

A Fear of Snakes

By Joseph Parish



I am currently taking a class to learn more about snakes and how they behave. I am not taking the class because I like snakes, as I feel that the best snake is a dead snake, however, I do wish to learn more about the creatures since they live near me. As they say in the military "Know your enemy." In the past, I have written several articles which reflected my experience with snakes after moving into our new property, however, this article will be slightly different in nature, as I am seeking to write a positive attribute article concerning snakes. I suppose no living creature is totally bad other than the dinosaur, so even the lowly snake must have some redeeming qualities about it. Perhaps it has a bad PR representative.

Let's humorously talk for a moment about the character of a snake. Snakes are primarily carnivores therefore a snake will eat only meat. Think about this for a moment – my fingers and toes are meat to them. They possess no eyelids, so I cannot sneak up on them, since I never know if they are asleep or watching me. Even a viper with fangs cannot bite their food, but must swallow it whole and allow their body chemistry to take care of the victim. There are over 3,000 Snakes around the world, and I am certain that word has spread among them to find and bite me. One of the worst characteristics of a Snake is that their jaws are flexible in order to allow them to eat any prey that might be larger than their head. Folks, that means me.

Unfortunately, snakes are located on every continent other than Antarctica, and believe me It's too cold there for me, so I must remain in Delaware with the serpents that would like nothing better than to eat me. One thing that works in my favor is the snakes have internal ears and not external ones, thus technically they cannot hear me sneaking up on them with a sharp ended shovel, however the little suckers can feel the vibrations as I approach, as well as my movements. Interesting as it is, those snakes found coming out of a wicker basket in India respond to the movement, and not to the charmer's music.

Ever notice that the slithering creatures constantly stick out their tongue? They are smelling to see if I am in their vicinity so they can bite me. See, I know how they are thinking. Fortunately, we do not have large pythons or anaconda's in Delaware, as they would consider wrapping themselves around me tightly and squeezing me to death. These snakes grow to an amazing 16 feet as well. Incidentally, just when you thought it was safe to go into the water, there are sea snakes capable of breathing through their skin, making them able to remain longer underwater. Watch your legs, my friend. With all these facts at my fingertips, is it any wonder that I do not like the creepy things?

Now seriously, let's set the jokes and the humor aside concerning snakes and see what they are really like. Usually, like in my paragraph above most people have a negative regard for the things. In general, like anything else, people fear that which they do not understand. By learning more about them and the proper way to handle them could possibly eliminate much of that assumed fear of snakes. My wife and I spent some time as a camp host, and during that time frame I was assigned to work at the nature center. There was an abundance of caged snakes there that were used for the various classes offered to youthful visitors. Most were harmless, even the caged Copperhead snake they had. The wildlife officials at the park had the damaging fangs removed from the snake so that he could harm no one. You might get a small bite from him, but nothing serious.

The class which I am taking on snakes identifies three main types of snakes found in the wild. The course included sections on snake Identification, and of course lessons on snakebite treatment, as well as procedures for handling the venomous snake (never gonna happen). The course provides the most up-to-date information on the animals that can be found. The content of the 12-lesson course includes:

- Introduction and History of Snakes
- Snake Myths in Religion and Culture
- Types of Snakes and Snake Myths Versus Fact
- Biology of Snakes
- Snake Behavior
- The Boidae Family (Boas and Pythons)
- Elapids (Cobras, Mambas, Kraits and Coral Snakes)
- Viperidae (Vipers and Rattlesnakes)
- Blind Snakes and Colubrids
- Snake Safety
- When Snakes Bite
- Snake Hobbies

These courses are designed to provide the amateur snake handler with the knowledge to do so safely for both you and the snake. I would suggest a class such as this for anyone who works in open fields where snakes are plentiful. It is the perfect course for farmers who may encounter them in his daily work. Any snake lover is sure to enjoy this course and the nice part of this is that the class is free if you have a valid library card

and your states library particulates in the program. Visit the Universal Class website to sign up.