

# Aspidelaps lubricus



## Scientific Classification

Kingdom:	Anamalia
Phylum:	Cordata
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Squamata
Suborder:	Serpentes
Family:	Elapidae
Geunus	Aspidelaps
Subgenus:	<i>A. lubricus</i>

## Binomial Name

### *Gonyosoma boulengeri*



blue – range of *A. lubricus*  
green – range of *A. scutatus*

## Synonyms

- *Natrix lubrica*  
Laurenti, 1768
- *Elaps lubricus*  
— Merrem, 1820
- *Naia somersetta*  
A. Smith, 1826
- *Naja lubrica*  
— Schlegel, 1837
- *Aspidelaps lubricus*  
— A. Smith, 1849

*Aspidelaps lubricus*, commonly known as the **Cape coral snake** or the **Cape coral cobra**, is a [species](#) of [venomous snake](#) in the [family Elapidae](#). The species is [endemic](#) to parts of [southern Africa](#).<sup>[2]</sup>

## Geographic range and habitat

*A. lubricus* is found in regions of the [Karoo](#), former [Cape Province](#), and all the way up into [Namibia](#). It mostly inhabits very arid regions, like deserts and rocky/sandy ecosystems. These areas within [South Africa](#) within the Karoo are known for low predictable rainfall and little vegetation, mostly shrubs and scrubs.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Taxonomy

## Etymology

The [subspecific name](#), *cowlesi*, is in honor of African-born American herpetologist [Raymond Bridgman Cowles](#).<sup>[5]</sup>

## Description

*A. lubricus* is a relatively small, slender bodied snake, around 1.6–2.0 ft (49–61 cm) in total length (including tail), with some growing up to 2.5 ft (76 cm) in some cases. The Cape coral snake is a small [elapid](#), which means that it is a part of a family of venomous snakes that are usually found within tropical or sub-tropical regions around the globe. It has an enlarged rostral scale, which is the scale located at the front of the snout above the mouth opening on the snake. The head relative to the body is very short, making it very easy to distinguish it from the neck and rest of the snake. Colors range from red-orange to yellow, slightly resembling the coloration patterns seen on some species of [corn snakes](#). The Cape coral snake has thick black rings along the length of the body, fully encircling on the body while not fully on the tail segment. There are around 20–47 total rings spanning the length of the snakes body. This species also contains a narrow hood right below the head, much like other [cobras](#).<sup>[6]</sup>

## Behaviour

*A. lubricus* is nocturnal, which means most of its activity and hunting occurs during the night. Since it generally prefers arid, rocky/sandy ecosystems, it will often be found living under rocks or even in underground burrows and tunnels. It has also been known to prefer leaving its burrow or hiding spots on cooler nights compared to the warmer nights in the summer.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Diet

Since *A. lubricus* is nocturnal, it relies on smell and taste to hunt

Subspecies	Taxon author	Common name	Geographic range
<i>A. i. lubricus</i>	( <a href="#">Laurenti</a> , 1768) <sup>[11]</sup>	Cape coral snake	Cape Province, Orange Free State (South Africa)
<i>A. i. cowlesi</i>	<a href="#">Bogert</a> , 1940 <sup>[11]</sup>	Angolan coral snake	Southern Angola, northern Namibia

its prey. It typically leaves its burrow or hole in search of smaller vertebrates nearby. It preys specifically on lizards, but has also been known to hunt other vertebrates such as legless skinks, small rodents, and sometimes other snakes. It is also known to target those vertebrates which are strictly diurnal, which are sleeping when it is on the hunt. This snake is known to rear up towards prey or when threatened, and then strike, injecting its venom. In captivity, it is known to eat some types of fish, mice, small rats, and also chicken legs, which are preferred by the juveniles.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Reproduction and life cycles

---

Not much information was found on *A. lubricus* in the wild, however there is reproduction data from captivity. In captivity, it is known to be exceptionally easy to breed. The breeding period starts in the winter, with the cooling down of winter temperatures. The snakes then increase their uptake of food to help cope with the extra energy needed to reproduce. If mating occurs at this time, the eggs will usually be laid in May or June. After that, there is a period of about 65 days before the eggs begin to hatch. There are usually between 3 and 11 eggs hatched per clutch, with sometimes multiple clutches per breeding period. Each hatchling can be around 17–18 cm (6.7–7.1 inches) in total length.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Venom

---

Although *A. lubricus* has been kept in captivity, there is still little known information on the venom itself. There has been no information given about the toxicity or the composition of the venom. However, the venom has been noted as similar to that of the genus *Naja*, which contains all of the species of snakes known as true cobras. When venom has been taken in captivity, it yields around 27–71 mg of wet venom. The average yield is around 55 mg and is about 28% solid material. Previous studies have shown that in rats, this snake's venom caused neurological symptoms, which escalated into respiratory failure and eventually death.

Human fatalities have been recorded from bites by *A. lubricus*.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Conservation status

---

As of 2015, the Cape coral snake is not listed as threatened or in need of conservation efforts. The main threat that is listed for this species is when crossing roads and highways, where vehicles can run over them.<sup>[9]</sup>