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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.

Taipan

Taipans can grow to be three metres in length, making them Australia's largest venomous snake. The common name for this snake is the Coastal Taipan. The Taipan is usually an unmarked light olive to dark russet brown colour, with the exception of some specimens from the Tully area in North-east Queensland, where they have been found almost black in colour.
The head is usually lighter in colour than the rest of the body with a pink mouth and a reddish eye. The Taipan is a stealthy hunter with an extraordinarily fast and accurate bite. The Taipan usually restricts its activity on the surface to the mid-morning. It may extend or change this to include late afternoon in cooler weather, in hot weather it is nocturnal.

Habitat

The Taipan lives in grasslands, coastal heaths, grassy beach dunes and cultivated areas such as cane fields in the far north of Australia and down the Queensland coast, but has also been found in Northern New South Wales.

Diet

A Taipan's diet consists of rats, lizards, bandicoots and small mammals. The Taipan swallows its prey whole and the animal is always deceased when they eat it. Adults killing large prey do not even need to complete a bite in order to inject venom, it is 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 to attempt an escape, but after a short delay, the Taipan follows the scent of the prey towards its cover or retreat, which it rarely reaches before succumbing to the venom. Juveniles killing small mammals usually bite and maintain their jaw grip until the prey can be ingested.

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