



## LITHERING SNAKES

1 Snakes can eat many things. Mice, rats, birds, rabbits and other small animals are all common snake snacks. But what about lamb? We know that people like to eat lamb for dinner. It's a very tasty meal. But it's not just people that like lamb. Snakes like it too.

In 2006, a six metre python ate lamb for lunch in Malaysia. Not too strange? Well, this lamb hadn't been born yet. It was still inside the mother sheep! This snake was so full after eating that it couldn't move. It became stuck in the middle of a main road. Workers had to come along and move it out of the way so cars could move past.

2 Pythons don't poison their prey; they crush it. First they grab the animal's head in their teeth, then they wrap tightly around its body. The animal can't breathe, so it dies. It becomes a snake snack, or in the case of a sheep and lamb, a huge meal.

The python doesn't like to chew either. At dinnertime it unlocks its jaws so it can stuff its meal down in one piece. There is no chewing needed — the snake just lets its stomach juices do the work. But that's not all; these amazing animals can make their hearts grow bigger when they have a big meal! The heart only returns to its normal size after the stomach has finished its job.

3 People have to eat a few meals each day. Not a large python. They can go for up to half a year between meals. Snakes do this by shutting their system down between meals. In this way they use less energy.

Animals that don't eat too often need to make the most of a large meal when they get the chance. This would explain the four metre python that tried to eat a two metre alligator. This snake was found in an American swamp with a very full stomach. Its stomach was so full that it had burst. Unfortunately, neither the snake nor the four-footed reptile survived.





4 Stranger still was the snake in America that ate an electric blanket. It seems the snake's owner used the blanket to keep the cold-blooded creature warm at night. The snake accidentally tangled the blanket cord around its rabbit dinner and just kept eating. Vets had to operate to save its life.

There are several reports of large snakes swallowing humans. Some even show shocking photos. Fortunately, most of these photos have proven to be fakes. People don't want to be a snake snack.



### Questions

- 1 A common snake snack might be a
  - a tiger.
  - b rabbit.
  - c person.
- 2 What was strange about the snake's lamb dinner?
  - a It hadn't been cooked.
  - b It was in the middle of the road.
  - c The lamb hadn't been born yet.
- 3 How does a python manage to eat a large meal?
  - a It chews it up into small pieces.
  - b It unlocks its jaws and swallows it whole.
  - c It eats some now and then finishes the rest later.
- 4 Which animal won the battle in the swamp?
  - a neither
  - b the snake
  - c the alligator
- 5 Snakes can go long periods without eating because
  - a they don't get very hungry.
  - b they rest and shut down their body systems.
  - c they eat much bigger meals than other animals.
- 6 How does a python kill its prey?
  - a It suffocates it.
  - b It bites its head off.
  - c It bites hard and poisons it.



### Vocabulary

Match the words from the text to the clues.  
The brackets show the text sections ( ).

survived tasty fakes unlocks accidentally

- 7 Full of flavour (1)
- 8 The opposite of locks (2)
- 9 Continued to live (3)
- 10 Not done on purpose (4)
- 11 Things that are not real (4)

### Grammar

Find a **noun** (person, place or thing) in these sentences.

- 12 The snake couldn't move.
- 13 Most of these are digital photos.
- 14 This is not a large python.
- 15 It's a very tasty meal.

### Back To The Text...

- 16 Which section talks about snakes eating humans?
  - a section 2
  - b section 4
- 17 In which part of the library would you find this text?
  - a fiction
  - b non-fiction

- 18 The purpose of this text is
  - a to recount.
  - b to inform.

### Think About This

- 19 What does a python do first?
  - a wraps around its prey
  - b grabs the prey by the head
- 20 Pythons can increase the size of their
  - a brain.
  - b heart.
  - c tail.
- 21 The word *tangled* in section 4 is best replaced with
  - a pressed.
  - b stuck.
  - c chewed.
  - d twisted.
- 22 The illustration on page 2 is described in section
  - a one.
  - b two.
  - c three.
  - d four.
- 23 Why do you think the title is Slithering Snacks rather than Slithering Snakes?
  - a It's about what snakes eat.
  - b It's really about snakes.
  - c It's really about snacks.

### Challenge Option

Writing: Write a short and funny advertisement to sell your pet snake.

