



Certification

Graduates receive DTA Short Course Certificate (upon completion of full program)



Duration

3 days (24 hours)

Course Description

Module 8 provides an in-depth exploration of the diverse and ecologically vital class Reptilia. This module covers the evolutionary history, unique physiological adaptations, and complex behaviours of reptiles, with a specific focus on the species found in Botswana. Trainees will learn to identify the major orders—Testudines (turtles and tortoises), Crocodilia (crocodiles), and Squamata (lizards, snakes, and worm lizards)—and understand their roles within local ecosystems. The course emphasizes the identification of common and significant species, their habitat preferences, and their interactions with other wildlife and humans. Through a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical field skills, guides will be equipped to confidently interpret reptile behaviour, address common misconceptions, and communicate the importance of reptile conservation to guests.

Course Outcome

By the end of this module, the trainee will be able to:

- Explaining the key evolutionary adaptations that define reptiles, including ectothermy, amniotic eggs, and scaly skin.
- Identifying the major orders of reptiles (Testudines, Crocodilia, Squamata) and their key distinguishing characteristics.
- Recognizing and describing common families and species of lizards, snakes, tortoises, and crocodilians indigenous to Botswana.
- Articulating the ecological roles of reptiles as predators, prey, and ecosystem engineers.
- Understanding and explaining reptile behaviour, including thermoregulation, defence mechanisms, and reproductive strategies.
- Applying safety protocols and ethical guidelines for encountering reptiles on guided safaris.
- Communicating the conservation challenges facing reptiles and their importance to biodiversity in Botswana's ecosystems.

Topics Covered

- Introduction to Class Reptilia.
- Order Testudines (Turtles & Tortoises): Biology, identification, and habitat preferences.
- Order Crocodilia (Crocodilians): Focus on the Nile
- Crocodile: biology, behaviour, ecology, and human interactions. Its role as an apex predator and keystone species in aquatic ecosystems.
- Order Squamata (Lizards): Identification, behaviour, and ecology of common species.
- Order Squamata, Suborder Serpentes: Identification of venomous and non-venomous species, snake behaviour, and safety.
- Order Squamata (Worm Lizards): Biology and ecology of these rarely seen, fossorial reptiles.
- Reptile Behaviour & Physiology: Thermoregulation, reproduction, feeding strategies, and defence mechanisms.
- Human-Reptile Interactions: Cultural significance, safety and first aid for snakebite, and conservation threats (habitat loss, persecution, pet trade). Practical Skills: Field identification, tracking, and ethical guiding practices for reptile sightings.



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