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[Are Dancing Cobras Taking Over North Carolina?](#)

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It was impossible to read or see North Carolina's news in the past 3 weeks without a headline announcing that some kind of snake, mostly non native venomous cobras, was supposedly running free and scaring native human population.

It started with [May 19, 2008 news](#) report: "*FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. — Wildlife agents are scouring the woods near Cedar Creek after a man says he spotted what looks like a king cobra there last week*"

Few days later on [May 22, 2008 news](#) reported: "*A resident on Mill Farms Road, that's off Piney Green Road, saw a Monocled Cobra under her back deck earlier this week. Officials said they believed the snake was released by a group trying to raise awareness in making it illegal for people to own exotic animals. But the public relations director for the Animal Protection Institute says her organization had nothing to do with the snake release. Officials say they found a flyer indicating someone lost two cobras, while Thursday night just one was spotted by the resident.*"

In the last few years, North Carolina has been under a heavy attack by animal rights (AR) groups, whose goal is to ban exotic animal ownership. These suspicious exotic animals-at-large sightings, or dumpings, tend to occur during legislative sessions, and [NC currently has active bills](#) for regulating and banning exotic animals.

The same thing happened last year, but instead of phantom venomous snakes, the animals at large were [young alligators](#). Their strolls through the city coincided with the 2007 introduction and hearings of anti-exotic animal bills.

"Born Free USA/ Animal Protection Institute (API) is very upset that after spending huge sums of money to lobby for their model legislative proposal banning many exotic animals, the State of NC has rejected their extreme Animal Rights based agenda in favor of good science and a public safety based legislative proposal regarding reptiles. State agency staffers, the NC Association of Reptile Keepers (NCARK) and Partners in Amphibian & Reptile Conservation (NCPARC) created a comprehensive proposal for the regulation of reptiles that was adopted by a Joint Legislative Study Committee and recommended for introduction in the 2009 NC Legislative session. This strict regulation



of reptiles includes caging standards, safety protocols and criminal prosecution for violators. It would be a felony to release a reptile named in this statute. Even though this legislation is still pending, if API as reported has released cobras in NC they could possibly be prosecuted under the Animal Enterprises Terrorism Act for attempting to influence legislation through fear and coercion” says Andrew Wyatt, President of US Association of Reptile Keepers and NC Association of Reptile Keepers.

As for the ‘missing cobras’ flyer, to this day nobody can provide any proof that it ever existed and [no cobras have been caught](#) so far.

“It is my belief that API did NOT release any cobras, but was behind the release of fliers designed to instill panic and hysteria in the public in order to garner more support for their proposals. Now it seems every snake sighted in NC is a cobra... and there are two native species to NC that mimic cobra behavior. “adds Wyatt.

The snakes residents saw were most likely harmless hognose snakes. Hognose snakes are native to the USA and completely harmless. They have a broad head that often leads people to erroneously believe they are venomous. When threatened, the hognose snake inflates its head and spreads its neck, doing a very good [impersonation of a real cobra](#). If this fails, the hognose snake rolls onto its back and plays dead.

This ‘cobra impersonating’ bluff makes the snake look large and scary, but it can also cost it its life. When in the state of hysteria, associated with hoax cobras in news reports, scared people will kill it, thinking it is one of the phantom cobras.

”Just posting a flyer in a populated area could create the desired scare factor. It would tend to put folks “on edge” and make them more inclined to see the missing cobras in any snake they found. “says John Zegel, a venomous snake owner and former reptile keeper at Atlanta Zoo.

So where are the “missing cobras” flyers? How come nobody can provide them for inspection? The whole scenario is suspicious; while posting a missing dog flyer is reasonable, having any exotic animal owner posting a ‘missing elephant, tiger or cobra’ flyer is as ridiculous as posting a missing goldfish flyer.

It makes no sense. A typical responsible exotic owner would keep looking and inform the authorities. An irresponsible owner would just keep quiet and keep looking alone.



The only purpose to produce or advertise the hoax 'missing cobras' flyer is for groups with the ulterior motives to scare the public and legislators. People with agendas, mostly extreme animal rights (AR) fanatics, report [fake big cat and reptile sightings](#) not just in NC, but across the USA. They dump dead exotic animals or actually release harmless baby big cats and reptiles, inciting public fear and hysteria before exotic animal legislation is proposed or while in session.

These incidents are always used by the proponents of these bills, animal rights groups, as an excuse to heavily regulate or ban these animals.

It is interesting to note that on May 27, 2008, a non-venomous, harmless, small constrictor, [ball python, was found in a Wilmington](#) restaurant. Wilmington also happens to be the location of the [Cape Fear Serpentarium](#), whose owner and

personnel are very active in [fighting these AR bills](#).

According to the FBI, animal/environmental rights activists are considered the number one domestic terrorist threat. Releasing captive exotic animals or making false reports is illegal and should be prosecuted. This is not any different than somebody calling in a fake bomb scare that creates unjustified hysteria and causes government resources to be wasted on pursuing a nonexistent threat.

"There has been mysterious dumping incidents in every state API is active. Hopefully now that their tactics have been exposed by the media these reprehensible tactics will backfire." states Wyatt.

Harmless Hognose Snakes Impersonating Venomous Cobras [Educational Flyer PDF](#) and [YouTube Video](#)

Ball Python © REXANO



Harmless Hognose Snakes Impersonating Venomous Cobras

Venomous Cobras - Not Native to the USA	Harmless Hognose Snakes - Native to the USA
 <p>Spitting Cobra © Eric Grace</p>	 <p>Hognose Snake © William Taylor</p>
 <p>Monocled Cobra © Glades Herp Farm, Inc.</p>	 <p>Hognose Snake © Don Becker</p>
	



Spectacled Cobra © Al Coritz



Eastern Hognose Snake © David Northcott
Nature's Lens



Spitting Cobra © Eric Grace



Hognose Snake © Don Becker



Egyptian Cobra © Lady Viper



Hognose Snake © David Northcott
Nature's Lens

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