

## *Atractus trilineatus* (Three-lined Snake)

Family: Dipsadidae (Rear-fanged Snakes)

Order: Squamata (Lizards and Snakes)

Class: Reptilia (Reptiles)



**Fig. 1.** Three-lined snake, *Atractus trilineatus*.

[<http://snakelives.blogspot.com/2011/02/three-lined-ground-snake.html>, downloaded 2 October 2016]

**TRAITS.** The three-lined snake *Atractus trilineatus* may also be called the three-lined ground snake, ground snake, three-lined worm snake, short-tailed ground snake and stub-tailed snake (Boos, 2001). Its back is light brown, even brown-grey with three dark brown longitudinal stripes running from head to tail, and it may have a few brown dots on its underside. Its belly is pale yellow (Boos, 2001). It has smooth scales with 15 per row at mid-body. It typically grows to about 24cm long. *Atractus trilineatus* is a fossorial or burrowing snake, with a sharp spine-like tail which is 15mm long (Fig. 1). The head and eyes are small, and there is no clear distinction between the head and the neck (APS, 1838). Its ventrals (scales located on its underside) number 125-150, and its anal area is covered by a single scale (Boulenger, 1894). Female *Atractus* are typically larger than the males (Murphy, 2010).

**DISTRIBUTION.** *Atractus trilineatus* is found in Venezuela, Trinidad, Tobago, the Bocas islands between Trinidad and Venezuela, Guyana and northern Brazil (Fig. 2).

**HABITAT AND ECOLOGY.** Typically found in savannahs, forests and urban areas. They are burrowing or fossorial so they are found more specifically under rotting vegetation and dry leaves (Fig. 3) in tight balls commonly mistaken for earthworms. They are also found under flower pots in urban areas. They were observed to eat soft-bodied insects, earthworms, fish and tadpoles. (Boos, 2001). *A. trilineatus* is an oviparous animal meaning that it lays eggs. The females typically lay 3-5 eggs during the months of March, May and August. It is suggested from this information that they reproduce all year round (TT Herps, 2016).

**BEHAVIOUR.** *Atractus trilineatus* uses its sharp pointed tail as a defense mechanism against predators where it uses it as a probe to startle them (TT Herps, 2016). It is not a poisonous snake. It is eaten by the false coral snake, *Erythrolamprus aesculapii*, and freshwater land crabs (TT Herps, 2016). The immature *A. trilineatus* is often mistaken for an earthworm or species of the snake families Leptotyphlopidae or Typhlopidae (worm and blind snakes).

**APPLIED BIOLOGY.** The *Atractus trilineatus* is not listed in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species hence it is not endangered (IUCN, 2016), but they are protected by law in Trinidad and Tobago (National Wildlife Policy, 2013). They are not typically kept as pets and they are not poisonous hence not harmful to humans.

## REFERENCES

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Author: Jeanique Adams

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**Fig. 2.** Distribution of three-lined snake, *Atractus trilineatus*.

[<http://reptile-database.reptarium.cz/species?genus=Atractus&species=trilineatus>, downloaded 2 October 2016]



**Fig. 3.** *Atractus trilineatus* in typical environment.

[<http://snakelives.blogspot.com/2011/02/three-lined-ground-snake.html>, downloaded 26 October 2016]

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