

Common Ground Snake

Check out the common ground snake.

By Mark O'Shea

Distribution: Eastern Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Australia (Torres Strait).

Habitat: Coconut plantations and rainforests.

Diet: Reptile eggs and small vertebrates.

Max. length: 0.5 m SVL (0.7 m TL).

Reproductive strategy: Oviparous with clutches of up to six eggs.

Two species of *Stegonotus* have been recorded from Karkar Island, but I have only found *S. parvus* within the coconut husk piles. *Stegonotus parvus* has eight supralabials, while *S. modestus* has only seven supralabials. Although only occasionally encountered, these small grey snakes are not rare, and they may just as easily be encountered on roads at night. Although nonvenomous, they have enlarged rear teeth, and they will bite and chew, usually drawing blood, with little provocation.

Sources for more information:

McDowell, S.B. 1972. "The species of *Stegonotus* (Serpentes, Colubridae) in Papua New Guinea." *Zoologische Mededelingen* 47:6-26.

O'Shea, M. 1996. *A Guide to the Snakes of Papua New Guinea*. Independent Pub. xii+239.