

Life without Legs: Fun Facts about Snakes

Worldwide, there are about 2,700 species of snakes. Of these 375 are venomous.

The world's smallest snake is the Brahminy blind snake at two inches in length. The wetland-loving anaconda can reach lengths of 38 feet.

Snakes consume a variety of items including termites, rodents, birds, frogs, small deer and other reptiles. Snakes eat their prey whole and are able to consume prey three times larger than the diameter of their head because their lower jaw can separate from the upper jaw. They do not need to hunt every day. Anacondas and pythons can survive for up to a year without food after feeding. Snakes hunt mostly at night.

Snakes are colorblind, but they do have light receptors to interpret different shades of light.

Snakes, like humans, smell through their nostrils. A snake can also smell by gathering odor particles on its tongue.

Snakes have evolved into a highly versatile vertebrate, able to climb straight up, dart through water and, in some species, even fly -- all without limbs. Flying snakes, also known as tree-dwelling snakes, live in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. They swing from branch to branch, gliding in the air for long distances.

Snakes don't have ears; they hear through their skin. Sound waves hit a snake's skin, which is then transferred to a snake's bone and is interpreted by the inner ear.

Keratin, the substance found in human fingernails, covers a snake's skin. The skin shedding process, also known as molting, takes approximately 14 days. Snakes must shed their skin three to six times per year.

Most snake species lay eggs, but some species give birth to live young.

Snakes don't have a diaphragm. Instead, snakes circulate air by narrowing and widening their ribcage.