

THE DANGEROUS NATURE OF SNAKES

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Classification of Snakes

There are approximately 3200 species of snake in the world and greater than 1300 are venomous. Snakes belong to the Class: Reptilia, Order: Squamata and Family: Serpentes, of which there are 16-20 families but only 4 of these are venomous.

1. **Atractaspididae:** A family of snake not present in the Australasia region. These snakes tend to be found in Africa and the Middle East. There are 12 genera in this family including Atractaspididae: *Xenocalamus bicolour* (Bicoloured Quill-snouted) (1) and *Atractaspis* (Burrowing Asps)
2. **Colubridae:** Vary few species of this snake are found in Australia but are found on every continent, excluding Antarctica. It is the largest family of snake in the world, with 524 genera, including: Colubridae: *Thamnophis elegans* (Western Terrestrial Garter) (2) and *Dispholidus typus* (Boom Slang)
3. **Viperidae:** Found all over the world, except Australia, Madagascar and Antarctica and categorised into 2 key sub-families, characterised by their heat sensing organs:
Viperinae- commonly referred to as true or pitless vipers e.g. Viperidae: *Atheris squamigera* (Bush Viper) (3)
Crotalinae. - commonly known as pit vipers, e.g. *Crotalus horridus* (Timber rattlesnake)
4. **Elapidae:** Members of the snake family, referred to as Elapids have a key distinguishing feature: short, hollow, permanently erect fangs that administer poison from the front of their mouth. They are found in tropical and subtropical regions of the world including America, Asia, Africa and Australia. Elapidae chiefly reside in Australia, with over 20 genera inhabiting Australia. Examples of elapidae include *Pseudonaja textilis* (Eastern Brown) (4) and *Dendroaspis polylepis* (Black Mamba)

1. Atractaspididae:

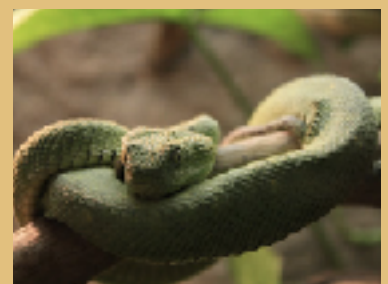
Xenocalamus bicolour (Bicoloured Quill-snouted) (1)



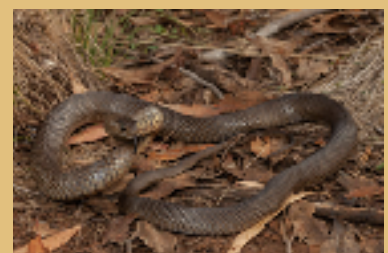
2. Colubridae: *Thamnophis elegans* (Western Terrestrial Garter) (2)



3. Viperidae: *Atheris squamigera* (Bush Viper) (3)



4. Elapidae: *Pseudonaja textilis* (Eastern Brown) (4)



Envenomation of Australia Elapids: Clinical Features

Australian Elapids are the most diverse of the seven families of snake found in Australia. In Australia, there are 80 species of elapids of which 20 are large or venomous enough to severely envenomate and kill.

