

RED SAND BOA



Photo courtesy: Carlos Delgado

ILLEGAL
WILDLIFE
TRADE

BEHAVIOUR & BIOLOGY



Stout, blunt head-like tail and narrow head, with snout shaped like a shovel that it uses to burrow into the ground. By burrowing, it performs the important ecosystem service of enhancing the quality of the soil making the sand boa a farmers' best friend.



Has small eyes adapted for the darkness of underground life.



Mostly found under mounds, buried rocks and bricks, gardens, rat holes, caves and agricultural land.



People falsely believe that it is a two headed snake, and therefore use it to perform rituals that have no proven effect. It is also falsely believed that the consumption of its meat has high medicinal value.



Con-men who deal in the illegal trade of sand boas often approach farmers and promise them crores of rupees to dig up their cropland in search of these shy snakes. The farmer agrees, they dig up his field, find a snake or two but then the con-man escapes and pays the farmer nothing, cheating him out of his harvest too.



ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE CATEGORY



SUPERSTITION

(used in superstitions and rituals to remove curses, snake is also rented out to astrologers or snake charmers who claim to read your future with it)



MEAT (consumption of its meat locally)



SOURCE TRANSIT CONSUMER

SCENARIO 1: SUPERSTITION



Farmer approached by con-man and promised lots of money

They dig up the field and destroy the crops, find 2 snakes.



Con-man disappears leaving the farmer stranded with no crops

Con-man sells snake to local dealer



Local dealer stores the snakes in buckets or drums in his home

Astrologer / mantravadi rents out snake from local dealer



Consumer pays astrologer to perform ritual and read his / her future

SCENARIO 2: SUPERSTITION



Farmer approached by con-man and promised lots of money

They dig up the field and destroy the crops, find 2 snakes.



Con-man disappears leaving the farmer stranded with no crops

Con-man force feeds the snake iron and mercury balls to increase its weight because it will fetch him a greater price



Con-man sells snake to local dealer

Local dealer sells the red sand boa to a snake charmer



snake charmer sells the meat to customer based on a superstition that it will bring them luck



PEOPLE, PLACES & PROPS

SCENARIO 1 & 2



Agricultural field



Crops



Digging equipment



Farmer



Con-man



Snake basket



Local dealer



Mercury/
iron balls



Astrologer/
Mantravadi



Mantravadi
Shop



Ritual items



Weighing
scale



Killing the
snake to
take meat



Cooking
meat



Performing
ritual



Money