

Learning About Snake Facts And Behaviors

Snakes are probably the most misunderstood, and most illogically feared creatures on the planet. Of the 2,200-plus species of snakes in the world, fewer than 20 percent are venomous. People have an instinctual fear of snakes that stems back for thousands of years. It probably started out as a survival instinct, when there was no literature or way of telling which snakes were harmful or not. On the other hand, biblical literature has encouraged us to fear snakes for an entirely different reason. Other people simply misunderstand snakes, thinking that they are slimy, nasty creatures.

The first thing to know about snakes is that any non-venomous snake will only bite you for 3 reasons. First, if you smell like food. If you have recently handled a warm-blooded animal, such as mice, guinea pigs, even cats, the snake may smell that on you and mistake you for something edible. Second, if the snake feels you are a predator that is trying to harm it. Especially when reaching down towards a snake, the snake can misinterpret you for something trying to eat it. Thirdly, and the most likely reason non-venomous snakes bite, is simply because they are afraid. When given the choice between biting at you (the 5-6 foot tall giant that just stepped into it's territory) or running away as fast as it can possibly slither?it will choose running away every time. If the snake however, feels cornered, or for whatever reason unable to hide, it will strike out at you, more as a warning to leave it alone than to actually do any damage.

Non-venomous snakes are usually very safe to handle, especially pet snakes or snakes that are used to being handled. Even most species of wild snakes that are non-venomous are perfectly able to be handled without fear of bites (the exception being water snakes and other naturally aggressive species). If you do try to handle a snake, be sure to move slowly, and edge your hand under the belly of the snake near the tail area. If you move suddenly, or from the top, it may mistake you for a predator. Once you have actually lifted the snake and are holding it, do not hold it by the tail, rather support it's body loosely with your hands (keep a loose but firm grip, if you squeeze too hard it will likely injure the snake), and let the snake explore it's way around your hands and arms. If the snake seems agitated, or goes into a strike position, it is best to slowly, but gently put the snake back.

You will find that snakes are not slimy, nor nasty in any way. However if they get frightened, they may defecate on you as a way of showing fear. If this happens, be sure to wash the area thoroughly with soap and hot water, as snakes do carry salmonella bacteria in their feces. You must also remember that snakes, while being beautiful and interesting to watch, simply aren't the brightest creatures in the world, and have about the same thinking power as your average goldfish. Remember when you are holding a snake that it likely sees you as a very odd tree, and does not recognize you as a human being. Snakes react by instinct rather than thought, and as long as you keep this in mind, being around snakes is very easy to do as well as being interesting.

So how do you tell venomous and non-venomous snakes apart? There are several ways to tell, although some species of non-venomous snakes have adapted to be able to look like venomous snakes when they are afraid. If you are ever even slightly in doubt, leave the snake alone! As a general rule, venomous snakes have diamond or triangle shaped heads, instead of rounded heads that most non-venomous snakes have. Also, their eyes are elliptical like a cat's eye instead of being round as well. Pit vipers have a telltale pit between the eye and the mouth. The pit, a heat-sensing organ, makes it possible for the snake to accurately strike a warm-blooded victim, even if the snake cannot see the victim. Of course rattlesnakes usually rattle, but this is not always the case. Some species of rattlesnakes have evolved without a rattle!

So now that you know more about snake behaviors and facts, I hope you will give snakes a chance. Not only are they fascinating to watch, but they serve a vital function in our ecosystem.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

Stephanie Davies is a 27 year old Missourian with a loving husband and an 8 year old son. She currently owns and operates her own business, Mystickal Incense & More, which sells handmade candles, incense, bath & body products and other handcrafted products at <http://www.mystickalincense.com>