

# SNAKES OF DURBAN



## NON - VENOMOUS



**BROWN HOUSE SNAKE**  
*Boaedon capensis*

Often found near human habitation where they hunt rodents, lizards and small birds. They are active at night and often collected for the pet trade.



**HERALD SNAKE**  
*Crotaphopeltis hotamboeia*

Also referred to as the Red-lipped herald. This nocturnal (active at night) snake feeds mainly on frogs and is one of the more common snakes found around human dwellings.



**SPOTTED BUSH SNAKE**  
*Philothamnus semivariegatus*

Probably the most commonly found snake in urban areas. They are very good climbers, often seen hunting geckos and lizards in the rafters of homes. This diurnal species (active during the day) is often confused with the Green mamba. Max length 1.1 metres.



**EASTERN NATAL GREEN SNAKE**  
*Philothamnus natalensis natalensis*

This green snake is often confused with the Green mamba. This diurnal species, (active during the day) actively hunts frogs and geckos. Max length 1.1 metres.



**SOUTHERN BROWN EGG EATER**  
*Dasypeltis inornata*

This snake has heavily keeled body scales and is nocturnal (active at night). Although harmless, they put up an impressive aggression display, with striking and open mouth gaping. Can reach over 1 metre in length and when they are that big they can eat chicken eggs. Habitat includes grasslands, coastal forests and it frequents suburban gardens where they are known to enter aviaries in search of eggs.



## VENOMOUS



**NIGHT ADDER**  
*Causus rhombeatus*

A common snake often found near ponds and dams because they feed exclusively on amphibians. They have a **cytotoxic venom** and bite symptoms will include pain and swelling. Max length 1 metre.



## HIGHLY VENOMOUS



**MOZAMBIQUE SPITTING COBRA**  
*Naja mossambicus*

This common cobra has a potent **cytotoxic venom** and is responsible for many bites in southern Africa. They are mostly active at night when they hunt frogs, toads and rodents. They are found in grasslands, coastal forest and savannah. **An antivenom is produced by The South African Vaccine Producers (SAVP).** Max length 1.8 metres.



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## VINE SNAKE

*Thelotornis capensis*

This highly venomous snake has a **potent hemotoxin** for which there is **no antivenom**. They actively hunt their prey using their exceptional camouflage. They are endemic to southern Africa and inhabit coastal bush, forests and savannas. Max Length 1.6 metres.



## GREEN MAMBA

*Dendroaspis angusticeps*

Prefers coastal forest and rarely found more than a few km's from the coast. Lives in trees and prefers to stay away from human habitation, however, urban development has pushed these snakes closer to human dwellings and habitat destruction is their single biggest threat. A shy snake that will not bite unless handled or provoked. They possess a **potent neurotoxic venom**. An antivenom is produced by The South African Vaccine Producers (SAVP). Max length 2.2 metres.



## BLACK MAMBA

*Dendroaspis polylepis*

Black mambas live in grasslands and rocky areas of southern and eastern Africa. This species is terrestrial, but they are excellent climbers. It is the longest venomous snake in Africa, reaching over 4 metres in length, however most are just over 2,5 metres in length. They are considered the most dangerous snake in Africa due to their nervous demeanour and speed. They possess a **potent neurotoxic venom**. A polyvalent antivenom is produced in South Africa and administered to bite victims when necessary.



## STILLETTO SNAKE

*Atractaspis bibronii*

Responsible for most bites in the greater Durban area. Their **potent cytotoxic venom** causes severe pain and swelling. These burrowing snakes are often seen after rains or unearthed during building excavations. This snake is often mistaken for the Brown house snake or the Wolf snake. They average 30cm but do grow larger.



Adult

Juvenile

## BOOMSLANG

*Dispholidus typus*

The Boomsnang is highly venomous and possesses a **potent hemotoxin**. Mainly tree dwelling, they are sexually dimorphic with females being brown and males in KZN, green. Because this snake seldom bites, few bites are recorded, however, an antivenom is produced by The South African Vaccine Producers (SAVP). They have a wide distribution, living in trees in grasslands, thickets and coastal forest. May reach lengths of 2 metres.



## PUFF ADDER

*Bitis arietans*

The Puff adder has a **potent cytotoxic venom** and is responsible for many bites in southern Africa. The name Puff adder comes from the loud warning hiss expelled when threatened. Found in grasslands and savannah, they prefer areas where they can use their camouflage to hunt and escape predation. An antivenom is produced by The South African Vaccine Producers (SAVP).

## THERE ARE 3 MAIN TYPES OF SNAKE VENOM

### NEUROTOXIC VENOM

Attacks the nervous system. Without treatment, paralysis or death may occur.

### HAEMOTOXIC VENOM

Stops blood from clotting. Causes internal bleeding.

### CYTOTOXIC VENOM

Destroys cells.



Photo credit: Nick Evans



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