



Herptiles in Movies and Film

By Eric Roscoe

Reptiles, amphibians, and even in many cases arachnids and other invertebrates have long been widely shown and featured in numerous different forms of TV, movies, films, books, and other media and popular culture. For good, bad, or indifferent, these animals are often among the most instantly and widely recognizable animals in society. Their depictions often vary considerably depending on the genre, plots or storylines, and other features or details they are used in. Reptiles and amphibians, which are collectively known as herptiles, or herps, have a tremendous array of relationships and interactions with humans both in the wild and in captivity. They are often seen or encountered in the wild often associated with adventure, science fiction, action, or other genres of films, kept as pets, in zoological institutions or other examples of captivity which may depict modern and contemporary trends in the pet industry in films and movies, and many other economic and socio-economic trends that are of interest to us in one way or another.

Members of the family Squamata, or better known as snakes, and to a lesser degree lizards, are by far the most commonly and widely utilized herptiles in films and movies. This is due to the fact that some can be venomous, have largely unfounded negative reputations or perceptions as man-eaters due to their size in some cases, or are otherwise perceived to be harmful, deadly, or dangerous to humans. Likewise, spiders, arachnids, and other invertebrates are often depicted in, or associated with horror genres since the early 1900's. Crocodilians (such as alligators, crocodiles, and their relatives) are also frequently depicted in horror, adventure, and sometimes science fiction films or other "swamp" or "jungle" themed movies as man-eaters or predators of humans as well. Turtles and tortoises (also known as chelonians), as well as frogs, toads, salamanders, and other amphibians tend to be utilized less frequently in movies and film due largely to the fact that they are either more widely seen as harmless and less sensational, and/or tend to be normally be more secretive, inconspicuous, or less frequently seen or encountered. Unfortunately, many viewers and audience members still unnecessarily fear these animals in particular, and associate them with danger, added drama, or scenes of tension.

As such, many people still possess negative predispositions that all reptiles and amphibians are to be feared and avoided when this is certainly far from the case.

This article has been created to document and highlight some of the many examples of misperceptions, as well as accurate, realistic, and otherwise positive appearances and portrayals of these animals in films and movies that do not otherwise use or promote sensationalism. Fortunately, attitudes and perceptions of these animals have been slowly changing as these animals become increasingly mainstream parts of our lives and society.

If anyone is looking for a website with every (or just about every) movie out there with snakes or other reptiles in them, as well as an analysis, here is the site for you! A lot of these movies are pretty funny: <http://www.californiaherps.com/films/snakesinmovies.html>