

Name: _____

Is That a Boa or a Python?

by Guy Belleranti

When people think of snakes, boas and pythons are two species that often come to mind. They're alike in so many ways that many people can't tell which is which.

Both types of snake use their forked tongues to smell. Those that hunt at night can widen the pupils of their eyes to let in more light. They also use heat sensors on their lips to find warm-bodied prey such as rodents.



Red-Tailed Boa Constrictor



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boa and the green tree python.

So, how are boas and pythons different?

First, a boa's skull bones aren't arranged the same as a python's. Pythons have more bones in their skull, and more teeth too.

Second, boa young hatch inside their mother and are born live. This is unusual because most other reptiles hatch from eggs. Pythons, on the other hand, do lay eggs. The mother python builds a shallow nest made of leaves



and soil. She coils around her eggs and keeps them warm and protected. When it is time for them to hatch, the mother python leaves and the babies must survive on their own without her help.

One other difference between boas



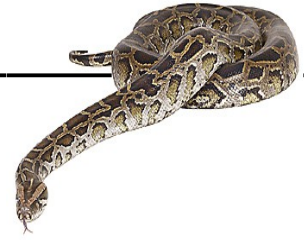
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Guy Belleranti is an author of fiction, poetry, articles, puzzles, and humor for children and adults. He also works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo.

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1. Which sentence best describes the organization of the article?
 - a. The author lists facts about boas and pythons in sequential order.
 - b. The author describes differences between boas and pythons, then describes similarities.
 - c. The author lists facts about boas and pythons in order of importance.
 - d. The author describes how boas and pythons are alike, then describes how they are different.



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3. A hiker is walking through the grassland in Africa and he encounters a large snake protecting its eggs. Is it probably a boa or python? Explain how you know.

4. What is a herpetologist?

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Is That a Boa or a Python?

Use information from the article to complete the Venn diagram.



Pythons



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Boas

ANSWER KEY

Is That a Boa or a Python?

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ANSWER KEY

Is That a Boa or a Python?

Use information from the article to complete the Venn diagram.



Pythons

1. More bones in its skull

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Boas