

SNAKES

In case of a snake bite, keep the victim calm, immobilize the bitten area and transport immediately to a hospital where antivenom treatment is available

Habitat

Open, grassy and bushy areas, farmlands, tree hollows, forests and human habitations, including cities

Species richness

About 300 species of snake are found in India. Snakes are legally protected in India

The Big 4

Most snakes are harmless. Only four species are responsible for most of the mortality

Common cobra / Spectacled cobra

Naja naja
Neurotoxic venom



Large sized snake with body colour varying from dark brown to black. When alerted, the snake will raise its head and spread its hood in defence. Dorsal body scales are smooth and oval shaped. Hood marking varies in individuals from a clear spectacle mark to no hood marks.

- Activity level is high during dusk
- Commonly found in farmlands, may enter houses in search of prey and shelter
- Hissing sound and raised hood are defensive and warning signals given by cobra
- Bites are painful with swelling at the bite site, continuous bleeding from wound. Patients may also experience vomiting, difficulty in breathing, and blurred vision
- Venom can cause paralysis, respiratory and cardiac failure

The majority of snake bites occur during the rainy season when snakes come out of their flooded burrows more frequently and may encounter humans in houses and agricultural fields

Common krait

Bungarus caeruleus
Neurotoxic venom

Medium sized snake with black or bluish black body with thin milky-white bands (often paired) on the body. The bands may be absent in the forebody. Scales are smooth with a hexagonal scale present in the vertebral region.



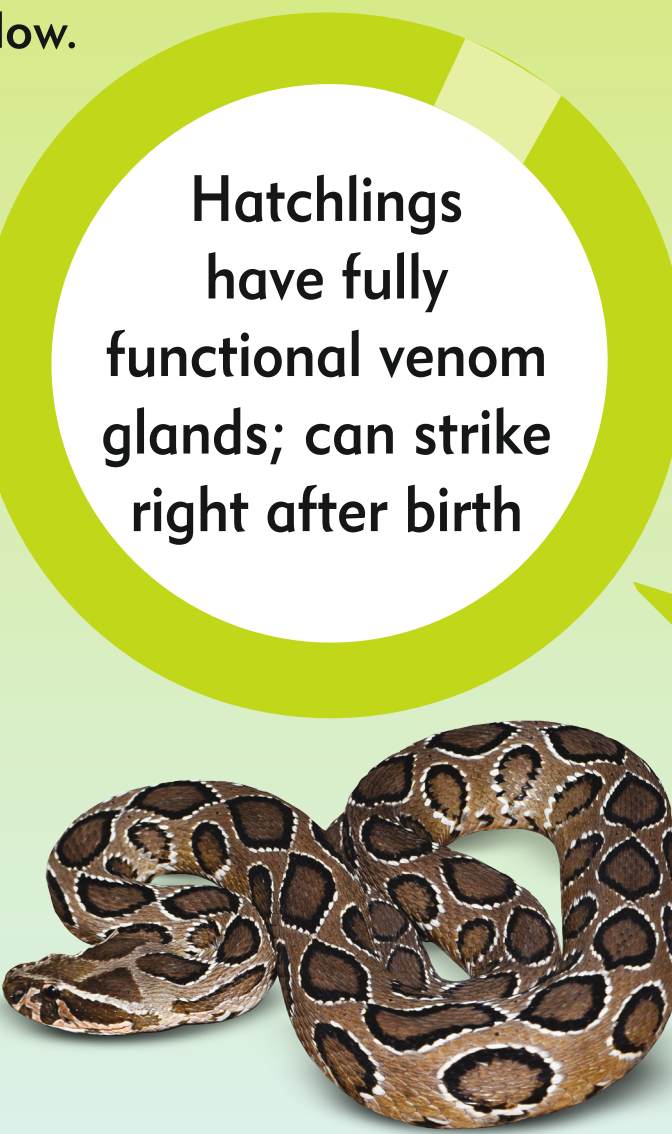
- Active during night-time
- Prefers rocky areas, crevices, under cement slabs, leaf litter, termite mounds, rat holes, often found hiding in cavities inside houses
- If disturbed during the day, it coils and hide the head under its body and bites only under extreme provocation, but aggressive at night and may bite without warning
- Often bites people who sleep on the floor. The bite is painless and the victim may die in sleep due to powerful neurotoxic venom
- Abdominal cramps, blurred vision, sweating, vomiting and difficulty in speech are common bite symptoms

Do you know?

Russell's viper

Daboia russelii
Haemotoxic venom

Thick bodied ground dwelling snake covered with rough scales. Head is triangular, flattened and distinct from neck. Dorsally, the colour pattern consists of a deep yellow, tan, or brown ground colour, with three series of dark brown spots that run the length of the body. Each of these spots has a black ring around it, the outer border of which is intensified with a rim of white or yellow.



- Active during the night-time, but in cool weather, it may also become active during the daytime
- This animal is commonly found in open, grassy areas, as well as forests, forested plantations, and farmland
- They may appear slow and sluggish. They produce a pressure cooker whistle-like sound to warn
- Bites aggressively and lightning fast with unfolded fangs
- Bites are painful, cause bleeding. There is blistering in the bitten limb. Often causes bleeding from gums and eyes as a result of haemotoxic venom

Hatchlings have fully functional venom glands; can strike right after birth

Saw-scaled viper / Indian saw-scaled viper

Echis carinatus
Haemotoxic venom

Small ground dwelling snakes covered with rough scales and with a triangular head. Body colour varies from brick red to dusty brown. An arrow or cross-like mark present on the head.

- Active during night-time, hunts at twilight
- Lives in deserts, semi-deserts, deciduous forests, grasslands and scrublands. Hides under rocks and, logs during the day
- Moves by sidewinding locomotion, body folds into S-shape for moving
- When alerted, makes a rasping sound by rubbing its body scale in a continuous manner
- When threatened, bites aggressively and repeatedly without any warning
- Severe pain, bleeding, blistering and swelling at bite site. Also causes bleeding from gums and eyes



In case of venomous snake bite, timely administration of antivenom under medical care is the only treatment

- Snakes provide important ecosystem services by controlling rodents that cause diseases and damage crops
- Snakes avoid encounters with humans and attack only when threatened or accidentally stepped upon
- Often some venomous snake bite victims without injecting venom. Such bites are known as 'dry bites'
- Contrary to the popular belief of snake following and biting people, snakes do not have long-term memory and avoid humans
- Every year India loses about 50,000 human lives to venomous snakebites

- Snakes inject venom to immobilize and digest prey. The Big-Four snakes feed on small mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians
- Snakes use their forked tongue to sense their prey and their surroundings, especially when tracking their prey
- Lack of knowledge, lack of awareness and fear have resulted in the indiscriminate killing of snakes, including non-venomous snakes
- Loss of forests, road kills and hunting for skin and meat are other threats to snake populations
- Indiscriminate killing of snakes due to fear is also a major threat

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Taking a Harmonious Co-existence
approach to Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation in India



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