

SANTANERO
(*Leptodeira bakeri*)



The slender Santanero or Aruban Cat-eyed Snake is typically less than 50 cm long. This snake is recognizable by the large scales on the top of its head and by its pattern of dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is plain white or cream colored without any markings.

This snake is shy and not aggressive. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its mouth and mild venom which is not dangerous to humans. However, the venom can paralyze small lizards and frogs.

Santaneros are most active at night when they search for food. During the day, they hide under rocks or leaves. They frequently climb trees and cactus. Santaneros eat toads, frogs, insects, and lizards.

You may find Santaneros near dams during periods of rainy weather or crossing roads at night. This snake is found island wide.

BOA
(*Boa constrictor*)



Boas are Aruba's largest snakes. The longest Boa found on the island was slightly less than 3 m. Newborn Boas average 35 cm. Boas are not venomous. The most distinctive feature of a Boa is its pattern of dark brown and tan blotches which become red toward the tail. The belly is white or cream colored with numerous black spots.

Boas are excellent climbers and may be found in trees and cactus. Boas also hide in the leaves under bushes waiting to catch prey that pass. Boas catch their prey with their teeth and then constrict it in their coils. The Boa's diet consists of birds, lizards, rats, mice, and rabbits. Large Boas have been known to eat small goats and chickens. When threatened, Boas will hiss loudly.

Boas are a non-native species. The first Boas were reported on the island in 1999. Since that time they have been found across the entire island in all types of habitats.

CASCABEL
(*Crotalus unicolor*)



The small Cascabel or Aruba Island Rattlesnake averages 70 cm in length. The body color is often uniform gray or light brown. There may be a faint pattern of diamond shaped markings on the back. This pattern is most noticeable on younger snakes. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail which makes a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed.

Cascabels are shy and not aggressive, but their venom can be dangerous to humans. It is best to leave this snake alone. Do not attempt to catch or kill it.

Cascabels hunt by waiting under bushes and fruiting trees to catch passing lizards, mice, rats, small rabbits, and an occasional bird.

This is often considered to be one of the rarest rattlesnakes in the world. The range of the Cascabel is restricted to the rugged

and mountainous areas of the island mostly within Arikok National Park.

The Snakes of Aruba and Arikok National Park

Aruba is home to two species of snakes that can not be found anywhere else in the world. Although both the Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*) and Santanero (*Leptodeira bakeri*) are undoubtedly related to ancestors from mainland South America, their long isolation on the island has allowed them to generate unique appearances and behaviors. Because they are only found on this small island, their future existence depends upon maintaining suitable living space (habitat) for them here on Aruba. It is also imperative that they be carefully protected from collecting, killing, and other threats to their future survival.

The Cascabel is internationally recognized as one of the world's rarest rattlesnakes. It is listed as "Threatened" by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), "Critically Endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), and it is the subject of a Species Survival Program of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The ecology of the Cascabel has been under intensive research on the island since 1985.

From time to time, several other species of snakes from both North and South America have been found on Aruba. These have been mostly isolated individuals that were probably stowaways in cargo or landscape plants. However, in 1999 several South American Boa Constrictors (*Boa constrictor*) were discovered on Aruba. The origin of these first Boa Constrictors remains a mystery, but it is possible that some were escaped pets. Despite persistent efforts to remove boas when discovered, this non-native species has succeeded in establishing itself on the island. Boa Constrictors are widespread throughout

Central and South America, and they also occur on several other Caribbean islands. Studies are currently underway to assess the impact of this new snake on the island ecosystem.

What if you see a Boa, Cascabel or Santanero in the Park or somewhere else?

Do not attempt to catch or kill the snake. Call Parke Nacional Arikok at 5828001/5858010 during office hours or call 911.



Fundacion Parke Nacional Arikok

Telephone: 582-8002

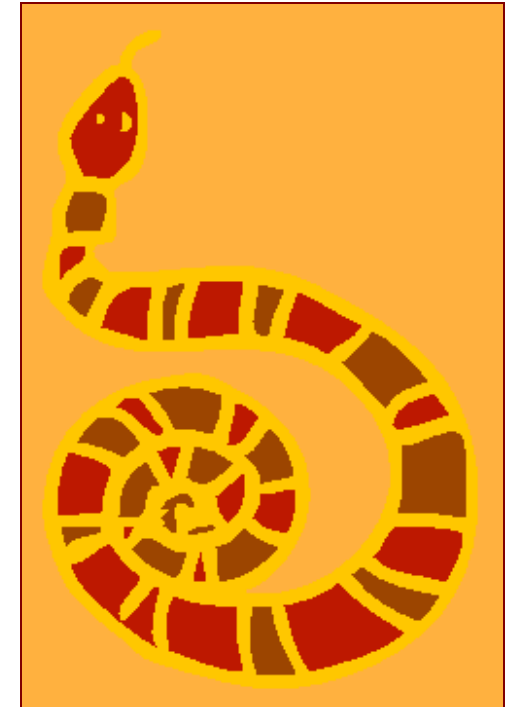
Fax: 582-8961

E-mail: info@arubanationalpark.org

R. Croes, H. K. Reinert, and L. M. Bushar

June 8, 2007

THE SNAKES OF ARUBA



**FUNDACION PARKE NACIONAL
ARIKOK**