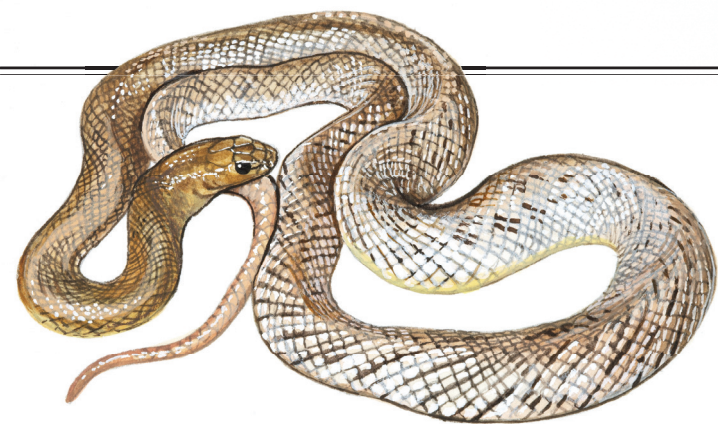


# VENOMOUS AUSTRALIAN SNAKES

AUSTRALIANS young and old stomp heavily through tall grass and shrub – a sound that signals a healthy respect for our share of the world's most venomous snakes.

A snake that sunbathes while snow is on the ground? Another that climbs vertical surfaces? These are but two of the fascinating reptiles you may encounter in the Australian bush. As a proportion of total species, our continent is home to more venomous snakes than any other, and while some may regard this as a dubious honour, there's much we can learn from these attractive creatures. Contrary to popular belief, snakes will not attack humans without provocation and are more often victim than aggressor. They play an important role in our ecosystems, are efficient pest controllers, and occupy a prominent place in our folklore. Forewarned is forearmed, and this poster – an ideal chart for your shed or veranda – is designed to help you identify some of our most deadly species. So when next you see a snake, allow it a wide berth, but also take the time to show it the admiration and respect it's due.



**Fierce snake**  
*Oxyuranus microlepidotus*  
**DESCRIPTION:** day-active; 2 m; yellowish to rich dark brown with black head, though colours may vary with season; sides and belly cream to yellow, orange blotches; egg-layer.  
**HABITAT:** gibber plains and arid shrub lands, especially those on black-soil floodplains and claypans.  
**MICROHABITAT:** deep cracks in soil, burrows of long-haired rat.  
Despite its name, this snake is extremely wary and timid – perhaps just as well, for it's the world's most venomous land snake. Feeds almost exclusively on long-haired rats. Shy but EXTREMELY DANGEROUS.



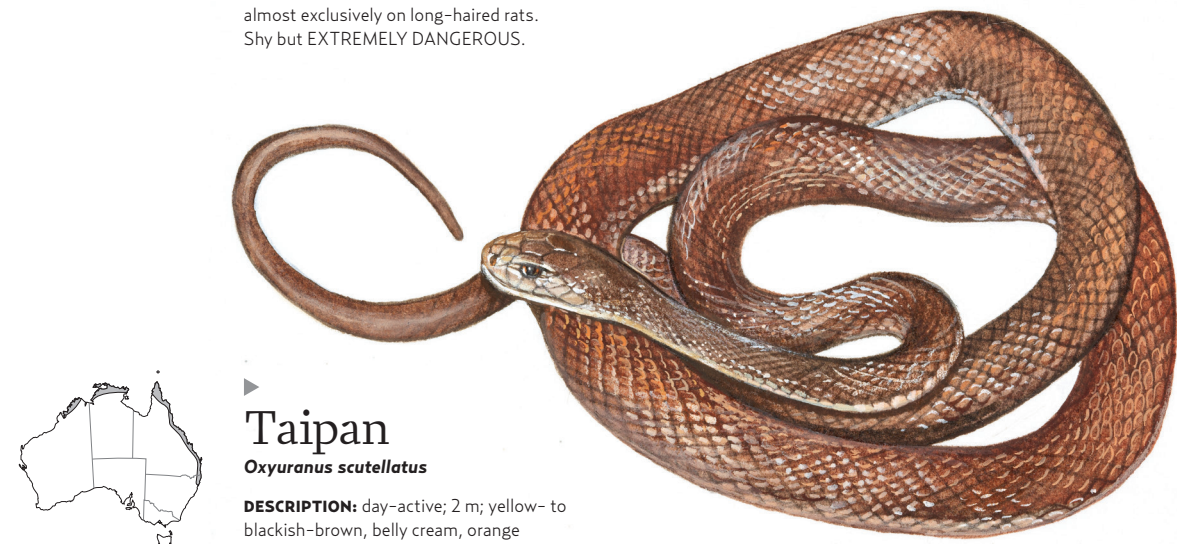
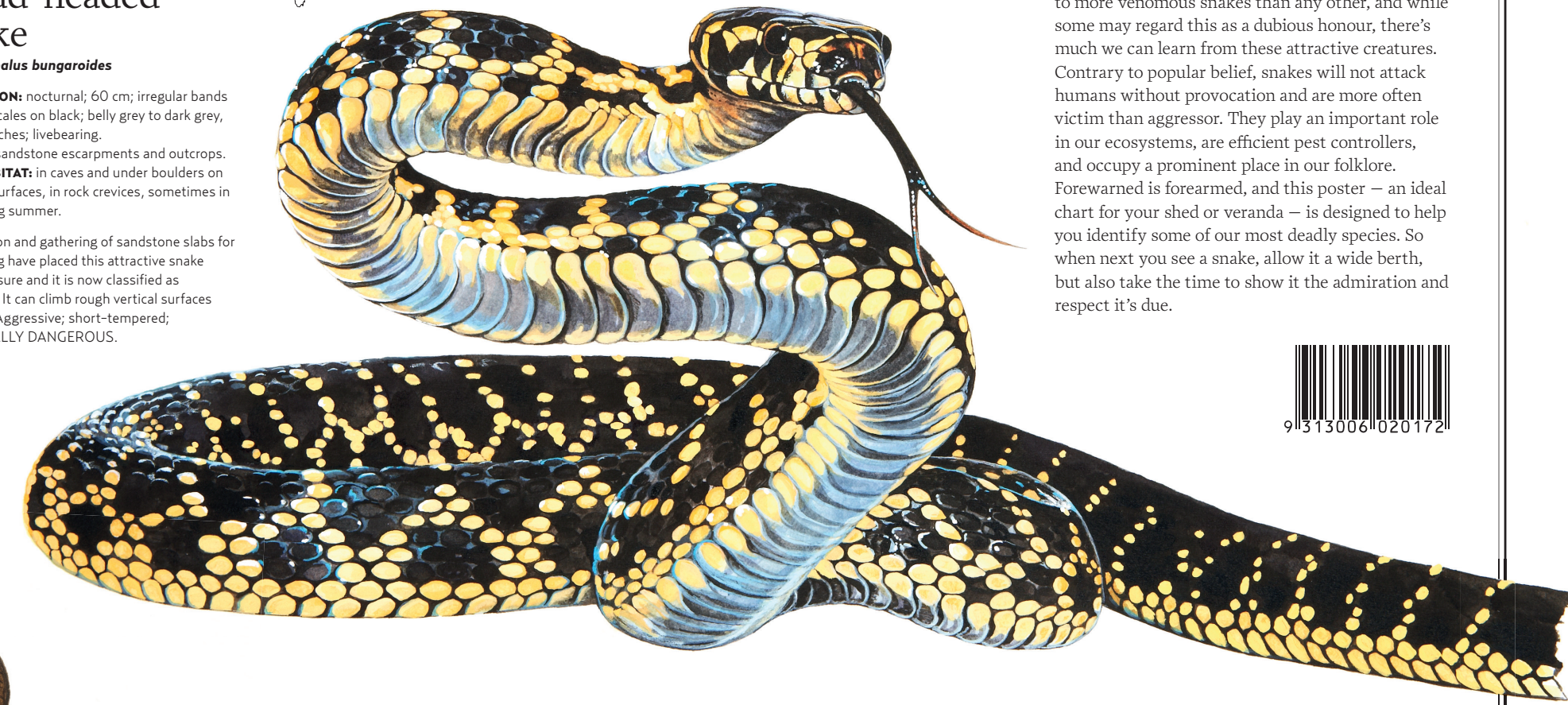
**Common death adder**  
*Acanthophis antarcticus*  
**DESCRIPTION:** nocturnal; 40 cm; broad, triangular head; rapidly tapering tail; pale grey to dark brown, paler bands; belly off-white, dark spots; livebearing.  
**HABITAT:** all within range.  
**MICROHABITAT:** by day lies half-buried in sand, leaf litter, under low shrubs.  
Strikes fast, often, a reluctance to retreat, large fangs and toxic venom place the death adder among the world's most dangerous snakes. It ambushes its prey, twitching its light-coloured tail tip to lure in victims. EXTREMELY DANGEROUS.



**Spotted black snake**  
*Pseudechis guttatus*  
**DESCRIPTION:** mostly day-active; 1.5 m; brown to black or black with lighter spots; belly grey to blue-grey; egg-layer.  
**HABITAT:** more common west of the Divide in woodlands and forest.  
**MICROHABITAT:** under fallen timber, in abandoned burrows and soil cracks.  
Sometimes called the blue-belly, this snake shares the temperament of its more colourful relative the red-bellied black snake. It also shares part of its range, though only occasionally extending to the coast. Aggressive if provoked; DANGEROUS.



**Broad-headed snake**  
*Hoplocephalus bungaroides*  
**DESCRIPTION:** nocturnal; 60 cm; irregular bands of yellow scales on black; belly grey to dark grey, yellow blotches; livebearing.  
**HABITAT:** sandstone escarpments and outcrops.  
**MICROHABITAT:** in caves and under boulders on bare rock surfaces, in rock crevices, sometimes in trees during summer.  
Urbanisation and gathering of sandstone slabs for landscaping have placed this attractive snake under pressure and it is now classified as vulnerable. It can climb rough vertical surfaces with ease. Aggressive; short-tempered; POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS.

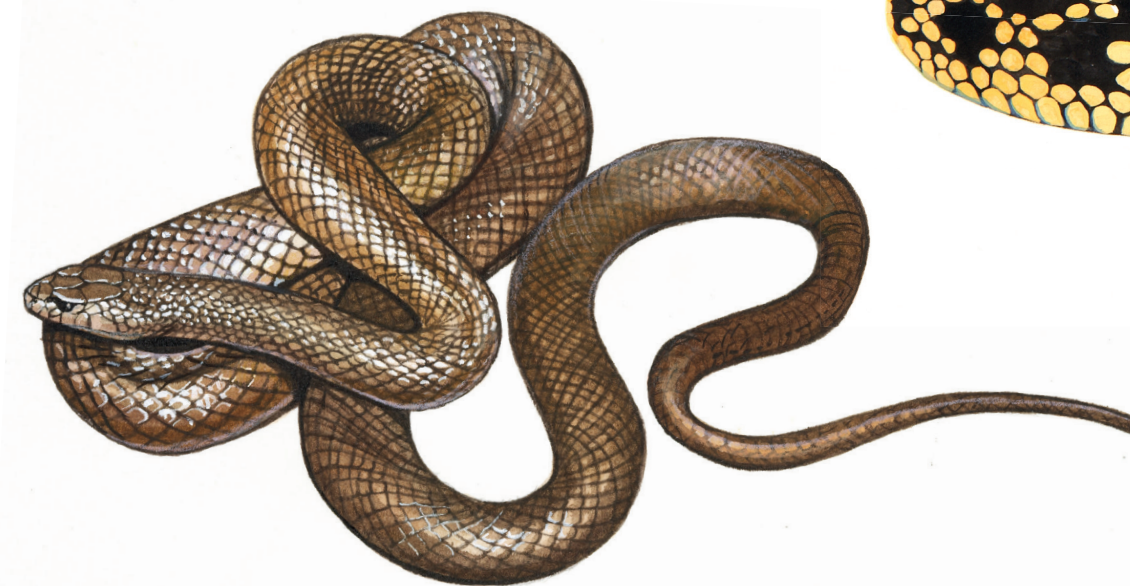


**Taipan**  
*Oxyuranus scutellatus*  
**DESCRIPTION:** day-active; 2 m; yellow-to blackish-brown, belly cream, orange blotches; long head; egg-layer.  
**HABITAT:** woodlands, dry and monsoon forests.  
**MICROHABITAT:** abandoned burrows, hollow logs and stumps, rubbish dumps.  
Probably the subject of more myths than any other Australian snake. Preferring evasion, if provoked it will hurl itself at its tormentor, delivering multiple deep bites with 12 mm fangs – the longest of any Australian snake. Fast; evasive but EXTREMELY DANGEROUS.

**Mulga snake**  
*Pseudechis australis*  
**DESCRIPTION:** mostly nocturnal; 2 m; pale brown, olive to red-brown; belly cream to salmon, orange blotches; egg-layer.  
**HABITAT:** widespread; monsoon forest to desert.  
**MICROHABITAT:** any available shelter, from surface debris to soil cracks.  
Also known as the king brown, the often thickset body distinguishes it from the brown snakes. The large amount of venom produced and a reluctance to let go after biting make it dangerous. Aggressive if threatened; VERY DANGEROUS.



**Dugite**  
*Pseudonaja affinis*  
**DESCRIPTION:** mostly day-active; 1.5 m; grey, olive, brown, dark specks; darker neck; belly pale brown to greyish white, often with salmon blotches; egg-layer; two subspecies.  
**HABITAT:** varied, from coastal dunes to arid interior.  
**MICROHABITAT:** hollow logs, rocks, burrows, litter.  
Urbanisation in the west of its range frequently brings this member of the brown snake family into contact with humans. Its venom interferes with blood clotting and may cause haemorrhaging even after antivenom has reversed other symptoms. Excitable; DANGEROUS.



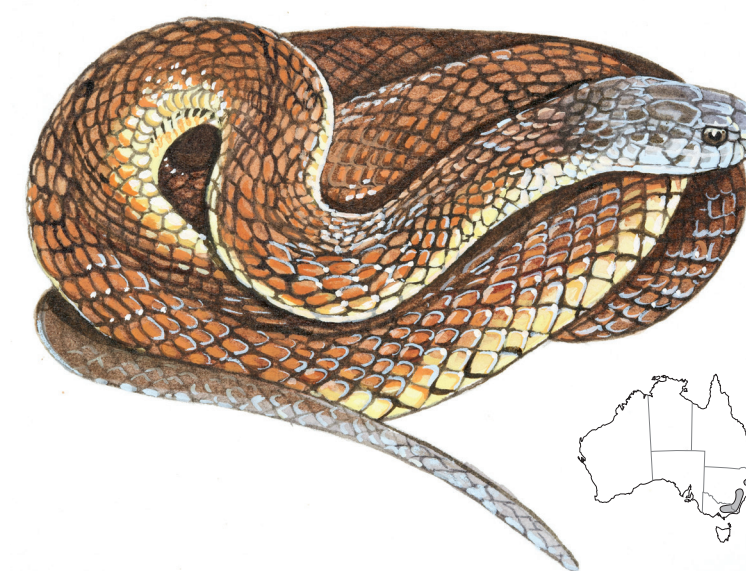
**Eastern brown snake**  
*Pseudonaja textilis*  
**DESCRIPTION:** mostly day-active; 2 m; yellowish-brown to almost black, darker edges to scales can create a reticulated pattern; belly creamy-grey to orange with darker blotches; egg-layer.  
**HABITAT:** absent only from wet forests; abundant in agricultural areas.  
**MICROHABITAT:** beneath rocks, hollow logs, fallen timber and surface debris, and in abandoned burrows; often attracted to farms in search of mice.  
An unmistakable threat display – neck flattened and a third of the body lifted from the ground in an S-shape – earned this species and its close relatives the name Pseudonaja, meaning false cobra. Nervous; reacts quickly; VERY DANGEROUS.



**Rough-scaled snake**  
*Tropidochis carinatus*  
**DESCRIPTION:** nocturnal; 75 cm; yellow-brown to almost black, usually darker bands; belly cream or olive to grey, darker blotches; livebearing.  
**HABITAT:** wet forests, edges of streams and swamps.  
**MICROHABITAT:** in dense vegetation and fallen timber.  
What it lacks in size, this normally shy snake makes up for in aggressiveness, reacting vigorously if it feels threatened. It is sometimes mistaken for the harmless keelback snake, with dire consequences. Excitable; DANGEROUS.



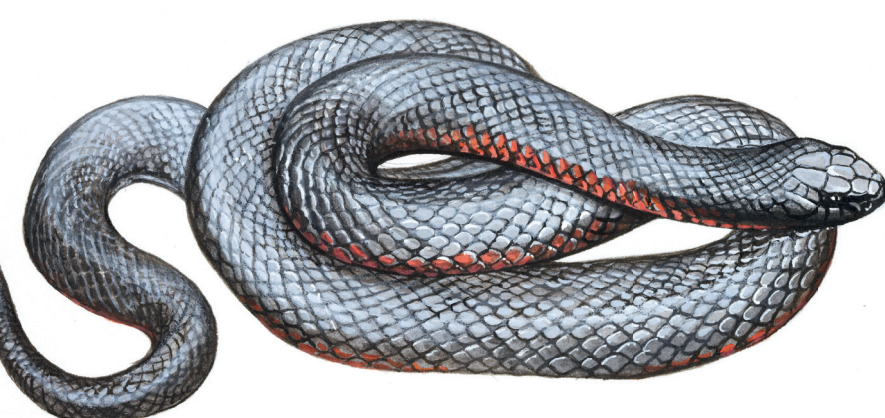
**Black whip snake**  
*Demansia vestigiata*  
**DESCRIPTION:** day-active; 1 m; black through browns to dark grey, often with reddish tinge on back body and tail, spotted; belly pale to green-grey; throat pinkish to white; egg-layer.  
**HABITAT:** tropical heath and woodland.  
**MICROHABITAT:** surface debris and low vegetation in open areas.  
Owes its name to its whip-like appearance. A nervous and fast-moving creature, it may strike without warning. Prey consists mostly of lizards and frogs. Fast; may bite without warning; POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS.



**Copperhead**  
*Austrelaps ramsayi*  
**DESCRIPTION:** active during the day and at night after warm days; 1.25 m; colour variable, through browns to almost black; belly white or yellow to grey; livebearing.  
**HABITAT:** near water or in moist, low-lying areas in tussock grasslands, dry forest, open woodlands and heath.  
**MICROHABITAT:** under low vegetation, among rocks and debris, hollow logs.  
Our most cool-adapted snakes, copperheads are active earlier in spring and later in autumn than most snakes and may even be seen sunbathing on bare patches of ground next to snow. One of three similar and closely related species. Aggressive when cornered; DANGEROUS.



**Eastern small-eyed snake**  
*Cryptophis nigrescens*  
**DESCRIPTION:** nocturnal; 60 cm; glossy blue-black to black; belly pale pink, black blotches; livebearing.  
**HABITAT:** heath, woodland and forest along coast and ranges, occasionally inland.  
**MICROHABITAT:** in crevices; under rocks, fallen timber; often under bark on logs.  
Owing to its secretive and nocturnal habits, this medium-sized snake is rarely seen. It often thrashes about when disturbed. Strikes out haphazardly; POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS.



**Red-bellied black snake**  
*Pseudechis porphyriacus*  
**DESCRIPTION:** mostly day-active; 1.5 m; glossy purple-black, sides pink to rich red; belly cream to pink; livebearing.  
**HABITAT:** widespread; prefers swamps, watercourses and forest margins.  
**MICROHABITAT:** abandoned burrows, hollow logs, beneath rocks and debris.  
This attractive snake has had to contend with severe modification of much of its habitat. It will enter water in pursuit of a meal. Placid until provoked; DANGEROUS.



**Tiger snake**  
*Notechis scutatus*  
**DESCRIPTION:** mostly day-active; 1.5 m; from pale grey through brown, olive to black; narrow, paler bands; belly cream to pink, olive or grey; livebearing.  
**HABITAT:** margins of swamps, creeks, lagoons, flood plains, heathlands and forest.  
**MICROHABITAT:** under rocks, logs, grass tussocks and in burrows, including those of rabbits.  
This snake occupies shearwater burrows on the Bass Strait islands – after eating the chick – making it the bane of islanders who collect the birds. This thickset snake will allow humans quite close before retreating, and is eastern Australia's most common snakebite culprit. Clumsy striker but VERY DANGEROUS.

**Gwardar**  
*Pseudonaja nuchalis*  
**DESCRIPTION:** mostly day-active; 1.5 m; colour and patterns in all shades of brown; belly cream to bright yellow, orange blotches; egg-layer.  
**HABITAT:** widespread in dry to arid country, to tropical woodlands in northern Australia.  
**MICROHABITAT:** beneath rocks and debris, in abandoned burrows, hollow logs.  
This snake occurs in a wide variety of colour patterns. Like others of its type, the gwardar is a prolific layer, producing up to 22 eggs in a clutch. Aggressive when provoked; DANGEROUS.

