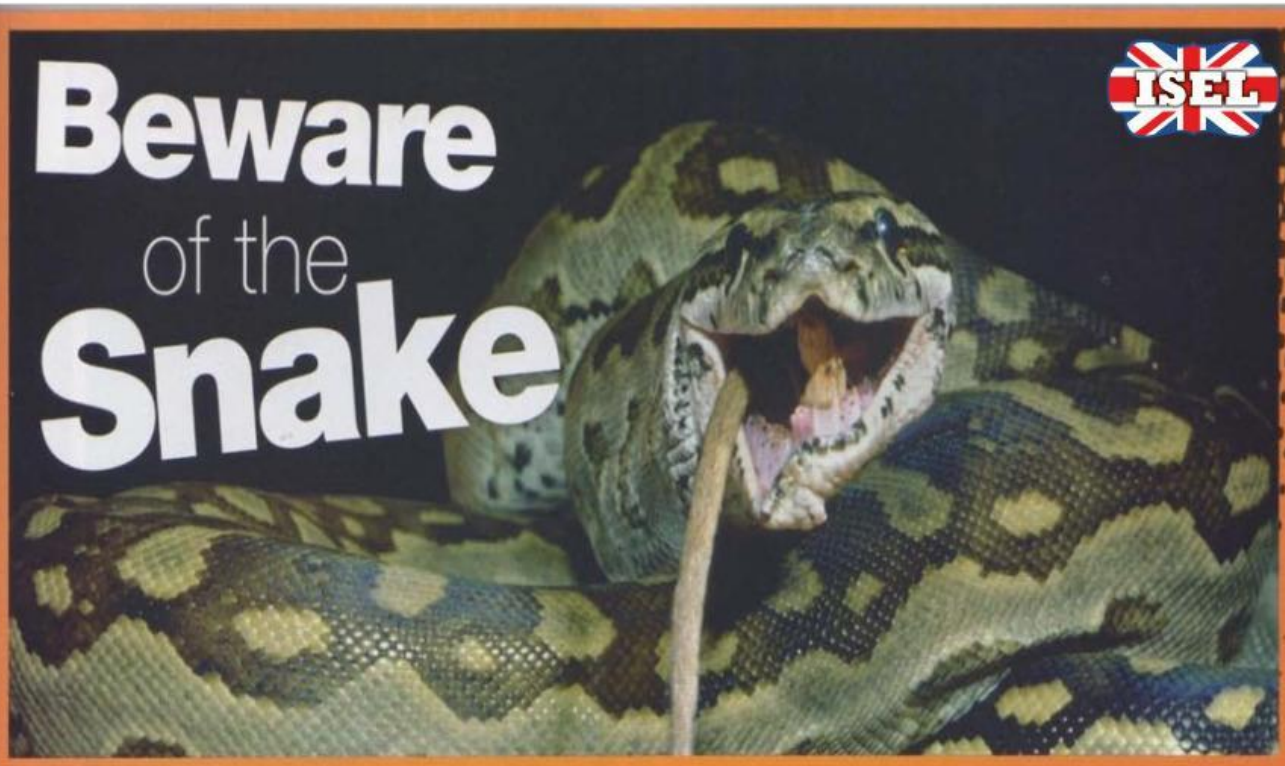
Beware of the Snake



A surprise encounter with a wild animal in its natural habitat can be absolutely thrilling. But if you get too close, your wildlife adventure can turn into a nightmare.

I discovered this for myself while I was studying to be a vet. I used to take temporary jobs during the holidays, to earn a bit of cash. Where possible, I tried to work with animals. 1) ..... A holiday company wanted a temporary guide to work in a wildlife camp in Botswana, Africa. I accepted the job immediately.

The camp was in an unpopulated part of Botswana, and there was no airport. Planes had to land on a small strip of earth a short distance from the camp. My duties included driving out to this airstrip to collect our guests. On this particular occasion, one of the guests was a middle-aged American. She was clearly terrified of the adventure ahead. 2) ..... The first thing she said to me was, 'Just tell me there are no snakes.'

'Of course not', I assured her. 'I haven't seen a single snake for fourteen months.' 3) ..... The reason lay in the weather. It hadn't rained for months so the land around us was parched and lifeless. The drought had driven away most of the wildlife, including the snakes.

As we were driving into the camp, we saw four workmen. It was midday and they were coming back to the camp for lunch. They had been digging up an underground pipe all morning, so they looked tired and dirty. Between them, they were carrying something that resembled the branch of a tree.

4) ..... The object was not a lifeless piece of wood, but a snake, a rock python, one of the world's greatest predators. In fact, at four metres long, this particular snake was one of the biggest and strongest of its species. In an underground pipe, it had found a nice, cool place to wait out the drought. But the workmen had disturbed it, and it wasn't happy!

The American woman saw the huge snake, screamed, and ran to her room. My boss rushed up with another guide and we carefully took the snake from the workmen. It was such a magnificent specimen we decided to take a photo. We each grabbed part of its body and held it in the air. I lifted its head up higher, so we could get a really good photo. 5) ..... While I was positioning it, the reptile began to struggle violently. The minute it had got its head free, it went for me!

The python opened its jaws wide as it struck. Its top jaw bit into my cheek while the lower jaw covered my chin. 6) ..... When it bites deep into its prey, escape is virtually impossible. I was lucky because instead of gripping on to my face, the snake released me. Then it prepared to strike again. I thought my end had come! But while everyone else froze in fear, my boss came to the rescue. He threw his hat over the snake's head – and it immediately calmed down!

But the danger wasn't over yet. The snake's teeth had left four puncture wounds in my face and blood was pouring out of them! Strangely, I didn't feel any pain at all. 7) ..... It took four whole hours to stop the bleeding, but the snake and I both survived: I to tell the story of how I was kissed by a four-metre rock python, and the python to go back to the wild to find a new hiding place where it wouldn't be disturbed again.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

4 **Read the article and choose the sentence (A–H) that best fits each gap (1–7). There is an extra sentence that you do not need.**

A A python's long teeth curve backwards.
B I can't describe the fear that went through us.
C I didn't suffer from shock either, because everything had happened so quickly.
D She was fairly hysterical before she had even stepped onto land.
E This was not the wisest decision.
F This was perfectly true.
G But appearances can be deceptive, as we were soon to find out.
H On one occasion, I got really lucky.

5 **Match verbs (1–6) from the article with the definitions (a–f).**

1 disturb (line 37)	**a** attack
2 grab (line 42)	**b** hold tightly
3 struggle (line 45)	**c** stay alive
4 go for (line 47)	**d** move or awaken
5 grip (line 52)	**e** fight to escape
6 survive (line 61)	**f** take hold of something suddenly or violently

LIVEWORKSHEETS