



SECRETS OF SNAKES

Exotic, elusive, and dangerous, snakes have fascinated humankind for millennia. They can be hard to find, yet their 3000 species have conquered almost every corner of the planet. They play key roles in religion and mythology—and even now snakebites kill an estimated 100,000 people annually.

These days, molecular biologists, too, are falling under the spell of snakes, pursuing the secrets of their bizarre anatomy and powerful venoms. To mark the publication of the first two snake genomes, *Science* reporters take a close look at the work of scientists who were bitten—in some cases literally—by snakes.