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Amazing Animals
Fact sheets

Venomous Snakes

It is really difficult to differentiate between venomous and non-venomous snakes. Many non-venomous snakes look venomous to protect themselves. There are also snake types whose teeth are placed like the teeth of non-venomous snakes although their bites can be dangerous. Out of the 2800 kind of snakes, only 270 types are venomous.

Black Tiger Snake

Black Tiger Snakes are usually active during the day, although during hot weather they will become nocturnal. They have to be dark in colour due to the extreme cold that they must tolerate throughout most of the year in Tasmania. Being black allows the Black Tiger Snake to absorb heat more readilyâ€"a necessity for any reptile living in such unbearably cold environments. It also means that they are absolutely spectacular to see and even tougher to spot in the scrub. Their sensitive forked tongue helps this snake to detect which underground burrows contain a food source.

Habitat

The Black Tiger Snake is only found on the island of Tasmania. This species of snake inhabits dense woodland, heathy shrub land and dense tussock grassland, often around waterways and swamps.

Diet

A Black Tiger Snakeâ€™s diet consists of frogs, small mammals, lizards and other snakes. On small offshore islands where Shearwater (seabird) colonies exist, adult Black Tiger Snakes will seasonally gorge feed on chicks to build fat reserves for the rest of the year. Adults killing large prey do not even need to complete a bite in order to inject venom, this being injected by momentary muscular pressure on the venom gland as the fangs penetrate in an open-mouthed jab-bite. The ungripped prey is allowed to pull away and attempt an escape. After a short delay, the Black Tiger Snake will follow the scent of the prey towards its cover or retreat, which it rarely reaches before succumbing to the venom. Juveniles killing small skinks and frogs usually bite and maintain their jaw grip until the prey can be ingested.

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