

Dunmall's snake



Bullock woodland © Craig Eddie

Description

The Dunmall's snake is a robust, shiny snake with small, dark eyes and little or no pattern. Its body is uniformly dark grey-brown above, fading to white on the lower flanks. The scales of the body are smooth and light-edged. Most of the upper lip scales have paler blotches in the centre or on the back edge. It reaches a total length of about 60 centimetres.

Distribution

It is almost entirely restricted to the southern half of the Brigalow Belt bioregion. Its range extends from Yeppoon and the Expedition Range in the north, to Oakey, Glenmorgan and Inglewood in the south. It has mostly been recorded between 200 and 500 metres in altitude.

Habitat

Although little is known about this species, the Dunmall's snake appears to prefer open forest and woodland, particularly those dominated by brigalow, cypress pine and bullock. The substrate varies from deep-cracking black clay to loamy soils.

Ecology and Life Cycle

This extremely secretive snake shelters in soil cracks and under fallen timber which is embedded in deep-cracking clay soils.

This snake is active during the night, feeding on small lizards. It lays eggs rather than live young.



Scientific Name:

Furina dunmalli

Conservation Status

Vulnerable - IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (International)

Vulnerable - *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (National)

Vulnerable - *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Queensland)

Although the Dunmall's snake is venomous and the effects are documented as being moderately severe, it is reluctant to bite when disturbed.



Dunmall's snake © Steve Wilson

Key Threats

Feral animals: The Dunmall's snake is vulnerable to predation by foxes and feral cats.

Loss of habitat due to clearing and thinning: The focus of vegetation clearing in the Brigalow Belt is shifting from the essentially cleared Brigalow ecosystems on fertile soils to the eucalypt woodlands on poorer soils. Consequently the survival of dry woodland/open forest species with limited geographic ranges and/or specialised habitat requirements, such as the Dunmall's snake, remain uncertain unless conservation action is undertaken.

Inappropriate roadside management: Roadsides and road reserves often provide suitable reptile habitat. Populations of reptiles that live within linear remnants, such as roadside strips, are particularly vulnerable to disturbances that remove essential microhabitat features, for example, rocks, logs, dense leaf litter and fallen bark. Threats can arise from inappropriate roadside burns, slashing and road widening.

How to help

- Maintain large, healthy, connected patches of native vegetation and avoid ploughing remnant strips/patches of native grassland or woodland.
- Retain fallen timber and ground cover as these provide essential habitat.
- Ensure grazing practices are sustainable, maintaining good ground cover.
- 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. Taking a photo of live or dead specimens is useful to help identification.
- Leave snakes alone. They are protected under Queensland legislation and it is illegal to harm them, not to mention potentially dangerous.

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



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

