skin comes off inside out. Voilà – the snake has a fresh, shiny look!



Easy does it... a Dione rat snake sheds its skin!



This puff adder is **fangtastic!**

SNAKE VENOM CAN BE DEADLY

By sinking two hollow, pointy fangs into their prey, some snakes inject venom to paralyse or kill prey before devouring them. Africa’s black mamba is thought to be one of the world’s deadliest snakes. Up to 4.5 metres long and as skinny as a snooker cue, the black mamba’s venom is so strong it can take down an elephant!



Emerald tree boas constrict their prey!

CONSTRUCTORS GIVE WICKED HUGS

Boas, anacondas, pythons and other snakes called ‘constrictors’ are amazing squeezers. They wrap their bodies around their dinner and squeeze until the animals stop breathing. Constrictors can do this because they have muscles attached to more than 200 vertebrae (small bones) in their backbones.

SNAKES “SEE” HEAT

Some snakes – such as pythons, rattlesnakes and copperheads – can’t see well and use other senses to find prey. These creatures have openings called pit holes in front of their eyes. These pits sense the heat given off by warm-blooded prey. The snakes’ heat vision allows the vipers to track prey day or night.



Green tree pythons are equipped with special heat vision!

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