

Death adder

Acanthophis praelongus, *Acanthophis antarcticus*, *Acanthophis pyrrhus*

Other names: northern death adder, common death adder, desert death adder

Description

The Northern Territory is home to three species of death adders. Death adders are extremely venomous and therefore highly dangerous to humans. Like all adders they have a lightning fast strike. They are a short, stubby snake growing up to 1.2m in length, with a very pronounced broad head and raised ridges above the eye. Their scales are keeled and colour ranges from dark grey to brown to reddish brown with both weak and highly contrasting bands of gold, copper, white, orange or brown. Their tails are usually short and skinny with the tip cream or black. Their underbelly is cream to grey.

Distribution

The northern death adder's range includes the Kimberley, Western Australia, to the islands of Torres Strait, Queensland. In this range it inhabits grasslands, woodlands and rocky ranges and outcrops. Common adders are found in the Gulf region of the Northern Territory while desert adders are found in the more arid parts of the Northern Territory down to the central desert regions.

Regional Abundance

Darwin - Common in rural area, Katherine - Rare, Alice Springs - Common in parts.

Diet and Reproduction

The diet of the death adder consists of birds, lizards and small mammals. It attracts these animals by wriggling its tail before striking. It injects prey with its powerful neurotoxic venom. Adders are live bearing producing up to 33 young. This species is slow moving and largely inactive.

HIGHLY VENOMOUS

Chris Peberdy



Rex Neindorf