

Tiger Snake Attack – the myth

The true nature of the dangerously venomous snakes of Australia

This is a look at how a tiger snake sees the world. To be fair with snakes you must understand that a snake does not see the same world that we see. A snake sees a totally different world to us. Because we are intelligent we can learn a little of the world of the snake. A snake can never learn or understand anything about us.

There are many that like to believe that they have been chased by a tiger snake. This story will explain how it is impossible to be truly **chased** by a tiger snake.

A snake will travel at top speed to pursue its prey or escape a predator, but definitely not to chase a human. If you aggravate a snake so much that it feels threatened enough to chase you, the truth is that it does not really want to catch you. That is why it will give chase with its head and neck raised. This is a time when you could perhaps receive a bite if you are too close.

However, for a snake to travel with part of its body raised, it can never travel at top speed. This is a form of defensive display which you, as an intelligent human should take heed of and understand that there is a frightened animal asking you to leave it alone in the most polite and forceful language it knows. Remember that snakes do not have a voice so they can't growl at you.

Unless you are a very selfish person, and only interested in what you think you know about the world, you can get to understand some of what is happening in the mind of the snake. First though, you must attempt to empathise with the creature.

Try this next time you see a large venomous snake in Australia. Try to put yourself in the place of the terrified snake and imagine what you would do if you were the snake. Remember that you are an animal that can only travel at your top speed when you are warm and to travel at top speed the total length of your body must be on the ground. You are totally deaf and only respond to very powerful vibrations. It is most unlikely you would ever notice the vibrations of a person bashing through the bush; regardless of what people might say.

Your eyes and brain are designed so that you can only notice an object when it is moving. Of course you do see other things but they are only shapes with no meaning, such as trees or rocks. Objects only take on a meaning of life when they move. For your survival you possess the capacity for fear but your short term memory only lasts a few seconds though your fear can last a little longer. You do not know that you are venomous you don't even know the meaning of venomous or non-venomous; as a matter of fact you can't reflect on the meaning of anything.

IMAGINE THIS SCENARIO

Let's say you are a tiger snake and you have been startled and then, that thing which frightened you becomes motionless. You can remain scared even though you cannot remember what it was that frightened you to begin with. So now you make a run for it. A tall tree like object seems like a good place to head for. Suddenly there is a problem. That tree comes to life and perhaps you realise it or perhaps you don't but that was the thing that scared you to begin with. One of two things may happen now. The tree will run away and soon you lose sight of it because you are so close to the ground that the grass is blocking your view. So you soon forget the incident. Or else, that tree will remain there and menace you. You understand nothing about it but it looks dangerous because it is very large and it is waving about in front of you and will not leave you alone. Perhaps there is enough grass for you to get into so you run for your life as fast as you can.

If you are a large tiger snake and you are warm you can travel at about the speed of a brisk human walking pace; for a short while. If you are a large brown snake you do at least three times that speed. You can't go on forever and suddenly there is that monster in front of you again and you are out of breath.

You do not know that you are venomous, you just accept that when you bite a mouse or a rat it slows down and eventually it can't bite you any more and so you can eat it. You have no arms or legs to defend yourself with, so you raise the front part of your body to look as scary as you can. The creature that is menacing you is huge but this is the best you can do and you are frightened. If you feel really desperate, you will head towards that scary thing with your head raised. Remember this is the best you can do and you are now very frightened but you have to be brave. You do not want to catch that scary thing as it is too big to eat and looks to be very dangerous.

By chasing it with your head raised, many of those ventral scales along your tummy are off the ground and you have less traction to move forward. You can now only travel at about a quarter speed but that suits you fine because if you caught that monster what would you do with it anyway? You will **only bite** if it gets too close.

You understand nothing about the world and you don't look for enemies, they are the last things you need. But this big scary thing is a civilised human. Some of them seem to enjoy playing heroes by senselessly destroying small creatures.

Although you are as brave as you can you hardly stand a chance. This human has a long handled shovel in his hand and is going to teach you a lesson for being a snake. You feel a sharp pain in your back then a few more blows and you feel no more. You are a creature without a voice so you could not have screamed in pain anyway; so who cares? You are hung over a fence for the world to see what some brave person has done to you. All you really wanted to do was to eat rats and mice and be left alone.

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