



dangerous creatures

sea snakes

Distribution

Warm coastal waters of the Indo-Pacific region, some are found in cooler waters. Sea snakes can swim up rivers and have been reported up to 160km from the sea.

Size and appearance

Sea snakes are similar in appearance to land snakes but have a flattened tail, much like a paddle, that is used in swimming. Sea snakes have no gills and must surface regularly to breathe. They may grow to several meters in length.

Symptoms and signs

Sea snakes inflict a relatively painless bite with no swelling and teeth may be left in the wound. Early symptoms include headache, a thick-feeling tongue, thirst, sweating and vomiting. Thirty minutes after the bite patients may suffer generalized aching, stiffness and tenderness of muscles all over the body. This is followed by another set of symptoms typical with a snake bite including progressive flaccid paralysis, starting with droopiness and paralysis of voluntary muscles. Death may result when there is paralysis of muscles used for swallowing and respiration. Renal failure may occur 3-8 hours after the bite and muscle breakdown, which can lead to cardiac arrest, 6-12 hours post bite.

First aid

1. Call 000.
2. Provide emergency care if required.
3. Apply pressure-immobilisation bandage.
4. Seek medical aid – antivenom available.

How to avoid them

Sea snakes are curious animals and may approach divers and snorkelers. It is important to maintain a clear distance between yourself and any sea snakes whether they are on land or at sea. Do not handle sea snakes.

Did you know?

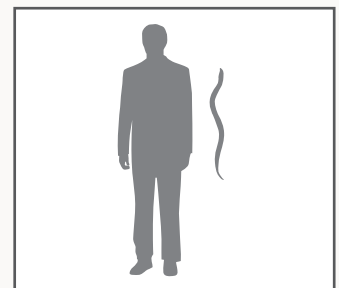
- Sea snakes use their tongue to smell under water.
- Most sea snakes are able to breathe through their skin but can only satisfy about 20% of their oxygen requirements this way.
- On land, sea snakes are not able to coil and strike like terrestrial snakes.
- Sea snakes have been reported swimming at depths of over 90m (295ft) and can remain submerged for several hours.
- Most sea snakes are ovoviviparous, meaning their young are born alive in the water, where they live out their entire life cycle. One group, the Latidcaudids, lay their eggs on land and are classified as oviparous.



Laticauda semifasciata



Distribution in Australian waters



Size relative to human



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