

Grey snake



Grey snake habitat © Craig Eddie

Description

As its name suggests the grey snake is a uniform grey to olive colour above fading to a pale grey along the sides, with a white or cream under belly featuring a few dark flecks. A dark patch or band can usually be seen at the base of the head in adults. The iris is mostly black with a fine silvery brown rim around the pupil. The grey snake generally reaches a total length of about 70 centimetres.

Distribution

The grey snake occurs from the Fitzroy River near Rockhampton, to the southern interior of New South Wales. The core area for this species in the Brigalow Belt is south of the Great Dividing Range between Dalby and Glenmorgan.

Habitat

The grey snake favours clay floodplains vegetated by grassland, and woodlands and open woodlands of brigalow/belah and eucalypts, such as poplar box. It occurs on both cracking clays and areas with small gullies or ditches (gilgais or melon holes).

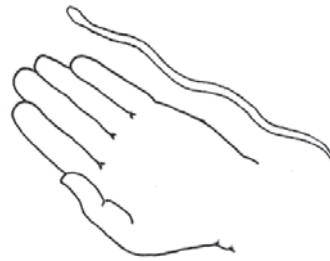
Ecology and Life Cycle

The grey snake has been found under logs, bark and soil cracks. It is also known to shelter under fallen and

embedded timber which has usually been stranded after floating into place on floodwaters. When forced from shelter by floods, the grey snake will take refuge amongst the emergent bushes.

They bear 4 to 16 live young each year from January to March.

While producing venom, they are not considered particularly dangerous; however care should be taken with large individuals.



Scientific Name:

Hemiaspis damelii

Conservation Status

Endangered - *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Queensland)

The grey snake is a ground-dwelling species that is largely active during the night, when it emerges to hunt frogs and the occasional lizard.



Grey snake © Steve Wilson

Key Threats

Hydrological changes: Changes in hydrological regimes such as damming of watercourses, may impact species reliant on wetlands, waterways or water bodies, such as the grey snake, which occurs in low lying areas found on floodplains and near inland watercourses. Mechanical activities that result in simplification of habitats, such as leveling of gilgais and melon holes, will also be unfavourable to grey snakes.

Feral animals: Frog-eating snakes, such as the grey snake, are at risk of poisoning through the ingestion of cane toads. They are also eaten by cats and foxes. Destruction of wetland habitat by feral pigs is a major threat to this species, along with the associated destruction of frog habitat and direct competition for their food source (frogs).

How to help

- Retain remnant vegetation, particularly near creeks and rivers.
- Undertake coordinated feral pig control measures.
- Avoid removing fallen timber and ground cover as these provide essential habitat.
- Undertake cane toad control measures where practicable.
- Leave snakes alone. They are protected under Queensland legislation and it is illegal to harm them, not to mention potentially dangerous.
- Control grazing in riparian zones to protect ground cover and reduce soil erosion.
- If burning, use cool burns in a mosaic pattern that promote patchiness and leave areas of ground cover unburnt.
- Consider entering into a conservation agreement (e.g. Land for Wildlife, Nature Refuges or incentive agreements through grant programs) for conservation and land management assistance.
- Report sightings to WWF-Australia, the Queensland Museum or the EPA/QPWS.

To find out more about saving threatened species check out www.wwf.org.au/tsn or contact the Threatened Species Network at tsn@wwf.org.au.



The Threatened Species Network is a community-based program of the Australian Government and WWF-Australia.



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