

First Aid for Snake Bite

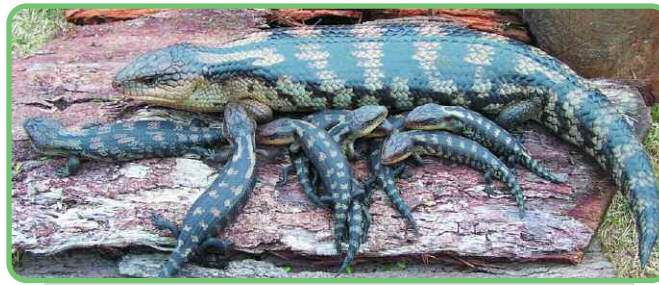
Snake bite is an acute medical emergency and it is important to act quickly and effectively.

- Stay calm, safety comes first – check that the snake is not still near the victim
- Keep the victim as still as possible and immediately apply a pressure bandage
- Start the bandage over the bite site and continue to the end of the limb leaving fingers or toes exposed. Work back over the bite site to the top of the limb until the entire limb is covered. Immobilise the limb
- Ring 000 for medical assistance
- **Mobile phones: ring 112**, even if you have no signal, this number will still get through to 000
- Bring transport to the victim if possible, or carry the person on a makeshift stretcher. It is important that the person is kept as still as possible
- Identification of the snake is unnecessary as the antivenom is effective for all three species of Tasmanian snakes
- Once the pressure bandage is in place, treat the victim for shock; ie. keep warm, monitor breathing and heart rate. Do not give food or drink
- If person loses consciousness, place victim in coma position on the unaffected side and keep airways clear
- Monitor fingers/toes – if they turn blue or white and go cold, the bandage is on too tight
- Do not cut or suck the bite site
- Do not release the bandage until victim has received advice from a qualified medical practitioner

What not to do!

- Do not apply a tourniquet
- Do not suck or cut a snake bite
- Do not attempt to catch the snake
- Do not let the victim walk about

Most people get bitten when they attempt to kill or handle a snake, or may have accidentally trodden on it. The last person to die from snake bite in Tasmania was bitten by a Tiger snake in 1966. **The best thing to do if you see a snake, is to stand very still and let it go on its way or if safe to do so, back away from it very slowly.**



Blotched Bluetongue (*Tiliqua nigrolutea*)

Contacts & Assistance with Reptiles*

North West Coast

The North West Reptile & Creepy Crawly Club ... 0418170952
Central North Wildlife Care & Rescue Inc. 0409978064

Southern Tasmania

Southern Tasmanian Reptile Club 0408 322 663

Statewide

DPIW Wildlife Management Branch 1300368550
(Office hours only) 62336556
RSPCA 1300139947
Emergency (snake bites only) 000
Emergency Mobile phone 112

(*Please note: in the case of snake relocations a small fee may apply)

This information brochure has been published by The North West Reptile & Creepy Crawly Club which is a group of people of all ages who share an interest in learning about and caring for reptiles under government license. The group provides rescue and relocation services by qualified and insured snake handlers and provides long term humane care for permanently injured reptiles and exotic reptiles that find their way in to Tasmania. For more information about the group please ring: 0418170952

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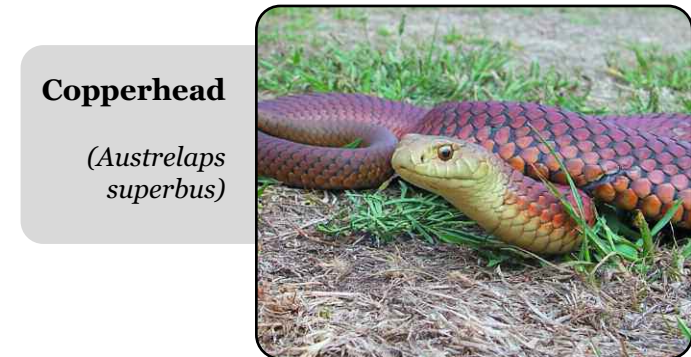


Living with the Snakes of Tasmania



Tiger snake

(*Notechis scutatus*)



Copperhead

(*Austrelaps superbus*)



White-lipped snake

(*Drysdalia coronoides*)

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Encountering Snakes

Snakes may be seen in the most surprising places including towns and industrial areas, particularly during summer when water is in short supply.

It's best to leave them alone.

Although most will only be passing through, snakes do occasionally take up residence in suburban yards. During prolonged dry periods, they are attracted to gardens in search of water, shelter and food (ie. lizards, frogs, goldfish and mice/rats).

To minimise their presence around your home:

- Keep your lawns mowed
- Minimise rubbish and garden waste
- Stack wood away from the house
- Do not have standing water in bowls or ponds close to the house
- Your pet cat may bring a snake indoors to show it off to you – keep cat flaps closed

If you find a snake at home...

- Stay calm
- Do not approach the snake and secure children and pets safely away from the area
- Keep the animal under constant observation if safe to do so, and ring for help

Roles and Values

Like most native mammals, birds and reptiles, Tasmanian snakes are protected by law. They are an important source of food for the larger birds of prey and do an excellent job of controlling introduced pests such as rabbits, rats and mice which have a detrimental effect on farms and natural bushland.

Habitat Loss

Reptiles depend on native bush for their survival. As more bushland is cleared for homes, agriculture and industry, animals have to adapt to the new environments to find food, shelter and breeding sites. Unless areas can be reserved to provide habitat, snakes will be seen more often in gardens and urban areas.

First Aid for Reptiles

- Snakes and Bluetongues frequently get caught up in strawberry netting. Do not attempt to free them. If it is a hot day, throw a towel over them, keep them shaded, cool and moist (light spray with water) and call an expert snake handler
- Bluetongues may be injured by family pets or lawnmowers etc: Carefully scoop the animal into a secure cardboard box with a towel in the bottom to prevent sliding, and keep in a cool dark place and call wildlife rescue
- Injured snakes should only be handled by experts. Keep the snake under surveillance and ring for help from a handler

Lizard or Snake?

The completely harmless lizard, the She-oak skink (*Cyclodomorphus casuarinae*) is only found in Tasmania and is often mistaken for a small snake. This is mainly because as well as flicking its tongue, it can tuck up its legs and move along the ground with a snakelike motion.



Myths & Legends – True or False?

- A snake's forked tongue is poisonous. **False**
- Snakes are attracted by milk **False**
- Snakes are slimy **False**
- Snakes go after chicken eggs **False**
(They are after mice & rats)
- Snakes will chase or attack you **False**
- Bluetongue lizards keep snakes away **False**
- The only good snake is a dead snake **FALSE!**

Fact File

- Tasmania has three species of snakes, the Tiger snake, Copperhead and White-lipped snake (formally known as whip snake), which are widely distributed throughout the State
- All three species are venomous
- Snakes cannot regulate their body heat, they need to warm up in the sun, and become sluggish in cold weather
- Snakes breed and birth in March/April and then go into hibernation for the winter, emerging in spring when temperatures warm up. Snakes will hibernate anywhere that is warm and dry and do not eat until they emerge from their torpor
- Tasmanian snakes give birth to live young and do not lay eggs
- Snakes generally give birth every second year
- Copperheads give birth to 6 – 12 young; Tiger snakes between 20 – 30 and White-lipped snake approximately 2 – 6 young. Only a small percentage of the young survive to adulthood
- Baby snakes are as venomous as adult snakes (just produce less)
- Snakes usually hide from the hot sun between 10am and 2pm, but will move around on cloudy days
- Some snakes can live up to 30 years
- Snakes will eat each other, frogs, tadpoles, lizards, small birds and marsupials, mice, rats and rabbits
- Most snakes are good climbers and have been found in roofs and up trees
- Tiger snakes and Copperheads are amongst the top 10 most venomous snakes in the world. Their venom is designed to quickly kill their prey in order to minimise the potential for injury to the snake
- Both Copperhead and Tiger snakes have wide colour variations ranging from black to yellow, red and brown
- Snakes are immune to their own venom
- According to the records no Copperheads have been responsible for any snake bite deaths in Tasmania