

Amerotyphlops trinitatus (Trinidad Blind Snake)

Family: Typhlopidae (Blind Snakes)

Order: Squamata (Lizards and Snakes)

Class: Reptilia (Reptiles)



Fig. 1. Trinidad blind snake, *Amerotyphlops trinitatus*.

[https://inpn.mnhn.fr/espece/cd_nom/444138?lg=en downloaded 10 October 2016]

TRAITS. These snakes resemble earthworms and have light pink heads, with a small mouth and barely noticeable eyes under their scales (Fig. 1). *Amerotyphlops trinitatus* averages about 24cm in body length or snout-vent-length (SVL). Its tail measures about 1.2% of its SVL, which is short and stumpy compared to other snakes, with a thin sharp spine at the tip of its tail (Fig. 2) and a short tongue. These snakes have short heads, with rounded snouts and smooth, round scales covering their entire body and head (Fig. 3). This snake has 345 ventral scales, 14 subcaudals (below the tail), and 24 rows of mid-body scales.

DISTRIBUTION. *Amerotyphlops trinitatus* is mainly found in South America; in Brazil, Peru and Guyana, and in both Trinidad and Tobago.

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY. This species is found in many different environments such as a dry forests as well as rainforests and low coastal lands. Another common name for this species of snake is the Trinidad burrowing snake because it prefers to live under the soil and loose leaves,

that is, in subterranean and soil environments. The Trinidad blind snake is a carnivore, its diet is mostly composed of ants and their larvae and pupae. Trinidad blind snakes are rarely seen or collected since they live mostly in isolation, underground, avoiding human interaction. They are nocturnal since most of their hunting and other activity occurs in the night. *Amerotyphlops trinitatus* is oviparous; this means that these snakes lay eggs, but there is no information available about how many eggs they lay and how often they reproduce.

BEHAVIOUR. The Trinidad blind snake lives under soil, leaves, logs and rocks and therefore has little to no interaction with other living organisms besides their prey. If a human attempts to hold this snake, it will squirm and twist to loosen the grip on it. This is a defensive mechanism. Very little is known of their natural history except that they are insect eaters.

APPLIED BIOLOGY. These snakes are not listed as an endangered or threatened species, however there is very little information on their numbers in the wild, their abundance and life span.

REFERENCES

- Boos, H. E.A. (2001). The Snakes of Trinidad and Tobago. Texas A&M University Press, College Station.
Gale, T. (2005). Early Blind Snakes: Anomalepididae. Grzimek's Student Animal Life Resource.
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle. (2003-2016). *National Inventory of Natural Heritage*.

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Fig. 2. The tail of the Trinidad blind snake, *Amerotyphlops trinitatus*.

[http://eol.org/data_objects/30256452 downloaded 10 October 2016]



Fig. 3. The details of the head of the Trinidad blind snake, *Amerotyphlops trinitatus*.

[http://eol.org/data_objects/30256452 downloaded 10 October 2016]