

FACT FILE

Common name

**COMMON DEATH ADDER**

Also known as

Coastal death adder or southern death adder

Scientific name

*Acanthophis antarcticus*

Size

Up to 1 metre, usually 0.5–0.6 metres

Habitat

Forests and grasslands

Location

New South Wales and Queensland, as well as the southern areas of Western Australia and South Australia

Prey

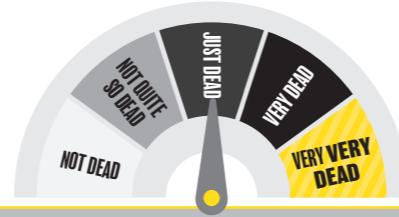
Frogs, lizards and birds

Effects of venom

Drooping eyelids, nausea, difficulty speaking, difficulty breathing and paralysis

Other stuff you need to know

- Common death adders have triangular-shaped heads; short, thick bodies and thin tails.
- Their colours vary greatly, from grey to red.
- They do not hunt their prey. They stay in one spot, hiding under leaves, sand or gravel, and wait for prey to come to them.
- They attack with lightning speed.
- When threatened they will usually stay still and try to blend in with their surroundings.



FACT FILE



Common name

**RED-BELLIED BLACK SNAKE**

Also known as

Common black snake

Scientific name

*Pseudechis porphyriacus*

Size

Up to 2 metres, usually 1–1.2 metres

Habitat

Forests and grasslands near water

Location

East coast of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, and in small parts of south-eastern South Australia

Prey

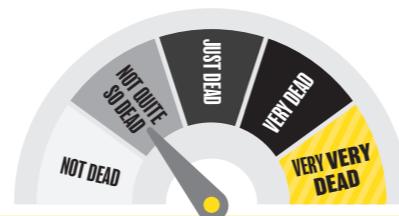
Fish, tadpoles, frogs, lizards, snakes and mammals

Effects of venom

Swelling around bite, blood-clotting, nausea, headaches, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, sweating, muscle pain and weakness

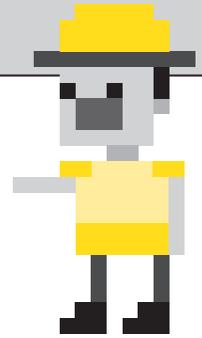
Other stuff you need to know

- Red-bellied black snakes are mostly black, with red/orange sides and belly.
- They hunt on both land and in water and often go into water with just their heads above the surface. And they can stay under water for over 20 minutes.
- A bite from a red-bellied black is rarely life-threatening to a human.



# Survival

## Flying Doctors Save Snake-bitten Teen



February 2009

It was the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to the rescue, when teenager Rhianna Harvie was bitten by a mulga snake while sleeping in her Blinman home. Thanks to first-aid advice provided over the phone by an RFDS doctor and then a night flight to Royal Adelaide Hospital, Rhianna survived the snake encounter.

Blinman is a small town in South Australia's Flinders Rangers, about 500 kilometres from Adelaide. Returning to her hometown for the weekend, after enrolling in an Animal Science degree at Adelaide University, Rhianna encountered an uninvited visitor.

It had been a hot evening, Rhianna decided to sleep on a mattress in the lounge room, where a new air conditioner had been installed. At about 11 pm she was woken by a sudden, sharp pain in her left upper thigh. It turns out that a two-metre long mulga snake had decided to share her mattress and had bitten her twice.

Rhianna's stepfather quickly tied a dressing gown cord around the top of her thigh as a tourniquet, above the bite, to stop the spread of venom and then contacted the RFDS. A RFDS doctor talked him through the necessary first aid. He needed to slow the flow of blood in the leg by putting a compression bandage around the whole leg, rather than just using a tourniquet. Not having a compression bandage, he improvised by tightly wrapping the entire leg in a sheet. Then he had to get Rhianna to the designated spot where they would meet the RFDS plane, which had been dispatched from the base at Port Augusta.

Rhianna was driven from Blinman, through Parachilna Gorge, to the Outback Highway, where she was met by an ambulance. The ambulance then raced her to the closest airstrip in the town of Hawker. From there she was flown to Adelaide and treated at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, where she received the required antivenom.

Wow! Imagine being bitten by a snake so far from a hospital, that you needed the RFDS to come and get you. The RFDS are amazing! Check out this website to see all the fab work they do: [flyingdoctor.org.au](http://flyingdoctor.org.au)

## Children's Author Survives Mosquito Attack!

2 April 2015

George Ivanoff, the Australian children's author of popular series such as *You Choose* and *OTHER WORLDS*, was attacked by mosquitoes on a recent family holiday.

Travelling from Melbourne to Uluru by car, George and his family stopped to camp at Coward Springs. That evening, while attempting to brush his teeth, he was descended upon by a swarm of ravenous mosquitoes, hungry for his blood. By the time he returned to his tent and found the insect repellent, he had been bitten over 100 times. The following night, staying in Coober Pedy, he was attacked yet again, this time while he slept. The following morning, over 250 mosquito bites covered his body.



George Ivanoff displays the results of the unprovoked mosquito attacks.

'Why me? What did I do to deserve this?' said George. 'I'm just glad I didn't end up getting Dengue fever or some other mosquito-borne virus. OMG! I could have died! I'm never going camping again!'



## MOSQUITO SURVIVAL

**MOSQUITO BITES RARELY LEAD TO DISEASE. MOST OF THE TIME, THEY ARE JUST IRRITATING. YOU CAN RELIEVE THE ITCHING WITH:**

- ✓ An ice pack.
- ✓ Special creams or ointments available from a pharmacy.
- ✓ If you are allergic, you can take a medicine called antihistamine.

**BUT THE BEST THING TO DO IS TO NOT GET BITTEN.**

- ✓ Use insect repellent. Note: You can buy insect repellent, or you can spray yourself with mint oil or rub your skin with garlic. But the garlic will probably repel EVERYONE!
- ✓ Light a citronella candle to keep mosquitoes away.

### FUN MOSQUITOES FACTS:

- ★ Mosquitoes are actually a type of fly. There are over 3,000 species worldwide.
- ★ Female mosquitoes live about two to three weeks. Males have even shorter lives.
- ★ A mosquito's saliva stops its victim's blood from clotting.
- ★ Mosquitoes lay their eggs on the surface of stagnant, fresh water.



CHAPTER 18

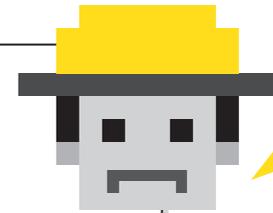
# CIVILISATION

So . . . this is the hard bit. I've collected all this info about how DEADLY and DANGEROUS Australia is – about how the animals and the environment are OUT TO GET YOU – when, in fact, the most dangerous and deadly things in this country are actually people. Yep! Us!

Before the European settlement of Australia, the Indigenous peoples lived in harmony with the land. They lived this way for THOUSANDS of years. Then European settlers came and kinda messed things up. They took the land from the Indigenous people, and even killed off a lot of them. Slowly, over time, animals have been driven into extinction, introduced species have caused havoc with the ecosystem and pollution has destroyed the environment. They even exploded nuclear bombs in the desert.

## Invasion

For the people who first came to Australia from England, it was settlement. For the Indigenous people already living here, it was invasion. Their land was taken from them. Many of them were murdered. And a sad history of mistreatment began. It is only in relatively recent times, that the Australian Government put measures into place to try to make amends. Custodianship of many sites sacred to the Indigenous people have been returned to them. And on 13 February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made a formal apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples.



Yep! The biggest threat is . . . US!

My mum and dad remember this happening. They reckon it was a really important thing. I watched the vid on YouTube. It's just one little word, but it's amazing how important the word 'sorry' can be.

**EXTINCTION**

Australia is home to more animal species than any other developed country; and most of this wildlife is unique to Australia – including:

- 87 per cent of mammal species
- 93 per cent of reptile species
- 94 per cent of frog species
- 45 per cent of bird species.

Since European settlement, many animals, have become extinct. Hunting, introduced species and destruction of the environment have had a devastating effect.

The thylacine (Tasmanian tiger) is perhaps Australia’s most famous extinct animal, but the Tasmanian emu, desert rat-kangaroo, pig-footed bandicoot and the dusky flying fox

are just some of the other animals that have disappeared.

Australia is at risk of losing even more of its animals, including keystone animals. While the loss of any species is a tragedy, the loss of a keystone species is dangerous to the ecosystem.

**WHAT IS A KEYSTONE ANIMAL?**

A keystone animal may be a predator, like the dingo – its existence keeps down the numbers of pests such as foxes and feral cats. But a keystone animal can also help the ecosystem in other ways. For example over 200 plants depend upon the southern cassowary for the spread of its seeds.

Wow! This is amazing! It shows how connected nature is. It's like a game of Jenga. Pull out the wrong bit and everything falls over.

**FACT FILE**



**Name**

**THYLACINE**

**Also known as**

Tasmanian tiger, Tasmanian wolf

**Scientific name**

*Thylacinus cynocephalus*

**Prey**

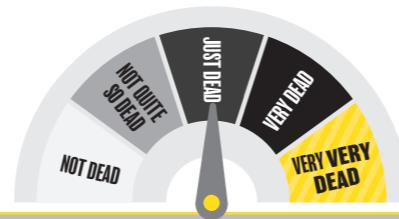
Bandicoots, possums and other marsupials, small rodents, birds

**Other stuff you need to know**

- Thylacines were large carnivorous marsupials.
- Although extinct on the mainland prior to European settlement, thylacines thrived on the island of Tasmania.

- They were hunted into extinction by settlers who considered them a danger to their sheep and poultry.
- The last-known thylacine, named Benjamin, died on 7 September 1936 at the Beaumaris Zoo in Hobart.
- Because of unconfirmed sightings, it is believed that thylacines may have survived in the wild beyond 1936, but they were officially declared extinct in the 1980s.

That's heartbreaking! It died alone . . . the last of its kind.



**AUSTRALIA'S TOP 5 ENDANGERED KEYSTONE ANIMALS**



**Random**

(there are too many to list them all)

- |                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Southern cassowary     | 4. Grey nurse shark |
| 2. Grey-headed flying fox | 5. Tasmanian devil  |
| 3. Gilbert's potoroo      |                     |

This makes me so sad.



**WHAT'S BEING DONE ABOUT IT?**

But it's not all DOOM and GLOOM . . .

The Australian Government has put together the Threatened Species Strategy, which works at protecting endangered species, improving habitats and creating safe havens. There are also numerous conservation organisations dedicated to educating people and minimising threats to animals and relocating animals in danger.

**Invasive Species**

European settlers brought many plants and animals into Australia. Some of these have proven to be damaging to the ecosystem.



**AUSTRALIA'S TOP 11 INVASIVE ANIMAL SPECIES**



- |                            |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Cane toad               | 6. Feral camels   |
| 2. European rabbit         | 7. Feral cats     |
| 3. Red fox                 | 8. Deer           |
| 4. European honey bee      | 9. Feral goats    |
| 5. Brumbies (feral horses) | 10. Feral pigs    |
|                            | 11. Water buffalo |



## CONCLUSION



Australia is a weird and wonderful place, isn't it? Sometimes deadly and dangerous. Sometimes glorious and wondrous. But ALWAYS amazing!

We, as a civilisation, have done so much here ... both good and bad. I guess that's just how the human race works. We do incredibly creative things, like inventing new technology, adapting language and building giant statues of fruit. And Vegemite! Don't forget the Vegemite. But we also do great harm to our environment. We pollute. We hunt animals into extinction. We are careless with the planet which we call home. If only we could all just take a step back and appreciate where we live.

I think everyone should take a trip around whatever country they live in, to get an appreciation of how awesome it is. Australia is an amazing place. But so is every other place on Earth. Each and every other place, from the driest desert to the densest jungle. Every place has its uniqueness. Every place has something incredible to offer the world. We need to appreciate it. Because if we appreciated it, we might not wreck it.

I'm gonna make a promise to myself right now – that I will always try to appreciate where I live. This country, Australia! This world that it's a part of, the planet Earth.

