

# Nature Notes

## RUBBER BOA



Less frequently seen than the Common Garter Snake, the Rubber Boa is a harmless snake that has been found several times in the Kimberley Nature Park. It is approximately 35 to 80 cm long and has small scales on loose skin with a texture of rubber, hence its name. Adult Rubber Boas are olive green to brown in color with a lighter, yellowish coloured belly.



*A young rubber boa found on Boulder Trail.  
(photo Alan Ansell)*

The most identifiable characteristic of the Rubber Boa is its tail which resembles its head. The hard cap on the end of the tail is used to ward off mother voles, shrews or birds who try to protect their young in their nests. Boas curve into a ball to protect their head while extending their tails as a decoy when threatened. They also can emit a smelly musk. Their secretive nature is their best defence against larger predators such as coyotes, cougars or owls. As a member of the boa constrictor family, Rubber Boas do use this method of killing adult prey such as a lizard or an adult rodent.

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Rubber Boas are nocturnal and can be found in grasslands, meadows and forest as long as adequate warmth, moisture and prey are available. They are good climbers, burrowers and swimmers but are known to basically have a slow, sluggish lifestyle! Mating occurs after these reptiles emerge from hibernating in underground dens. Although they can produce up to 9 young a year, many females only reproduce every four years. The young are born live and are about 15 to 23 cm long and appear pinkish or transparent in color.



*Adult boa on Sunflower Hill  
(photo Kent Goodwin)*

These "two-headed snakes" spend much of their time under shelter such as logs, rocks or leaf litter. Maybe you will be one of the few who sees one!

Visit [www.rockies.net/kimberley/naturepark](http://www.rockies.net/kimberley/naturepark) for a hard copy or to learn more about Kimberley Nature events.