BUZZTAIL

THE STORY OF A RATTLESNAKE

Robert McClung

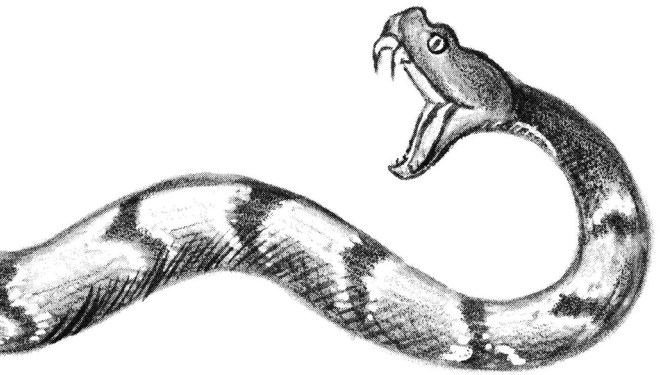
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

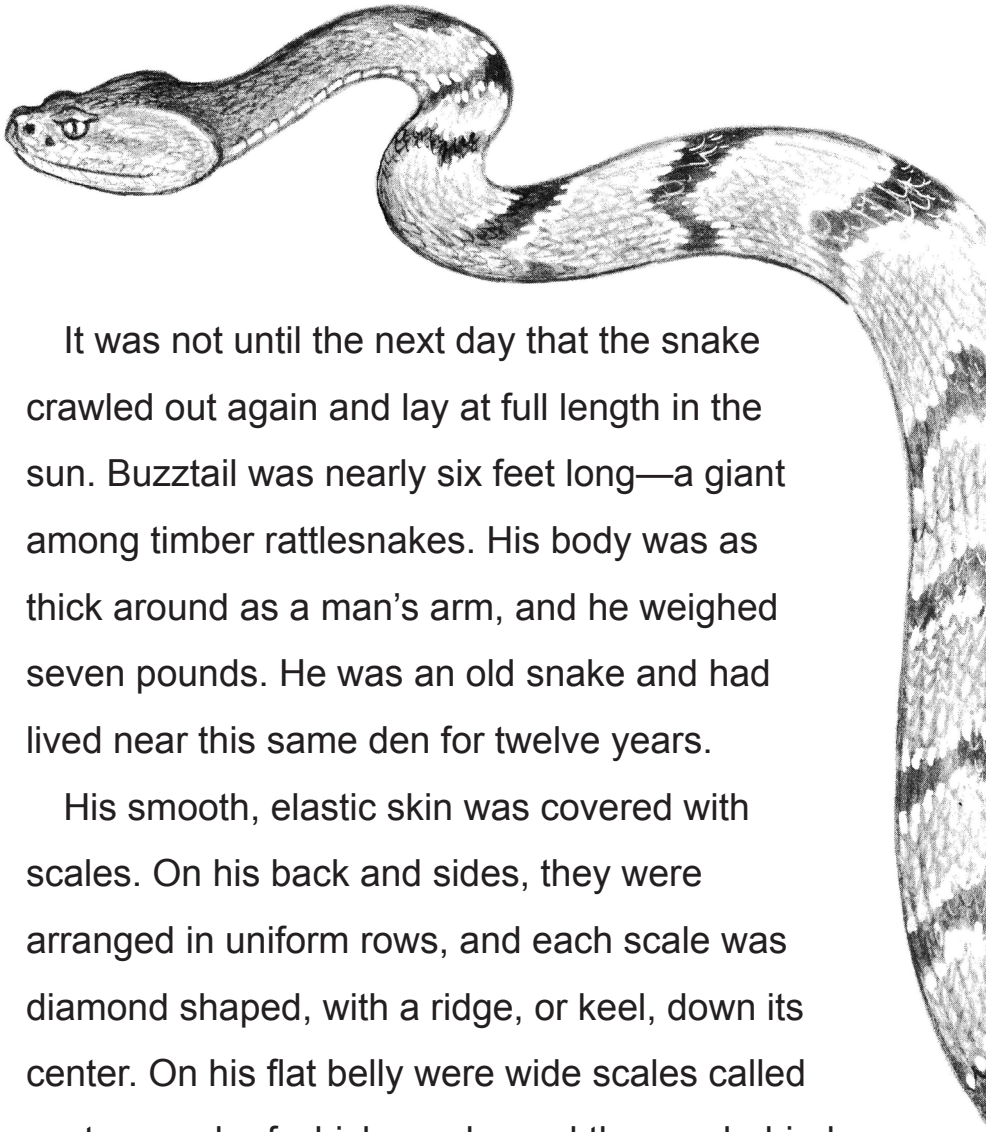
The rattlesnake had crawled out of his den at noon and was basking in the bright sunshine. The ground beneath him felt warm, for the rocky ridge got the full benefit of the afternoon sun. It was late May.

A dogwood tree was in bloom beside the trail, and a big green-clouded swallowtail was fluttering around a sassafras tree, laying her eggs on the newly opened leaves. The big snake shifted his coils. High over the ridge an eagle, soaring on motionless wings, saw him. Downward the great bird of prey plummeted.

The eagle attacked quickly, its sharp talons grasping the snake's middle. Surprised, the snake struck back, and his fangs just grazed the tip of one of the eagle's rapidly beating wings.

For a split second, the eagle relaxed its grip. Before it could seize the snake again, he had glided under a big overhanging rock. Bobbing its head, the eagle peered under the rock for a moment. Then it flapped heavily away.

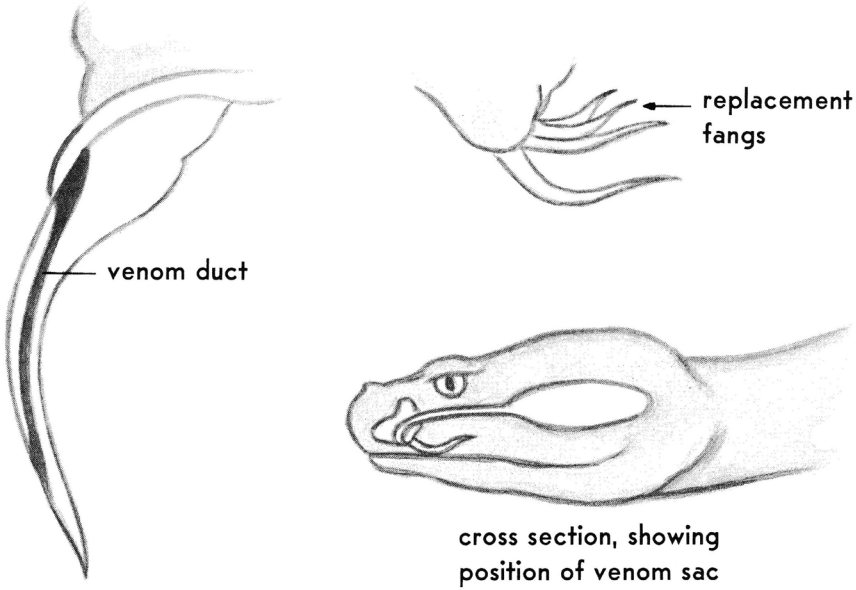


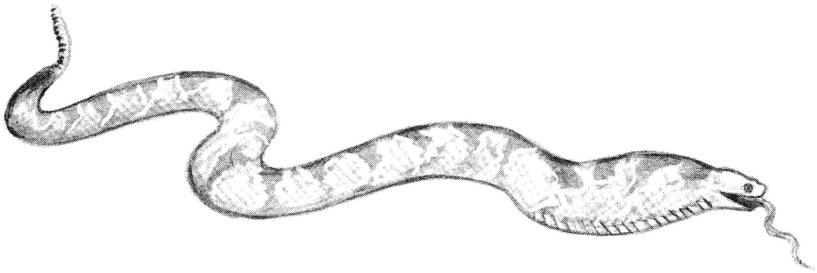


It was not until the next day that the snake crawled out again and lay at full length in the sun. Buzztail was nearly six feet long—a giant among timber rattlesnakes. His body was as thick around as a man's arm, and he weighed seven pounds. He was an old snake and had lived near this same den for twelve years.

His smooth, elastic skin was covered with scales. On his back and sides, they were arranged in uniform rows, and each scale was diamond shaped, with a ridge, or keel, down its center. On his flat belly were wide scales called scutes, each of which overlapped the one behind it. Buzztail's scales formed definite patterns of different colors. His background color was a dull yellowish-brown, with many dark, sooty crossbands.

The fangs were anchored in hinged bones which could rotate backward and forward. When Buzztail's mouth was closed, the fangs folded back against the roof of his mouth. But when he opened his jaws, the fangs sprung into an upright position, ready for biting. Behind each of the fangs in use were several partly developed ones, ready to take the place of either regular fang if it was broken off or pulled out.





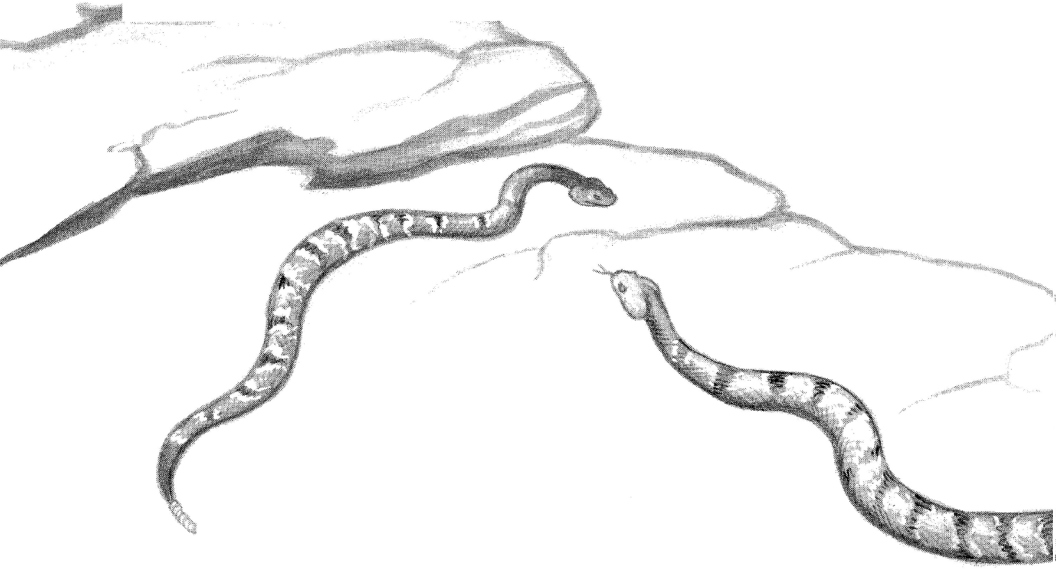
section to stretch apart and work separately. This arrangement, plus his elastic skin, made it possible for him to swallow animals whose bodies were bigger around than his.

Little by little the wood rat disappeared. Its body became coated with saliva as it went down, making it easier for Buzztail to swallow. Finally only its tail could be seen. That soon disappeared too.

Buzztail crawled back under the rock and lay at full length. There was a big bulge in his middle where the wood rat was, and he was very lethargic. For three days he lay there, digesting his meal.

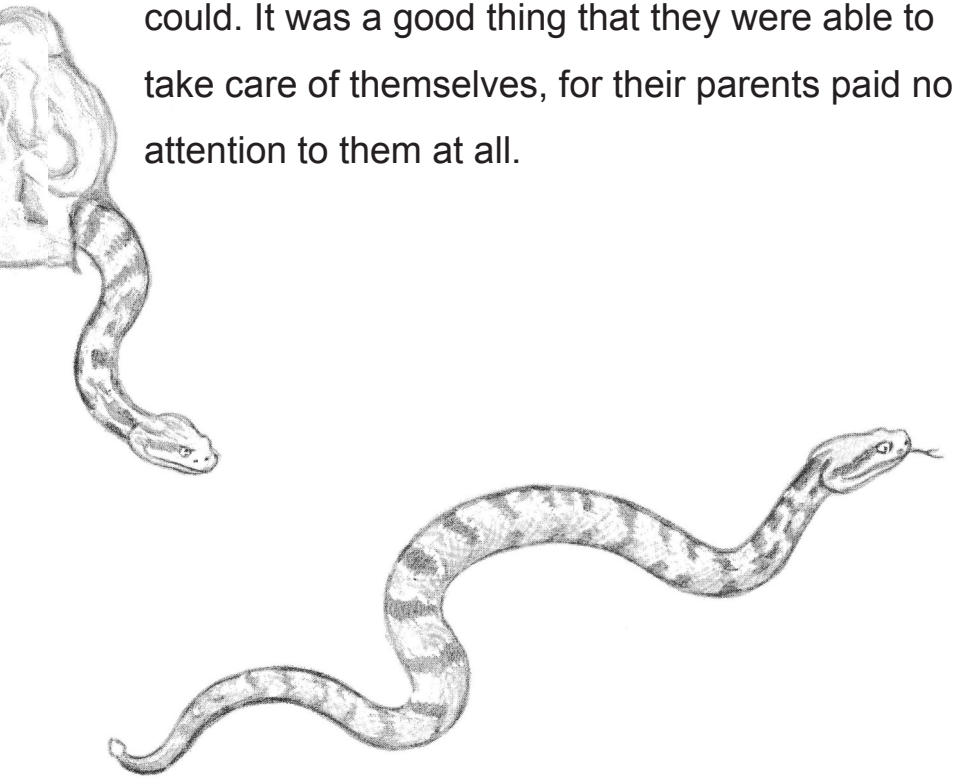
Buzztail promptly turned back to the trail of the female. Following it, he came to a big rock near the den. There was a female rattlesnake, sunning herself.

Buzztail glided up beside her and rubbed his chin along her back. They flicked their tongues over each other, getting acquainted. The female was about four feet long and much lighter and brighter than Buzztail. She was a sulfur-yellow color, with pale tan crossbands.



world it had just entered. Then it crawled over to a sunny spot near Buzztail and lay still.

During the next several hours, sixteen other little rattlesnakes were born. All of them came into the world fully equipped to take care of themselves. They were able to crawl about, catch prey, and inflict venomous bites, just as Buzztail could. It was a good thing that they were able to take care of themselves, for their parents paid no attention to them at all.

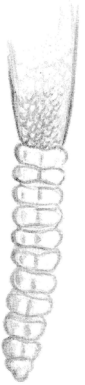


prebutton

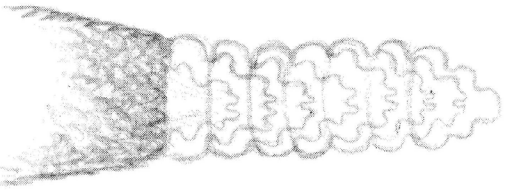
button

button and first segment

At birth, each rattlesnake has a tiny node, called a prebutton, at the end of its tail. When it is a few days old, the baby rattler sheds its skin and gets a button—the first segment of its rattle. From then on it gains a segment every time it sheds. Each new rattle grows inside the previous one and is loosely interlocked with it.



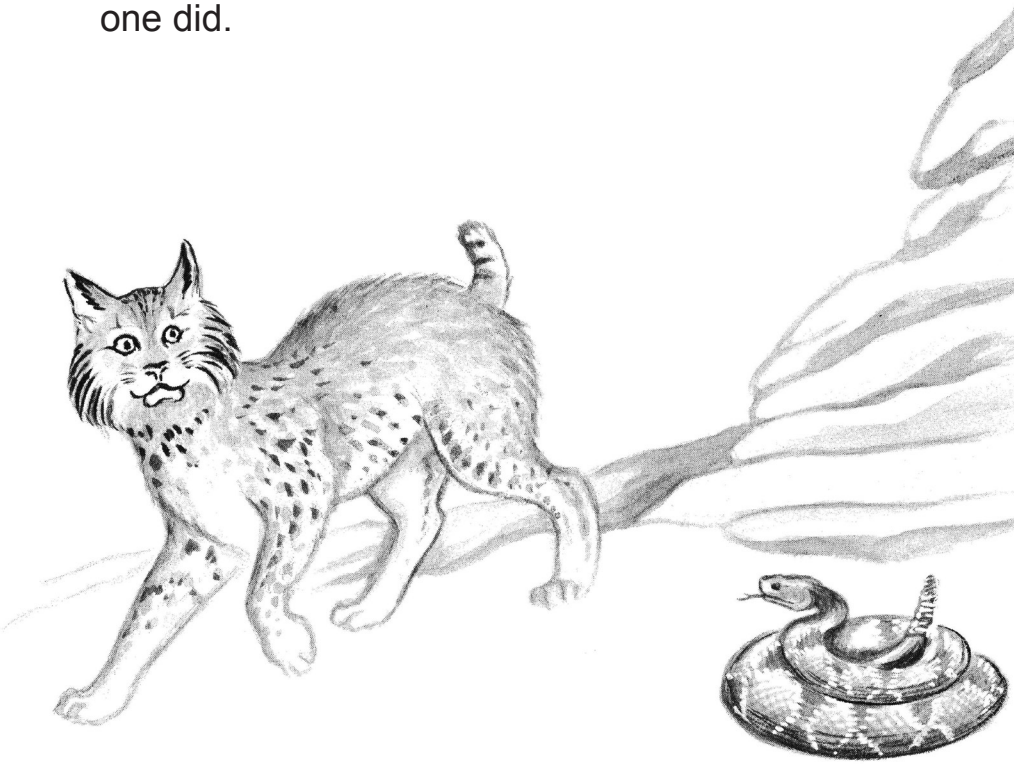
During their first year, timber rattlers shed their skin four or five times and grow to be eighteen or twenty inches long. At two years, they measure twenty-four inches or more, and when they are three, over thirty inches. By this time they have as many as ten or eleven

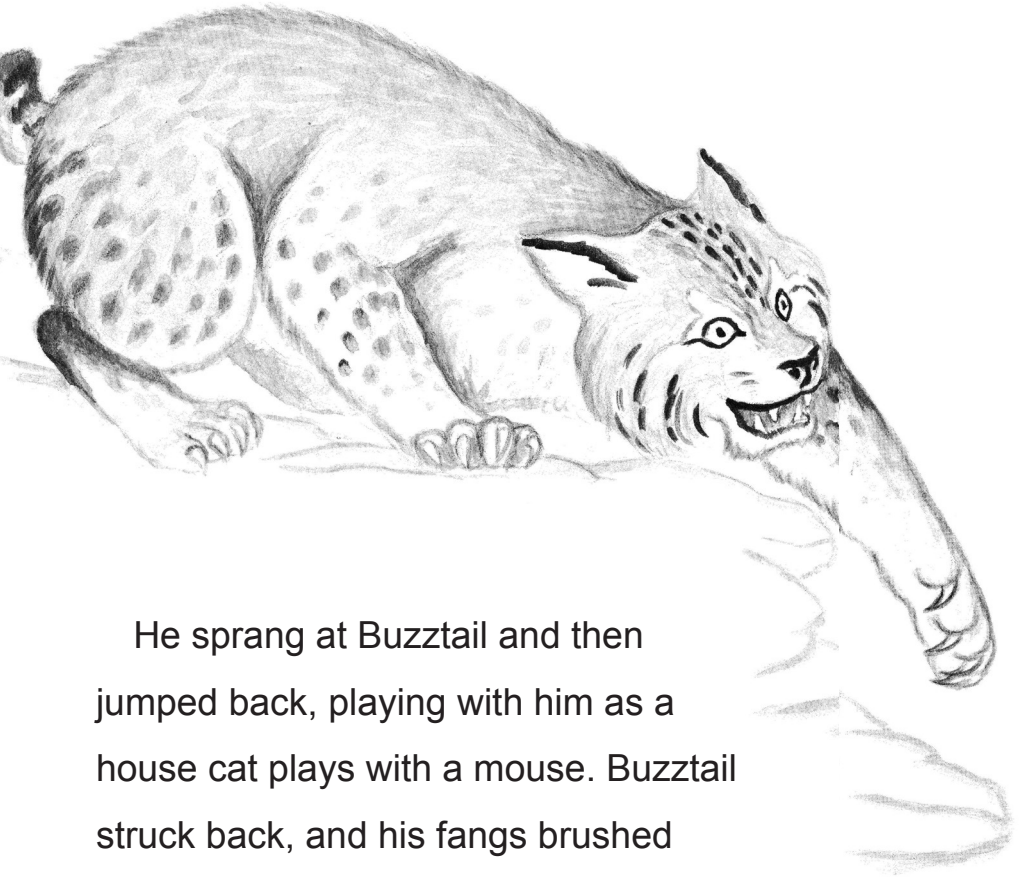


cross section of rattle, showing how segments are joined

When spring came, with its warm rains and rising temperatures, the snakes began to stir. One warm, sunny day in early May, Buzztail crawled sluggishly to the den entrance and lay for a few moments in the sunshine. As the days became warmer, he and the other snakes spent more time outside.

One afternoon a big bobcat found Buzztail. Bobcats do not often attack rattlesnakes, but this one did.





He sprang at Buzztail and then jumped back, playing with him as a house cat plays with a mouse. Buzztail struck back, and his fangs brushed against the other animal's fur.

The big cat circled then dashed in to attack once more. He lashed out with his paw, and his sharp talons ripped bloody furrows in Buzztail's back. Buzztail struck back a second time, but the bobcat leaped out of reach as before.

BUZZTAIL

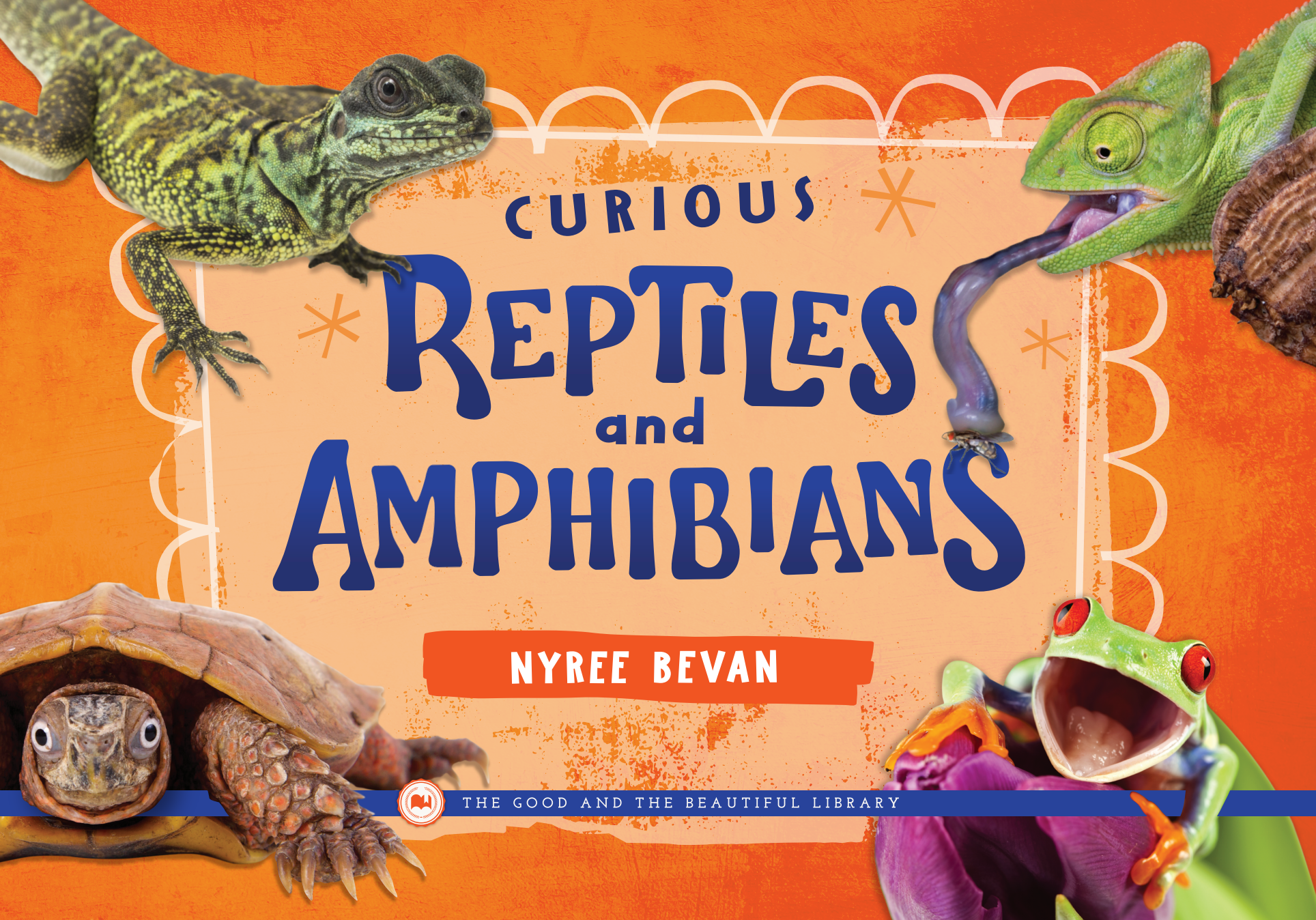
THE STORY OF A RATTLESNAKE

Something else moved in front of him. It was a big male rattler. Buzztail reared his head at this new threat, hissing loudly. The rival, almost as big as Buzztail, was a dull black color all over, with bands of an even deeper black showing faintly.

As the "biggest rattler on the mountainside," Buzztail has seen it all. As you follow along with his adventures and challenges, you will learn about the life cycle of a rattlesnake. You will also meet many other animals and plants that share his ecosystem. This entertaining, yet informative, story will leave you with a deeper knowledge and appreciation of these scaly, slithering creatures.

$6.99
ISBN 978-1-952920-50-9
50699>
9 781952 920509
SKU 757

The Good AND THE Beautiful
goodandbeautiful.com


CURIOUS
REPTILES
and
AMPHIBIANS
NYREE BEVAN
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

Of all God's creatures, reptiles and amphibians are some of the most fascinating. While it's easy to simply refer to them as "lizards" or "snakes," there is so much more to reptiles than a couple types of animals. And though they are often confused with reptiles, amphibians have their own differentiating characteristics. From big to small and aggressive to meek, there are many unique and wonderful reptiles and amphibians. Let's take a look at some of them!

BLUE CRESTED LIZARD

The blue crested lizard is known for its beautiful turquoise-blue head and throat, but this color is only present during breeding season. At other times it is mostly reddish-brown or even grayish-brown.

Blue crested lizards are considered fully **arboreal**, which means they spend all their time in trees.

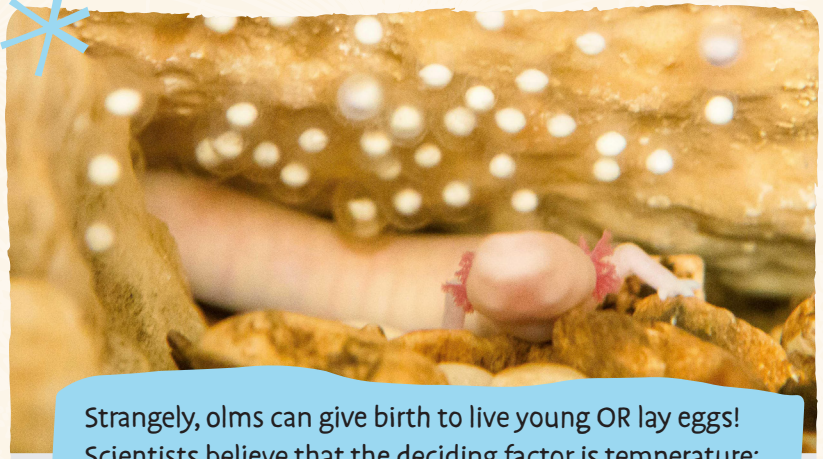
They are also **diurnal**—their activity time is during the day, and their sleeping time is at night.

Blue crested lizards are found in Southeast Asia.

These lizards have long white stripes just under the eyes, which extend from their snouts to their shoulders.

OLM SALAMANDER

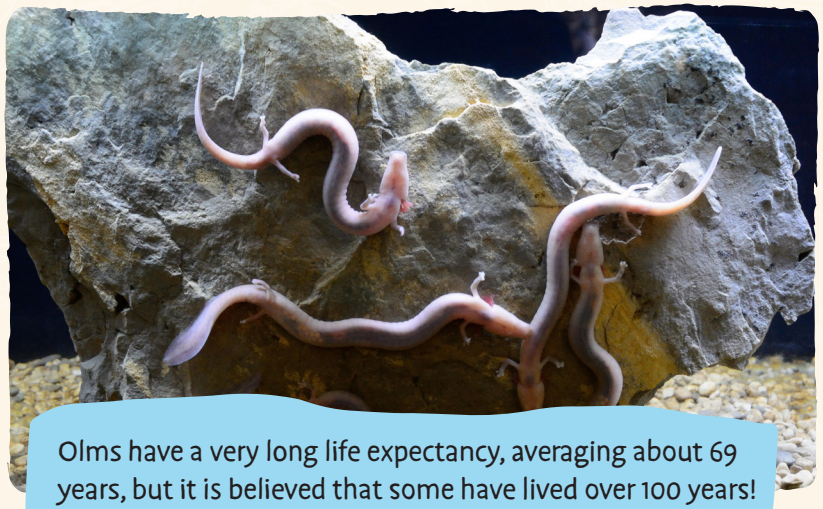
Olms are mostly blind because they live in caves or in underground streams. Their sight stops developing as they grow, and layers of skin even grow over their eyes.



Strangely, olms can give birth to live young OR lay eggs! Scientists believe that the deciding factor is temperature; colder temperatures promote live births.

Using "super" senses such as highly developed smell and hearing, olms hunt and capture food. They may even be able to detect electric fields.

Because they are almost always without light, their skin loses most of its pigment, making them light pink, almost translucent, in color.



Olms have a very long life expectancy, averaging about 69 years, but it is believed that some have lived over 100 years!

PANTHER CHAMELEON

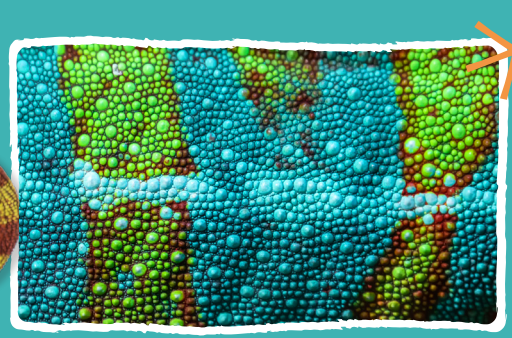
Male panther chameleons sport brightly colored skins, while most females are light green, tan, or gray.

Panther chameleons have very large eyes that are covered with scaly skin with only a small opening to see. As with other chameleons, these eyes can move independently from one another.

There are several different species of panther chameleons, with many different colors depending on where they are from. They are some of the most colorful chameleons, displaying the many colors of the rainbow!

Female panther chameleons dig burrows to lay their eggs, up to 46 at a time, and then bury them with dirt, some even using leaves and sticks on top to protect the eggs. The hatchlings are independent when born.

With tongues that can extend longer than their body length with sticky "suction cups" on the ends, panther chameleons can quickly grab prey such as insects or even small birds. They can extend and retract their tongues at fast speeds, much like a whip.

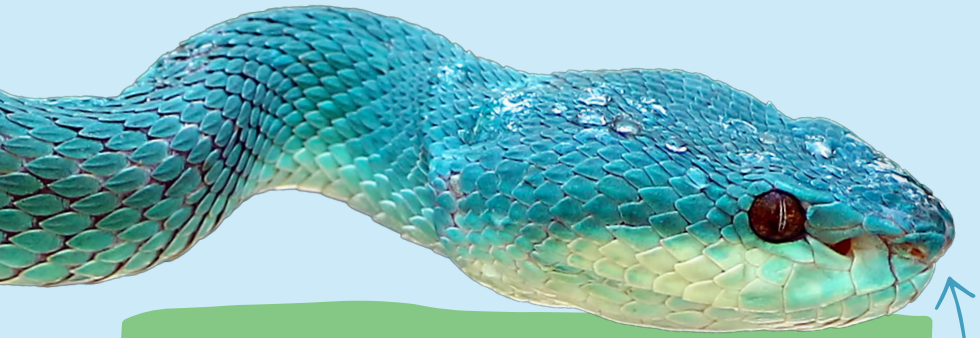


A panther chameleon's skin has two layers of crystal-containing cells that can be stretched or relaxed, allowing the animal to quickly change its skin color by changing the reflected light.

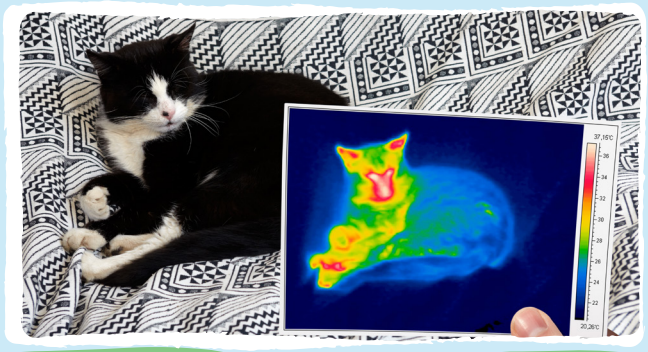
BLUE VIPER SNAKE

Blue vipers are a species of pit vipers.

Viper snakes are often shorter and more sturdy than other snakes such as cobras. Vipers use this strength to ambush and attack their prey.

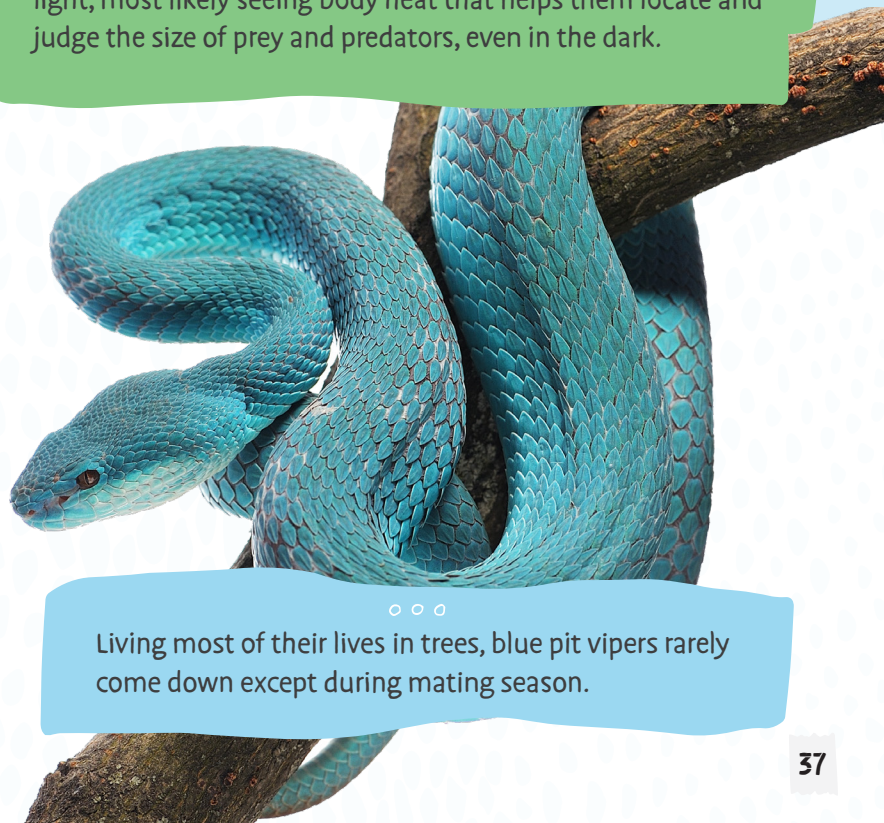


Pit vipers detect electromagnetic radiation through pit organs located on their upper lips. This helps them find and identify prey.



Instead of seeing light as humans do, pit vipers sense **infrared** light, most likely seeing body heat that helps them locate and judge the size of prey and predators, even in the dark.

Blue vipers are very rare, most often found in Indonesia. Green is a much more common color for pit vipers.



Living most of their lives in trees, blue pit vipers rarely come down except during mating season.

WEB-FOOTED GECKO

Living mostly in the Namib Desert, this sandy-colored, nearly translucent, web-footed gecko blends in perfectly.

To help keep their lidless eyes moist, web-footed geckos collect dew drops on their eyes and continually lick them with their long, light pink tongues to keep them clean.

Webbed feet help these geckos travel on top of sand. They also help them dig into the sand to bury themselves, which is where they spend most of the day to keep cool and sleep.

The web between their toes is fleshy but contains small cartilages that help coordinate the many muscles of their feet. This helps them to "scoop" the sand in order to bury themselves quickly.

With their large eyes and vertical pupils, these geckos can see very well at night when they are out hunting.

These adorable geckos only reach about 10–13 centimeters (4–5 inches) long.

GOLD DUST DAY GECKO

Day geckos are native to Madagascar and small islands off the coast of Africa.

Gold dust day geckos have a spattering of gold dots along their necks and shoulders over a beautiful green skin and have been called "living jewels."

These geckos not only eat insects like most geckos but also lick nectar from flowers and juices from overripe fruit.

The stunning sky-blue coloring above their big eyes looks almost like eye shadow.

Unlike most geckos, the day gecko is active during the day and sleeps at night.

CURIOUS REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS

From frogs with big eyes to salamanders that don't use their eyes at all, from turtles that lure prey right into their mouths to lizards that snatch up insects with suction-cup tongues, there is so much variety to be found among reptiles and amphibians. Packed with vibrant full-color photos that are both entertaining and informational, *Curious Reptiles and Amphibians* explores fun facts about many of God's most fascinating creatures.

ORIGINAL PUBLICATION

THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL
goodandbeautiful.com

$7.99
ISBN 978-1-952920-45-5
50799>
9 781952 920455
SKU 756