



Sample Paper 8

Score for Organization _____

The California King

The California king snake, or Cal king, is one of the most interesting creatures in North America. Don't let the California part of its name fool you. This guy has little in common with tan, blond, surfer-dudes that hang out on the beach. In the wild, the Cal king is one very tough customer.

Birds, rodents, lizards, frogs, and other snakes better be on the alert when Cal king is on the hunt. It is one of the few creatures, including humans, that will approach a rattlesnake—and even stalk it. In fact, king snakes hunt and eat rattlesnakes, even though the rattlers are often larger. Although Cal kings are not immune to a rattler's venom, their systems are relatively tolerant of the poison, and it almost never kills them. The Cal kings themselves have no venom. Instead of relying on poison, they wrap themselves around their prey and squeeze! Then they unhinge their jaws to swallow the victim. They have other survival tricks going for them, too.

The California king snake bears a stunning resemblance to the deadly coral snake. People often confuse the two, sometimes with painful or even deadly results. What is more important for the king snake, though, is that its enemies, including hawks and eagles, also confuse the two snakes. The Cal king avoids numerous confrontations with predators thanks to mistaken identity—the predator may confuse the king snake with a coral snake and stay away. Looks can be important if you are trying to avoid attack.



Despite its reputation as a relentless hunter, the California king snake is gentle around humans, especially if they show no fear and make no sudden moves. They can make good pets, but you have to do your homework and learn about their habits and preferences. What do you think? Would you want one for a pet? Would you dare pick one up for a closer look? It's most likely a Cal king, but then again . . .

Sources

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