

Small-eyed snake (*Cryptophis nigrescens*)
Sometimes (*Rhinoplocephalus nigrescens*)

This snake is nocturnal, bearing live young perhaps up to 5 or 6. If you find one of these snakes that is a metre long, consider it huge; half a metre would be considered normal size; even for breeding.

The venom works like a myotoxin but is specifically called cryptoxin. Like a myotoxin it breaks down muscle protein, this is secreted into the urine and blocks the kidney tubules. In extreme cases it can cause renal failure.

My experience with bites from these snakes has been mild to extreme swelling which would subside after a day or two. The venom from the bites of these snakes never caused the pain as does the bites of some other Australian snakes. After the swelling was down it could be brought up again by scratching the area that was quite itchy. This ebb and flow of swelling could be repeated over a few days.

The specific antivenom recommended by Struan K Sutherland is Tiger snake - initial dose 3000 units.

The Small-eyed snake is found from Victoria along the eastern seaboard often extending a few hundred miles inland and perhaps high up into Cape York Peninsula. Basically they follow the area of high rainfall.

These snakes are venomous but it is very hard to get a bite from these snakes. If you would like a bite you will have to pick up the snake and then it might give you a nip.

Bites mostly cause local swelling though not very painful. There is however a record of at least one fatality from the bite of a Small eyed. The reason for the death was kidney failure.

Mostly the bites from these snakes have never bothered me. However, some years back in Nimbin in Northern New South Wales someone brought me a Small-eyed snake for identification. I have never seen a Small-eyed like it. It was only about half a metre or two foot long, but it was very thick for this type of snake. It had a head on it like a small Mulga snake, meaning like a Bull Terrier.

At that time i had no idea that someone had died from the bite of a Small-eyed snake. The person who brought me this snake asked whether or not it was deadly. I remember distinctly, saying that there is no way that i would let this one bite me; it just looked like a bite from that snake would have upset my whole day.

But still, it is the type of snake that you would have to be playing with to receive a bite; Small-eyed snakes are just too slow and stupid. They are quite safe to observe even from close quarters. You can safely sweep one of them into a bucket with a broom and release it into the bush. Don't pick one up unless you know them well.

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