

Key to the Snakes of South Australia



Desert Whipsnake, *Demansia cyanochasma*

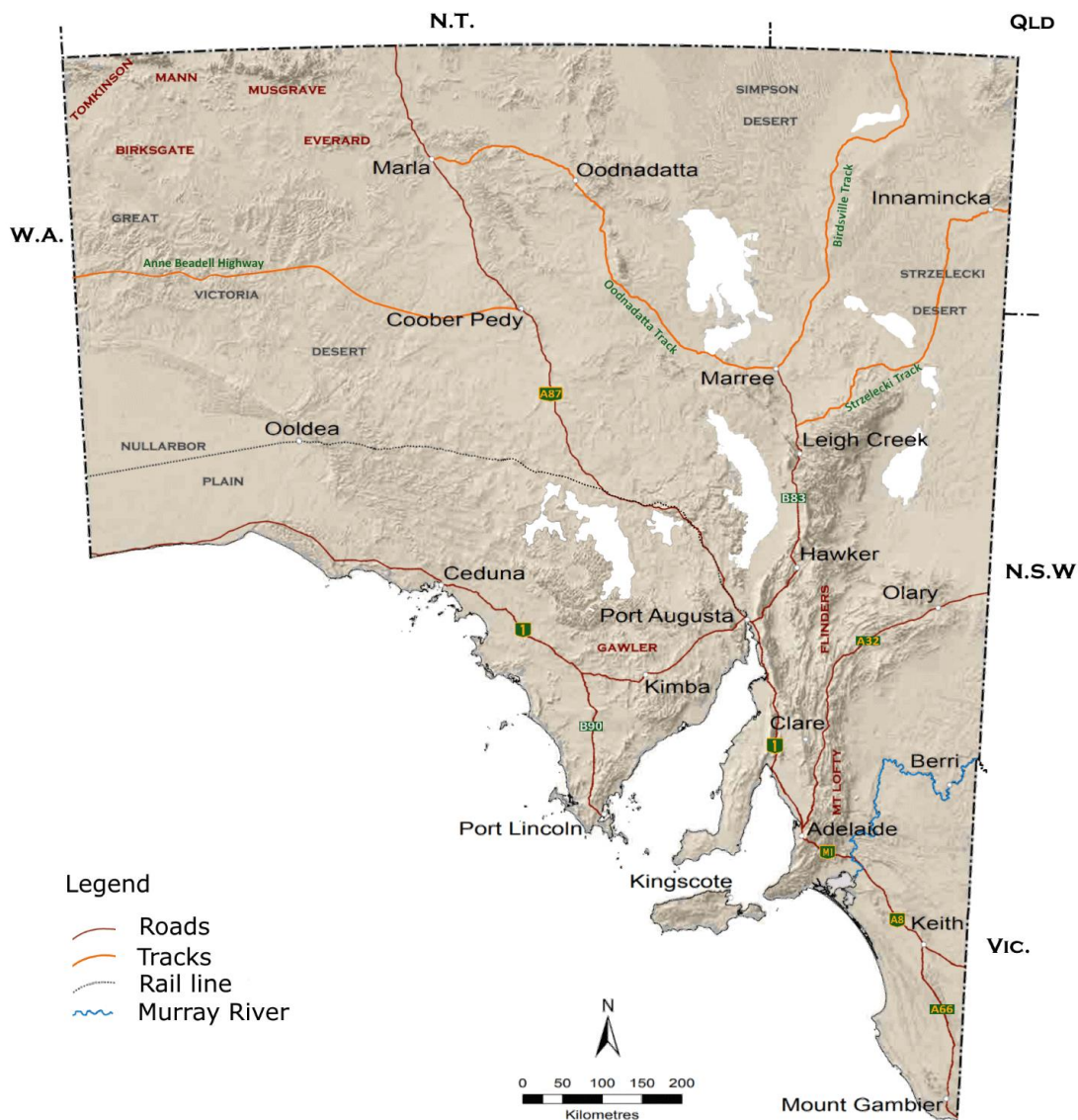
Mark Hutchinson & Ian Williams

Version: June 2026

<https://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/reptile-keys>

The Snakes of South Australia

Geographic Distribution

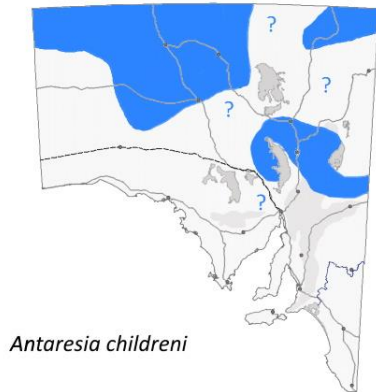


Map* showing place names and geographical features as well as some main roads and major desert tracks, to assist with interpreting the following distribution maps.

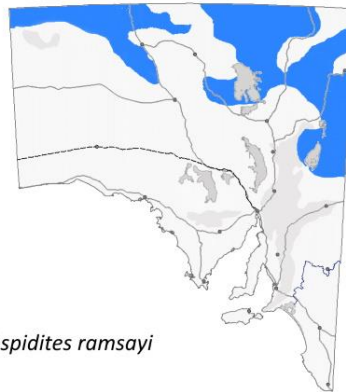
Distribution maps show known and likely occurrence, given suitable habitat. In some cases South Australian populations that belong to recognised subspecies are indicated in blue text.

*modified from original by Department of Environment & Water.

Family Pythonidae (pythons)



Antaresia childreni



Aspidites ramsayi

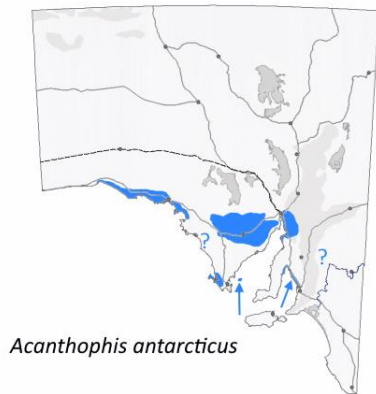


Morelia imbricata

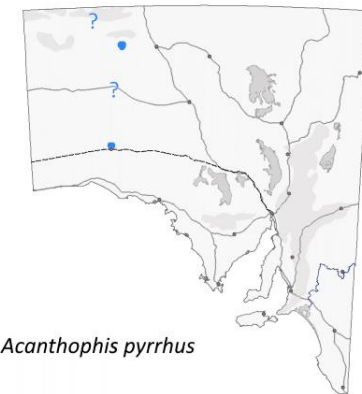


Morelia spilota

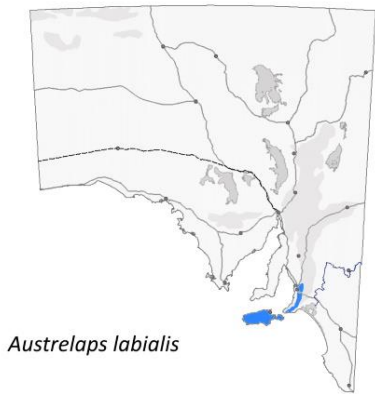
Family Elapidae (Front-fanged venomous snakes)



Acanthophis antarcticus



Acanthophis pyrrhus



Austrelaps labialis



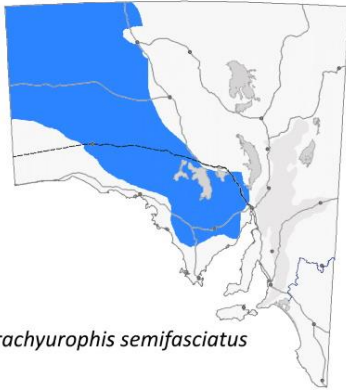
Austrelaps superbus



Brachyuropis australis



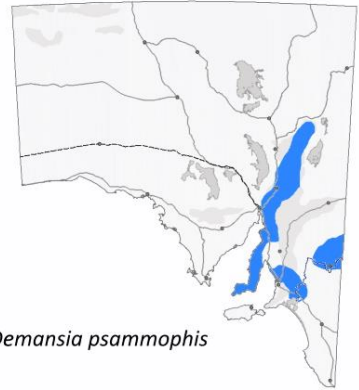
Brachyuropis fasciolatus



Brachyrophis semifasciatus



Demansia cyanochasma



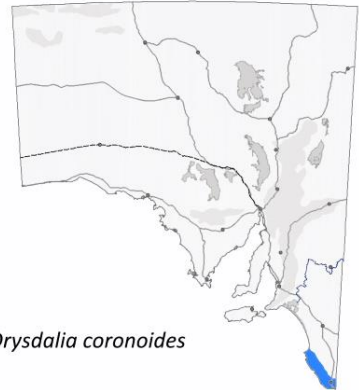
Demansia psammophis



Demansia rimicola



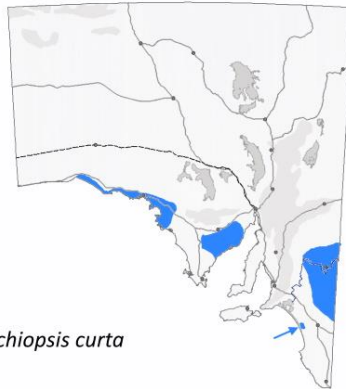
Denisonia devisi



Drysdalia coronoides



Drysdalia mastersi



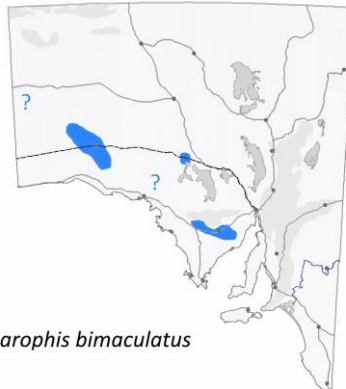
Echiopsis curta



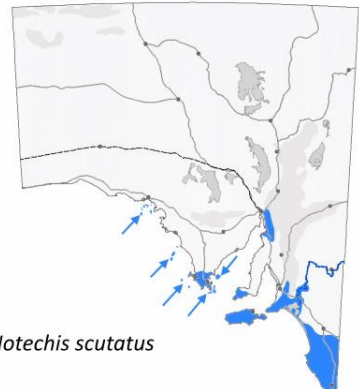
Furina diadema



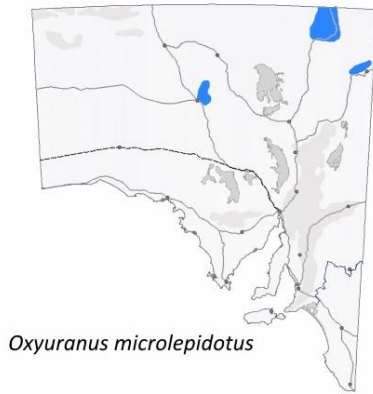
Furina ornata



Narophis bimaculatus



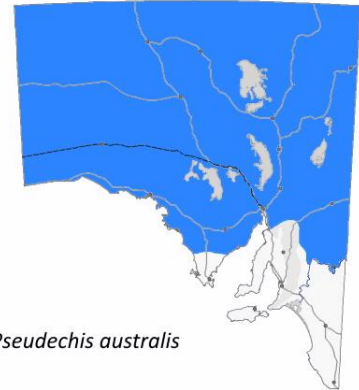
Notechis scutatus



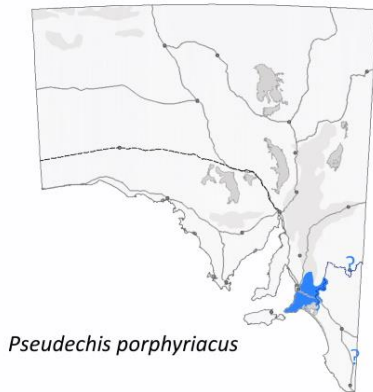
Oxyuranus microlepidotus



Oxyuranus temporalis



Pseudechis australis



Pseudechis porphyriacus



Pseudonaja affinis



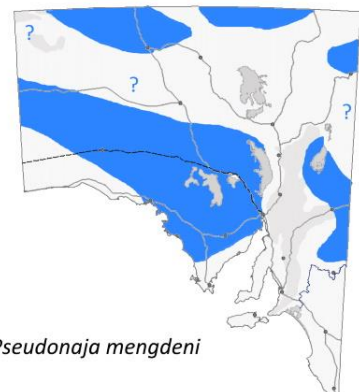
Pseudonaja aspidorhyncha



Pseudonaja guttata



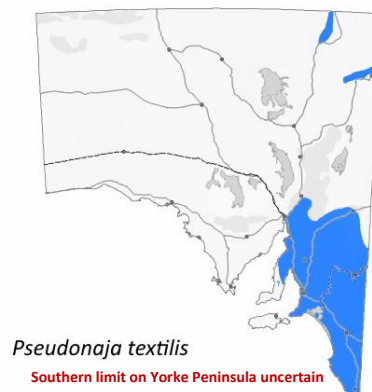
Pseudonaja infracaula
Northern limit on Yorke Peninsula uncertain



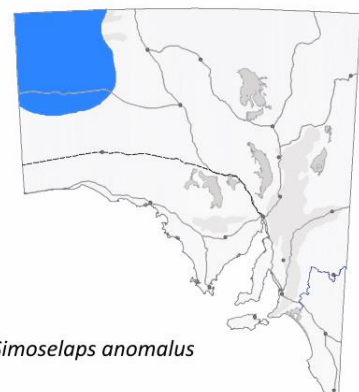
Pseudonaja mengdeni



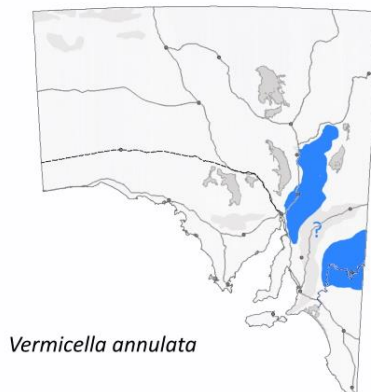
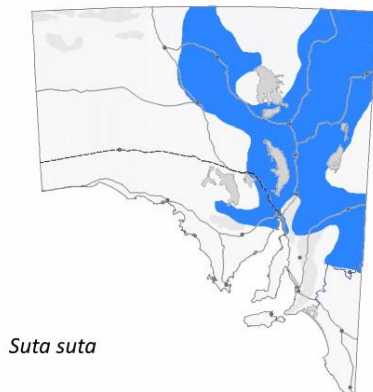
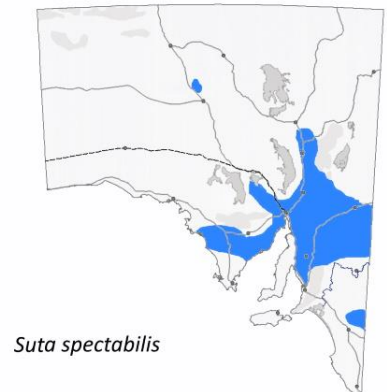
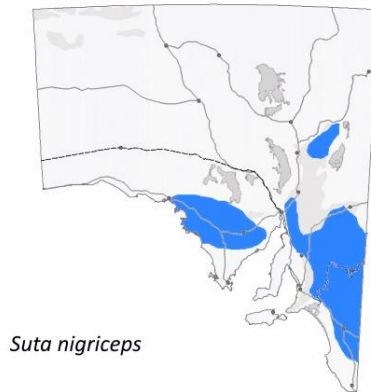
Pseudonaja modesta



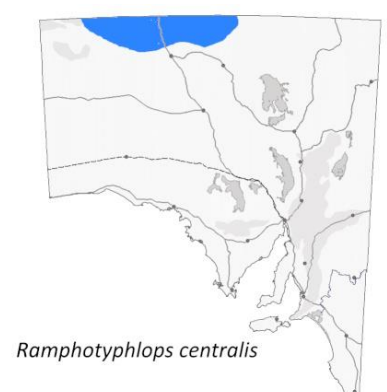
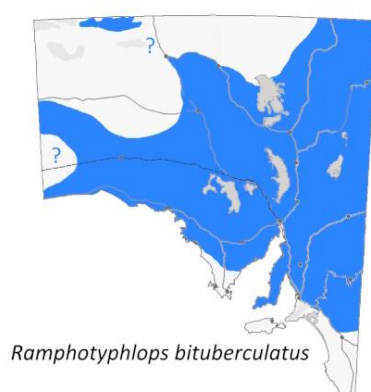
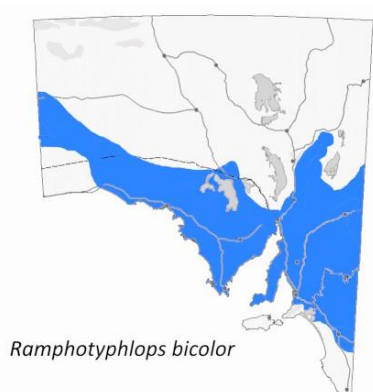
Pseudonaja textilis
Southern limit on Yorke Peninsula uncertain



Simoselaps anomalus



Family Typhlopidae (blind-snakes)





Key to the Snakes of South Australia

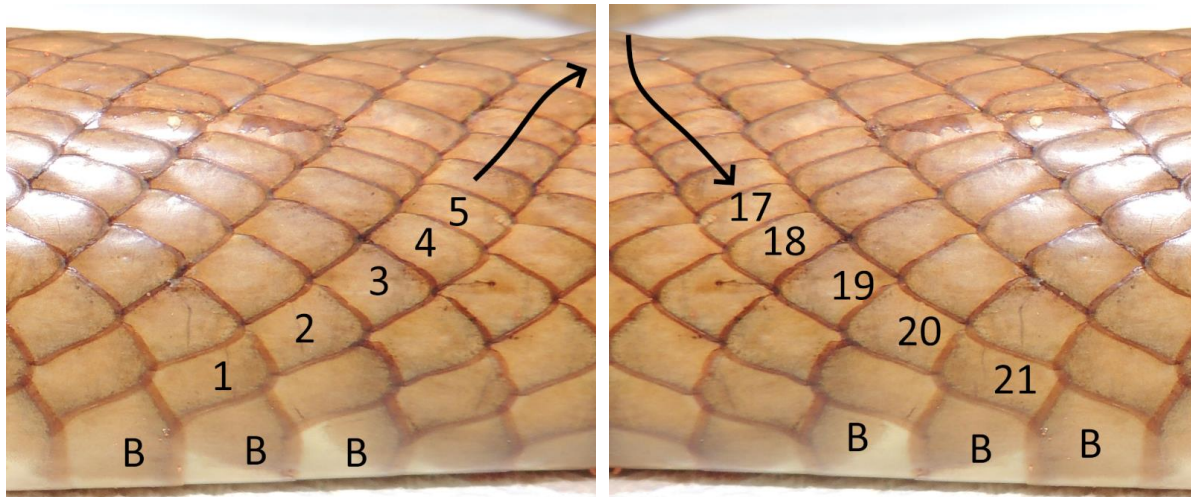
As far as possible we have aimed to use distinguishing features that can be seen in a photograph or observation of a live snake without handling, but in many cases precise identification will require handling by a trained person, or be limited to dead specimens.

Many of the taxonomic features used in snake identification are scale features, especially the arrangement of scales under the tail, the number of body scales on the back and sides of the body and the arrangements of the larger scales on the head and lips. One aspect of this that can be useful is that it means recently shed skins of snakes will often enable several scale features to be checked and for the specimen to be identified, but there are obvious safety issues in the case of live snakes.

*If close examination is going to be necessary for a precise identification it must always be kept in mind that **an unidentified snake could be a dangerously venomous snake**. Make use of the distribution maps and the illustrations to rule out as many species as possible. Very often this process of geographical elimination plus one or two colour pattern or other easily observed features will rule out all but one possibility.*

*Body scales rows are counted across the upper surfaces of the **mid-region** of the snake's body. This is important because around the neck region the number of scale rows can increase, while on the posterior third of the body row the number of scale rows may begin to decrease.*

The easiest method is to follow a row diagonally across the body, starting on one side of the body with the first scale row above the belly scale row (B; margins of the belly scales are visible in side view in elapid snakes) and finishing at the last scale row before the belly scale on the other side of the body.



Oxyuranus temporalis

This example shows the usual maximum number of scale rows in an Australian elapid (venomous) snake.

1. a. Eyes obvious; tail tapering, not blunt-ended; a single row of enlarged scales runs down the middle of the belly **2 (Pythonidae and Elapidae)**
- b. Eyes rudimentary, visible as small dots buried under head scales; tail extremely short, blunt, tipped with a small spine; no enlarged belly scales **Anilius (Typhlopidae), (Blind-snakes) (p. 33)**



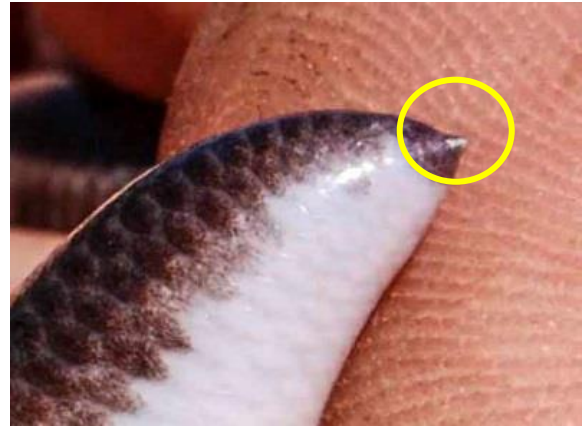
Ramphotyphlops bicolor

1a. Typical blind-snake



Ramphotyphlops bicolor

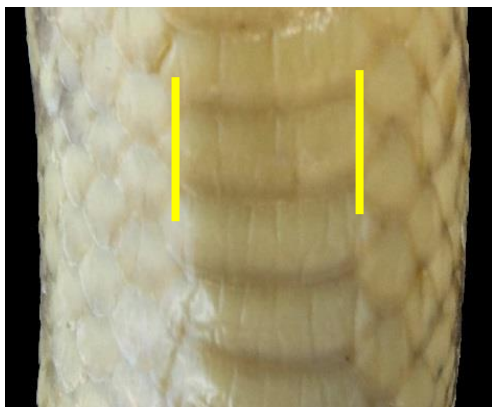
1a. Tiny head and rudimentary eye



Ramphotyphlops bicolor

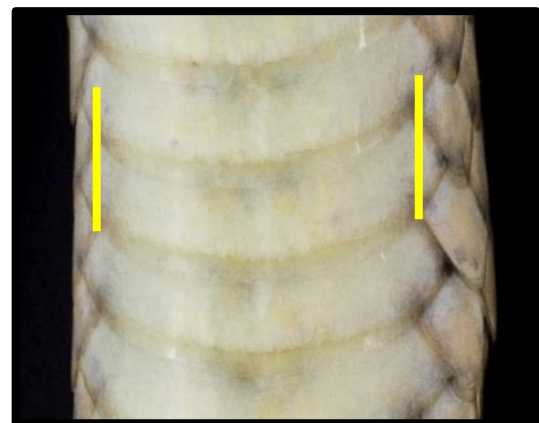
1a. Blunt tail with spiny tip

- 2. a. Belly scales not covering the full width of the belly; more than 30 mid-body scale rows **3 Pythonidae** (Pythons)
- b. Belly scales cover the full width of the belly and wrap slightly onto the lower sides of the body; 23 or fewer mid-body scale rows . . . **6 Elapidae** (Front-fanged venomous snakes)



Antaresia stimsoni

2a. Narrow belly scales

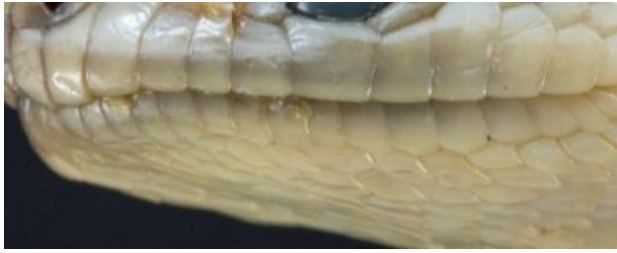


Demansia psammophis

2b. Broad belly scales

Family Pythonidae (Pythons)

- 3. a. Lower lip and snout scales smooth, without pockets; pale yellow-brown to dull olive with brown blurry crossbands, sometimes very faint in large adults **Aspidites ramsayi** Woma
- b. Lower lip scales, and sometimes the snout scales, with central pockets; strongly patterned with irregular blotches or bands . . . **4**



Aspides ramsayi

3a. All lip scales smooth



3a. Weakly-banded form of a Woma (*Aspides ramsayi*)

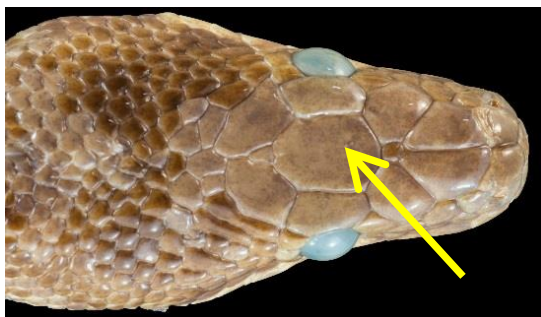


Morelia spilota

3b. Some lip scales have 'pockets'

- 4. a. Scales on the top of head (between and behind the eyes) forming large symmetrical plates; rostral and anterior upper lip scales not deeply pitted
- b. Scales on top of head (between and behind the eyes) small and irregular; deep pits in the rostral and anterior upper labial scales. 10

Antaresia childreni
Children's Python



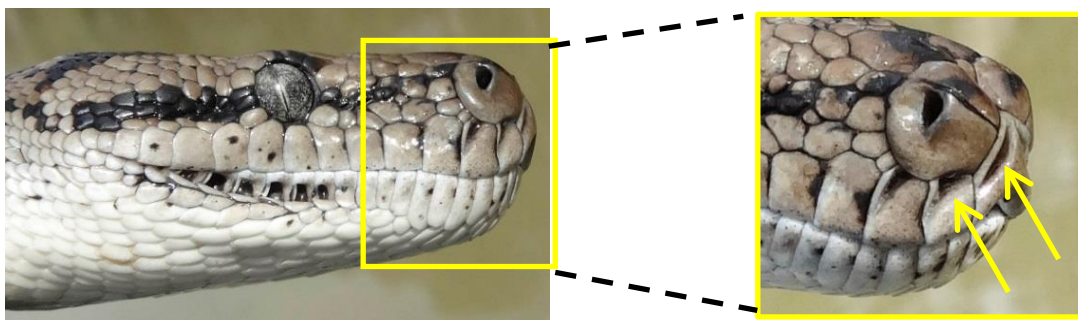
Antaresia stimsoni

4a. Large symmetrical plates



Morelia spilota

4b. Irregular small scales



Morelia spilota

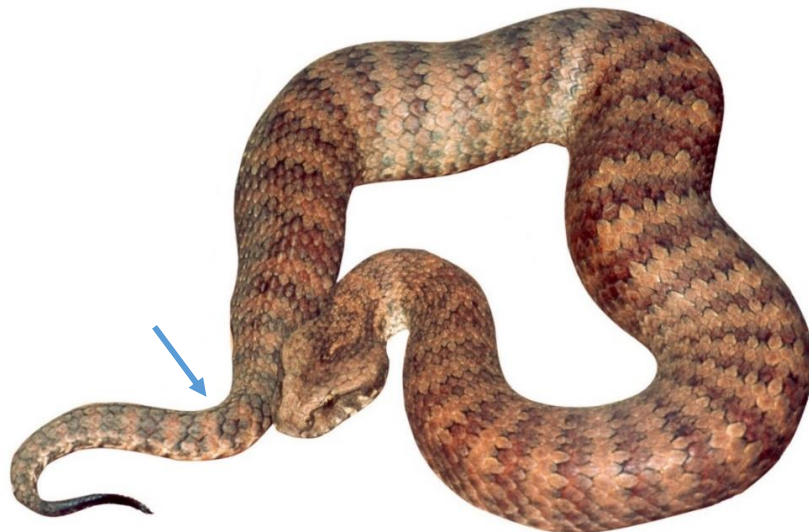
4b. Deep pits in scales on the front of the snout

- 5. a. East of Spencer Gulf ***Morelia spilota***
Carpet Python
- b. West of Spencer Gulf ***Morelia imbricata***
South-western
Carpet Python

Family Elapidae (Front-fanged venomous snakes)

ALL members of this family have fangs and venom, and most will bite if handled. Avoid handling any members of this family unless you are experienced or have received training.

- 6. a. Body relatively short and stout and strongly patterned with cross-bands; tail much narrower than the body and tipped with a single spiny scale; head very broad posteriorly and distinct from neck . [*Acanthophis*](#)
(Death Adders)
(pg. 17)
- b. Various body and head shapes, from moderately stout to very slender; tail tapering gradually to the tip, not ending with an enlarged spiny scale 7

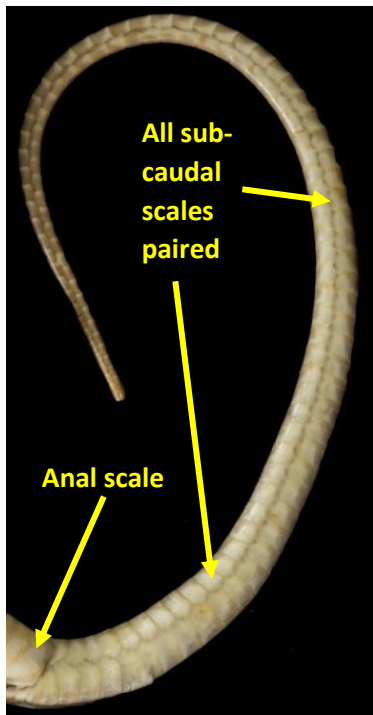


Acanthophis antarcticus



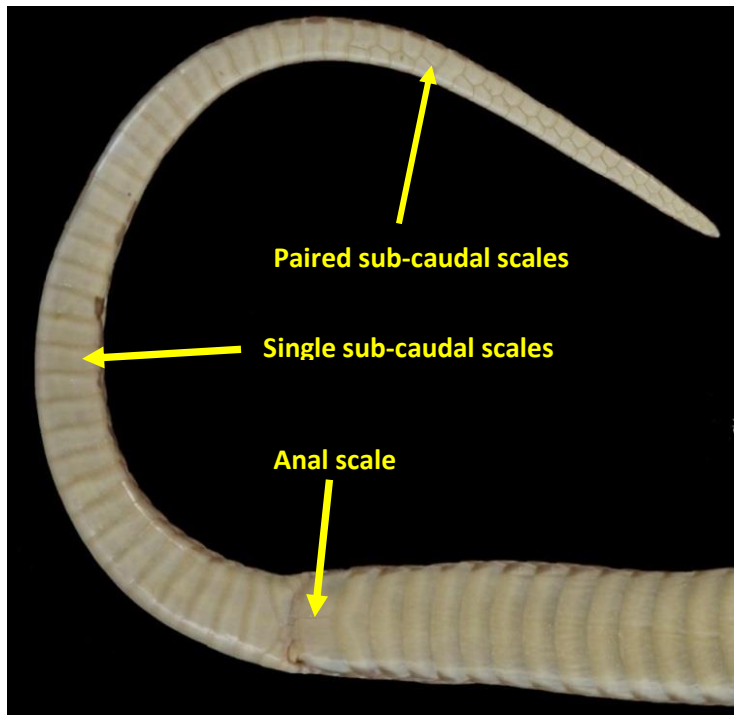
- 6a. Broad head, many narrow cross-bands, tail narrows abruptly and terminates in a sharp spine

- 7. a. All sub-caudal scales paired 8
- b. At least some sub-caudal scales single 15



Pseudonaja textilis

7a. All subcaudals paired



Pseudechis australis

7b. Most subcaudals single

- 8. a. Anal scale single; mid-body scales in 21 or more rows [Oxyuranus*](#)
 Taipans
 (pg. 21)

***Taipans and Brown snakes (*Pseudonaja*) can be very similar in colour and habits. Identification of live specimens can require close examination of scale features which should not be attempted unless an experienced snake handler is involved. Bites should be treated as medical emergencies.**

- b. Anal scale paired; mid-body scales in 21 or fewer rows 9



Oxyuranus microlepidotus

8a. Anal scale single



Pseudechis australis

8b. Anal scale paired

- 9. a. Body coloured completely in a pattern of black and cream to white rings that encircle the body ***Vermicella annulata***
Common Bandy Bandy
- b. Colour pattern not as above **10**



Vermicella annulata

9a. Black-and-white ringed pattern of a Bandy Bandy

- 10. a. Body coloured in a pattern of black and bright yellow to orange-yellow rings that encircle the body (including the belly scales) . . . ([pg. 30](#)) ***Simoselaps***
- b. Colour pattern not as above; if dark rings present they do not cross the belly **11**



Simoselaps bertholdi

10a. Black rings completely encircle the body

- 11. a. Eyes with the iris distinct from the pupil. 12
- b. Eyes 'beady', appear solidly black, iris not distinguishable from pupil 13



Pseudonaja guttata

11a. Golden ring on the iris makes pupil distinct



Brachyuropsis semifasciatus

11b. Iris dark, similar to pupil

- 12. a. Eyes with a black, pale-edged comma-shaped marking surrounding the eye, and a pale-edged dark line that runs over the rostral from nostril to nostril [Demansia](#) (pg. 19)
- b. No yellow markings or comma-shaped patch over the eye; small individuals with a black patch on top of the head and/or a black collar [Pseudonaja](#) (pg. 23)



Demansia psammophis

12a. Comma-shaped eye markings and a line crossing the snout

- 13. a. Tail short, 30 or fewer pairs of sub-caudals; body patterned in transverse rows of black, reddish-brown and/or cream scale, but belly remains unmarked whitish [Brachyuropsis](#) (pg. 18)
- b. Tail longer, with 35 or more pairs of sub-caudals; body with a uniform pattern of dark-edged scales giving a 'fishnet' appearance and typically a red patch behind the head followed by a black patch or collar (red collar lost in larger specimens of *Furina ornata*) 14



Brachyurophis semifasciatus

- 13a.** Black rings do not cross the belly scales
- 14. a.** Top of head uniformly black; upper lip scales white [Furina](#) (pg. 20)
- b.** Top of head with black patch that stops at the level of the eyes; upper lip scales coloured like adjacent scales [Narophis bimaculatus](#)
Black-naped Burrowing Snake

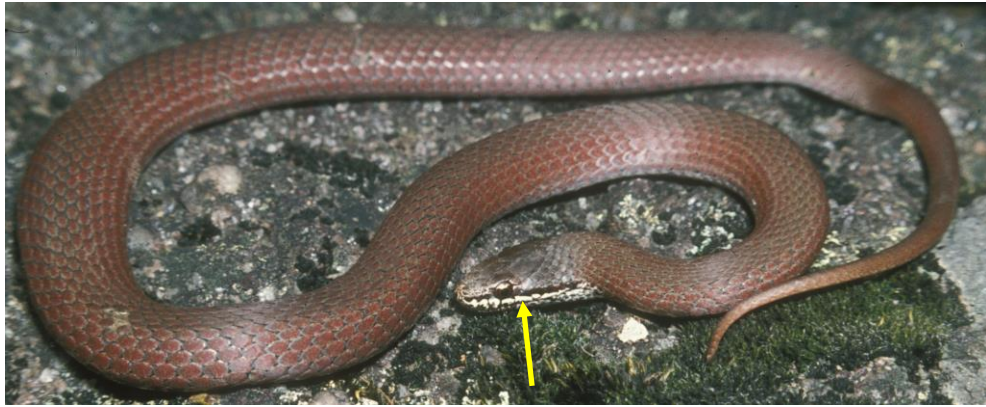


Furina ornata (A. Fenner)



Narophis bimaculatus

- 19a.** Black cap continues to snout
- 19b.** Black cap stops at the eyes
- 15. a.** Anal scales paired (see fig. **8b**); some, sometimes most, of the sub-caudals paired (see fig. **7a** and **7b**) [Pseudechis](#) (pg. 22)
- b.** Anal scale single (see fig. **8a**); all sub-caudals single (see fig. **7b**). **16**
- 16. a.** A narrow white stripe edged above by black runs from the nostril across the upper lip and below the eye to the neck; dorsal scales matt olive, grey or brown [Drysdalia](#) (pg. 20)
- b.** If pale lip stripe present, scales glossy; if white markings on upper lip scales, they take the form of pale scale edges or vertical bars (see figs **19a** and **b**) **17**



Drysdalia coronoides

16a. White lip stripe edged above by black

- 17. a. Top of head black or brown, contrasting with lighter brown to orange body colour that never has cross-bands; glossy scales . . . [Suta](#) (pg. 32)
- b. Head not as above; cross-bands present in some species; scale surface glossy or matt **18**



Suta suta

17a. Head with brown cap



Suta spectabilis

17a. Head with black cap

- 18. a. Scales of upper lip same colour and pattern as the rest of the dorsal head colour; usually some indications of a cross-banded pattern on the body, but some specimens are completely un-banded **Notechis scutatus**
Tiger Snake

***The tiger snake is one of Australia's most dangerously venomous species. Bites should be treated as medical emergencies.**

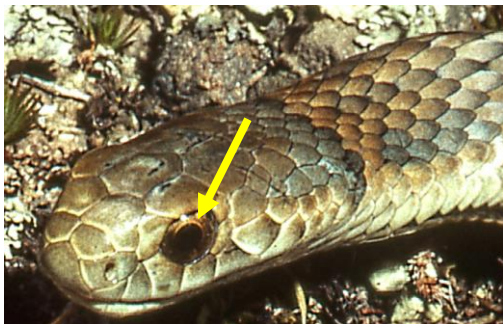
- b. Scales of upper lip with white edges (see below - fig. 19a and b) or vertical bars or mostly whitish, in contrast to darker brownish dorsal head colouring **18**



Notechis scutatus

18a. Upper lips without light patterning

- 19. a. Pupil round in bright light; head no wider than neck; dark grey to dark brown or almost black above, uniform, or with dull orange wash on the lateral scales. [Austrelaps](#) (pg. 17)
- b. Pupil vertically elliptical in bright light; head broader than neck, or with strong cross-banded pattern **20**



Austrelaps superbus

19a. Round pupil; head no wider than neck



Echiopsis curta

19b. Elliptical pupil; head broader than neck

- 20. a. Uniformly light matt grey-brown to medium brown above ***Echiopsis curta***
Bardick
- b. Patterned with alternating beige and dark brown cross-bands, scales rather glossy. ***Denisonia devisi***
DeVis' Banded Snake



Echiopsis curta

20a. Body unmarked



Denisonia devisi

20b. Body with numerous dark, irregular crossbands

Key to the South Australian species of *Acanthophis*

Bites should be treated as medical emergencies. Identification of live specimens can require close examination of scale features which should not be attempted unless an experienced snake handler is involved.

1. a. Head scales rough and keeled. ***A. pyrrhus***
Desert Death Adder
- b. Head scales smooth ***A. antarcticus***
Common Death Adder



A. pyrrhus

1a. Scales with central keel



A. antarcticus

1b. Scales without central keel

Key to the South Australian species of *Austrelaps*

Bites should be treated as medical emergencies. Identification of live specimens can require close examination of scale features which should not be attempted unless an experienced snake handler is involved.

1. a. Upper lips with strongly contrasting pattern, each scale dark brown, most with a sloping white bar along the leading edge of each scale; maximum length 75 cm, usually smaller; Mt Lofty Ranges, Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island ***A. labialis***
Pygmy Copperhead
- b. Upper lips with weakly contrasting pattern, each scale whitish to pale brown with narrow white leading edge; maximum length 1.4 m; lower South-East of SA ***A. superbis***
Lowlands Copperhead



A. labialis

1a. Sharp-edged lip pattern



A. superbis

1b. Blurry lip pattern

Key to the South Australian species of *Brachyurophis*

- 1. a. Snout relatively unmodified, head rather flat ***B. fasciolatus***
Narrow-banded Shovel-nosed Snake
- b. Front of snout with a curved-up sharp edge ending in a point, head rounded **2**



B. fasciolatus



B. australis

1a. Head flat, no 'shovel' at snout

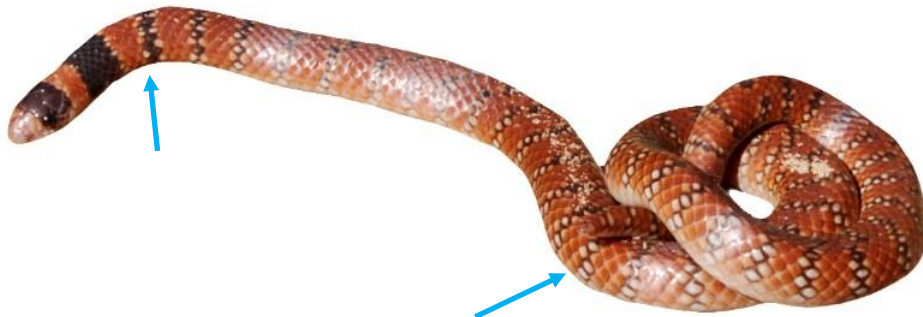
1b. Head domed; snout with sharp-edged 'shovel'

- 2. a. Dorsal surface of body with alternating even bands of reddish and blackish grey ***B. semifasciatus***
Southern Shovel-nosed Snake
- b. Body dull to bright orange to red with narrow black bands, each including a regular scattering of white scales ***B. australis***
Australian Coral Snake



B. semifasciatus

2a. Pattern lacks white scales

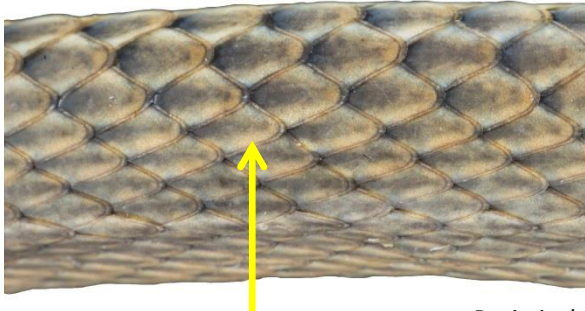


B. australis

2b. White scales mixed with black scales

Key to the South Australian species of *Demansia*

1. a. A pattern of pale light narrow lines running along the dorsal scale edges; belly 'sunset coloured', orange or pink and yellow. ***D. rimicola***
Blacksoil Whipsnake
- b. No trace of light longitudinal lined pattern on dorsal scales (scales may have dark, not light, edges); belly whitish to pale grey, sometimes with a darker midline zone. 2



D. rimicola

1a. Light streaks run along the edges of the scales



D. psammophis

1b. No light lines along the body

2. a. Head and tail similar colour to body; faint to prominent pinkish wash along either side of the back on the neck and forebody . . ***D. psammophis***
Yellow-faced Whipsnake
- b. Head and tail sandy brown to yellow-orange, contrasting with the main dorsal colour of bluish-grey ***D. cyanochasma***
Desert Whipsnake



D. psammophis

2a. Uniform body colour



D. cyanochasma

2b. Head and tail orange, body blue-grey

Key to the South Australian species of *Drysdalia*

- 1. a. Yellow or orange collar ***D. mastersi***
Masters' Snake
- b. No pale collar ***D. coronoides***
White-lipped Snake



1a. Pale collar
D. mastersi



1b. No pale collar
D. coronoides

Key to the South Australian species of *Furina*

- 1. a. Red patch separates the black head from the black collar ***F. ornata***
Orange-naped Snake
- b. Red patch surrounded by black, the black collar connected on either side to the black head colouring ***F. diadema***
Red-naped Snake



1a. Red collar interrupts black
F. ornata (A. Fenner)



1b. Red collar surrounded by black
F. diadema (A. Fenner)



1a. *Furina ornata* - large individuals become dark and drab (A. Fenner)

Key to the South Australian species of *Oxyuranus*

Bites should be treated as medical emergencies. Identification of live specimens can require close examination of scale features which should not be attempted unless an experienced snake handler is involved.

1. a. Snout and head somewhat darker than the rest of the body (whole head may be blackish); Lake Eyre Basin and Channel Country ***O. microlepidotus***
Inland Taipan
- b. Snout and head paler than the rest of the body; Great Victoria Desert and Northwest Ranges ***O. temporalis***
Western Desert Taipan



O. microlepidotus

1a. Snout and head darker than body



O. temporalis (Karl Brennan)

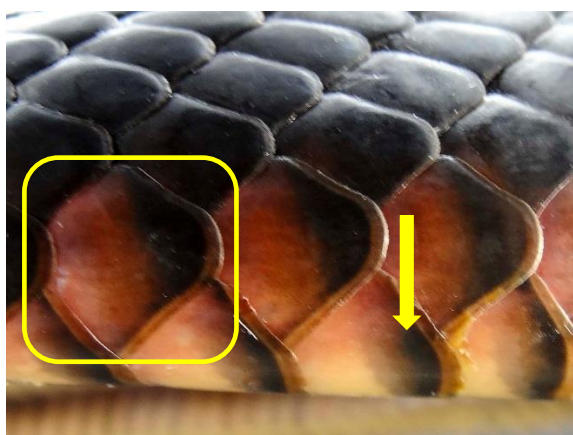
1b. Snout and head paler than body

**O. temporalis* has not yet been recorded in South Australia, but it occurs close to the eastern border of Western Australia and its habitat appears to continue into adjacent South Australia.

Key to the South Australian species of *Pseudechis*

Bites should be treated as medical emergencies. Identification of live specimens can require close examination of scale features which should not be attempted unless an experienced snake handler is involved.

1. a. Dorsal scales uniformly jet black; each of the scales in the lateral-most scale row half black and half red; belly pale greyish to pink, with the trailing edge of each ventral scale black ***P. porphyriacus***
Red-bellied Black Snake
- b. Dorsal scales all light at the base and darker along the trailing edge producing a 'fish-net stocking' effect; colour of dorsal scales with pale beige to yellow bases and dark brownish grey tips (central and northern SA): grading to almost yellow and black (Eyre Peninsula) or light and dark reddish brown (adjacent to eastern border); belly uniformly cream or dull yellow, sometimes salmon pink in eastern populations ***P. australis***
Mulga Snake



P. porphyriacus

- 1a.** Last scale row on each side crimson at the base with a black trailing edge; belly scales with a black trailing edge



P. australis

- 1b.** All body scales light at the base and dark along the trailing edge

Key to the South Australian species of *Pseudonaja*

Bites should be treated as medical emergencies. Identification of live specimens can require close examination of scale features which should not be attempted unless an experienced snake handler is involved.

1.
 - a. 21 (sometimes 19) mid-body scale rows; far northeast corner of South Australia; adults extremely variable in colour and pattern, sometimes with fine dark speckles on all dorsal scales, sometimes with broad, indistinct cross-bands. ***P. guttata***
Speckled Brown Snake
 - b. 17 (a few far SW corner *P. affinis* have 19) mid-body scale rows. **2**
2.
 - a. Maximum length 60 cm, frequently smaller; colour pattern (sometimes only weakly present in larger animals) a black head patch and collar, with about five black bands each about as wide as the collar widely spaced along the light brown to pinkish brown body and tail; face markings include a dark snout and pale patch in front of the eye ***P. modesta***
Ringed Brown Snake
 - b. Maximum length greater than one metre; young animals with black head patch and collar but sides of snout pale and no contrasting pale patch in front of eye; body pattern highly variable but never with just five narrow black bands **3**



P. modesta

2a. Strongly marked



P. modesta

2a. Weakly marked



P. modesta

2a. Lateral head pattern, strongly marked



P. modesta

2a. Lateral head pattern, weakly marked



2b. *P. textilis*, juvenile lateral head pattern



2b. *P. mengdeni*, juvenile lateral head pattern

- 3.
 - a. Length 50 cm or less, with obvious black head markings (juveniles) 4
 - b. Length greater than 50 cm. (sub-adults to adults) 8
- 4.
 - a. Black head markings a continuous black cap from above the eyes to the nape, with no collar and tending to blur into the adjacent body colour). **juv. *P. affinis***
Dugite
 - b. Black markings consist of a black cap over the eyes and a black collar separated by pale brown to pinkish or orange (see figs 5a and 5b below) 5



P. affinis, juv.

4a. Black cap continuous

- 5.
 - a. Black cap over the eyes well-defined and sharp-edged; body occasionally with numerous narrow black crossbands 6
 - b. Black cap over the eyes often less intense than neck patch, tending to merge with lighter colour around it 7



P. textilis, juv.

5a. Cap uniformly black, sharp-edged

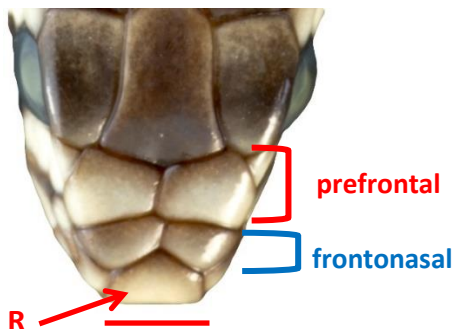


P. aspidorhyncha, juv

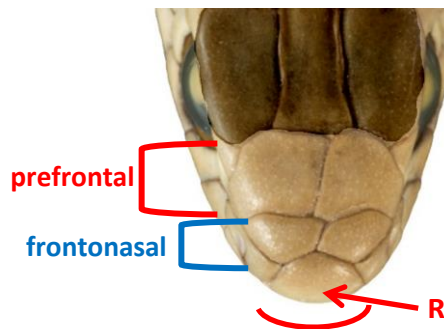
5b. Cap brownish and black, margins blurred

- 6.
 - a. Eastern SA, as far west as northern Yorke Peninsula and the northern Spencer Gulf coast **juv. *P. textilis***
Eastern Brown Snake
 - b. Southern Yorke Peninsula west to the southern Eyre Peninsula and the Nullarbor Plain **juv. *P. inframacula***
Peninsula Brown Snake

- 7. a. Margins of rostral scale (R) somewhat raised compared to adjacent scales, and front of snout almost straight-edged when viewed from above; prefrontal scales less than twice as long as frontonasal scales. **juv. *P. aspidorhyncha***
Strap-snouted Brown Snake
- b. Margins of rostral scale flush with adjacent scale margins, front of snout rounded when seen from above; prefrontal twice as long as frontonasal scales **juv. *P. mengdeni***
Western Brown Snake



7a. *P. aspidorhyncha*, juv.

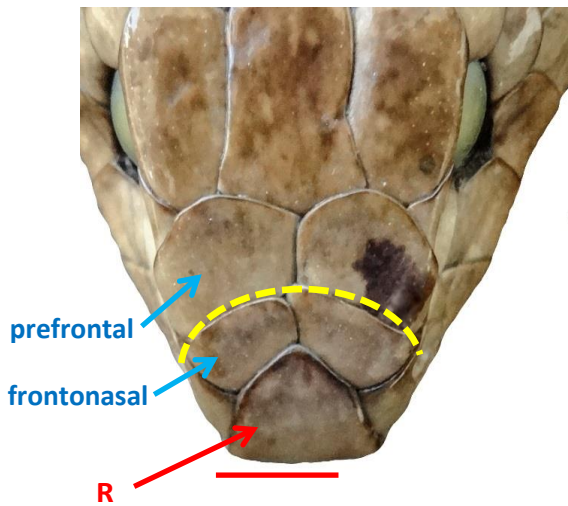


7b. *P. mengdeni*, juv.

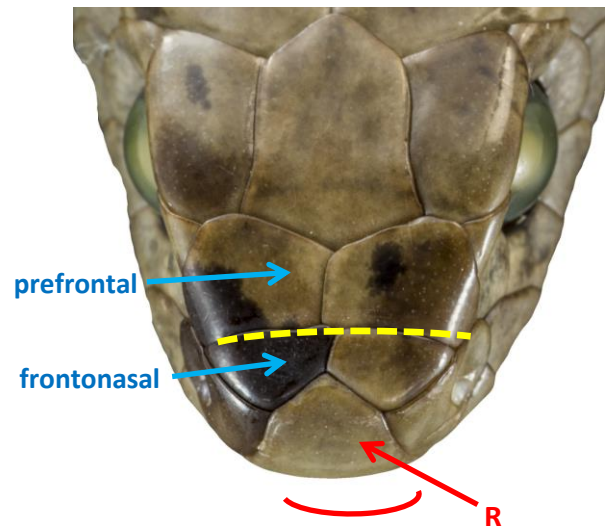
- 8. a. Body, head and nape, often irregularly speckled or banded; margins of rostral scale (R) distinctively raised compared to adjacent scales, and front of snout almost straight-edged when viewed from above; contact between prefrontal scales frontonasal scales curved or angled backwards. ***P. aspidorhyncha***
Strap-snouted Brown Snake
- b. Margins of rostral scale flush with adjacent scale margins, front of snout rounded when seen from above; contact between prefrontal scales frontonasal scales almost a straight line. **9**



8a. Some examples of colour and pattern variation in adult *Pseudonaja aspidorhyncha*



8a. *P. aspidorhyncha*



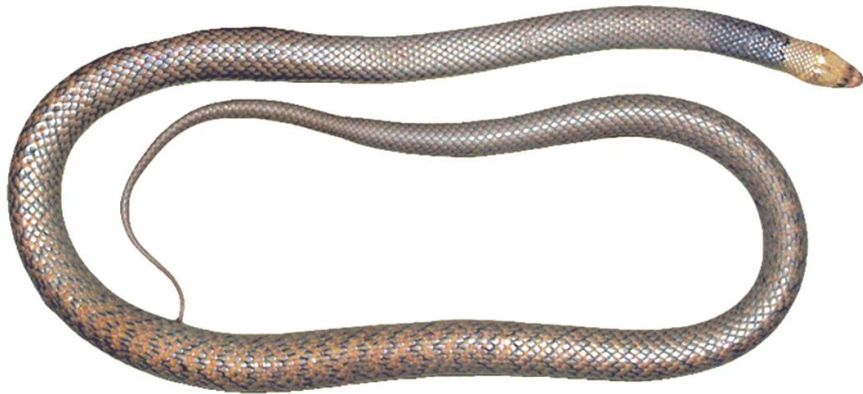
8b. *P. affinis*

- 9. a. Lining of mouth pale pink; body usually uniformly coloured with no irregular or contrasting dark body or head markings. ***P. textilis***
Eastern Brown Snake
- b. Lining of mouth dark greyish pink to black; head and body may have either irregular spots or contrasting dark markings on the head, neck or body **10**
- 10. a. One of three alternatives (A) body yellow to bright tan heavily flecked with black; head and neck uniform glossy black above; (B) body pale sand to grey-brown with darker scale edges; head and neck pale creamy brown to bone coloured usually with a darker greyish zone or group of scales on the nape; (C) body and head golden brown; chin and throat blackish; lining of mouth black; belly cream with bright orange freckles; ***P. mengdeni***
Western Brown Snake
- b. Not like any of the three alternatives listed above; body pattern very individually variable, from almost uniform medium brown to almost black above, or any shade of brown with a few to many irregular splotches and spots of darker and/or lighter scales; some specimens with light or dark cross-bands, occasionally very strongly banded; lining of mouth dark greyish pink; belly either a duller version of the dorsal colour or light to very dark grey **11**



Pseudonaja mengdeni

11a. A. Black-headed morph



Pseudonaja mengdeni

11a. B. Pale-headed morph



Pseudonaja mengdeni

11a. C. Black-throated gold morph



Pseudonaja affinis

11b. Typical “messy” colour pattern of the Dugite and Peninsula Brown Snake

- 12. a.** Underside of neck black, contrasting with remainder of the belly which is a paler version of the dorsal colour with obscure darker speckling ***P. affinis***
Dugite
- b.** Entire underside of adults plain dark grey, their lateral margins off-white to pale brown; on southern Yorke Peninsula ventrals may be spotted in grey rather than solidly grey; back generally similar to the unevenly spotted back of the Dugite (Fig **11b**); an uncommon colour variety has very strong black cross-bands ***P. inframacula***
Peninsula Brown Snake



Pseudonaja affinis

11a. Throat blackish; belly mostly dull straw coloured, spotted with brown



Pseudonaja inframacula

11b. Whole belly dark grey



Pseudonaja infracula

11b. Uncommon, strongly cross-banded pattern seen in some Peninsula Brown Snakes

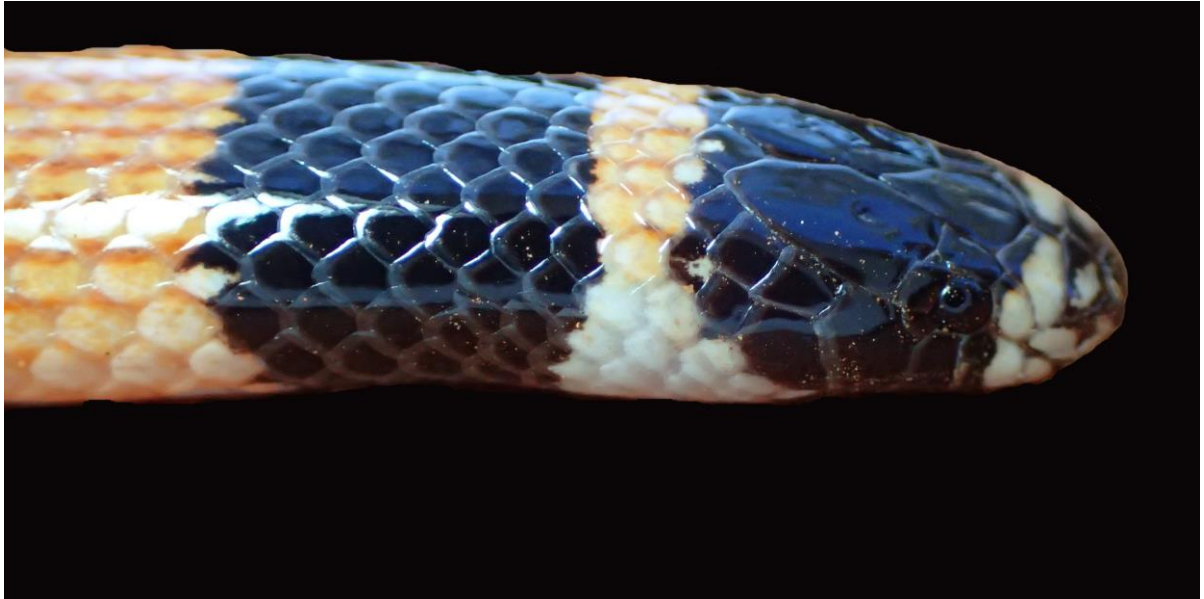


Pseudonaja infracula

11a and b. Almost black colouring seen in some Dugites and Peninsula Browns

Key to the South Australian species of *Simoselaps*

- 1. a. Head mostly black; eye black ***S. anomalus***
Northern Desert
Banded Snake
- b. Head whitish with pale brown flecks and blotches; eye pale ***S. bertholdi***
Southern Desert
Banded Snake



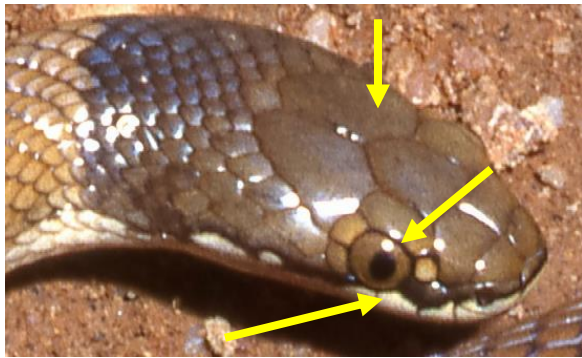
1a. *S. anomalus*



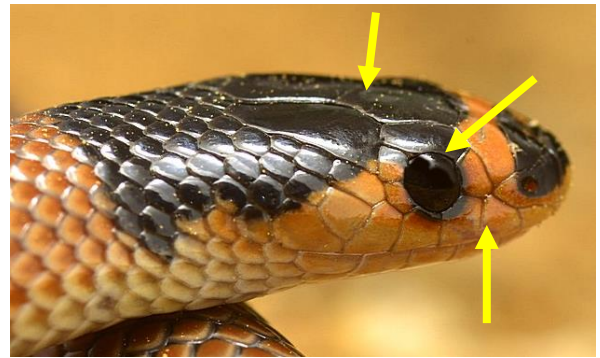
1b. *S. bertholdi*

Key to the South Australian species of *Suta*

- 1. a. Eye brown with vertical oval pupil; head usually brown rather than black (blackish in young animals, < 20 cm long); wavy white upper lip stripe. ***S. suta***
Curl Snake
- b. Eye black, pupil not distinguishable from iris; head patch black; no upper lip stripe **2**



S. suta



S. spectabilis

1a. Pupil distinct, head patch brown in adults, wavy white upper lip stripe

1b. Pupil not distinct, head patch black, upper lip lacks white stripe

- 2. a. Top of head uniformly black from snout to eyes; upper lips whitish. **3**
- b. Black head colouring with a pale spot or complete cross-bar dividing the black between the eyes and the nostrils; upper lips pale brown to beige **4**



S. monachus (A. Fenner)



S. spectabilis

2a. Black scales in front of the eye not interrupted by a pale blotch or band on snout

2b. Black scales in front the eye interrupted by a pale blotch or band on snout

- 3. a. Mid-dorsal zone a broad blackish vertebral stripe, sometimes reduced to a short streak behind the head ***S. nigriceps***
Mitchell's Short-tailed Snake
- b. Mid-dorsal zone same orange to brownish colour as rest of the dorsal surface, no suggestion of a black vertebral stripe ***S. monachus***
Monk Snake



S. nigriceps

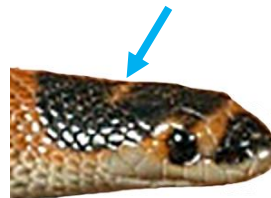
3a. Broad, black vertebral stripe

- 4. a. 17 mid-body scale rows; black hood always interrupted in front of the eyes, but uninterrupted from the eyes to the nape ***S. flagellum***
Little Whip Snake
- b. 15 midbody scale rows; black hood may be continuous to snout and may be broken on the neck by a pale streak or collar. **5**



S. flagellum

4a. Pale bar across snout and black hood is unbroken on nape



S. spectabilis

4b. Black hood with pale break on nape



S. gouldii

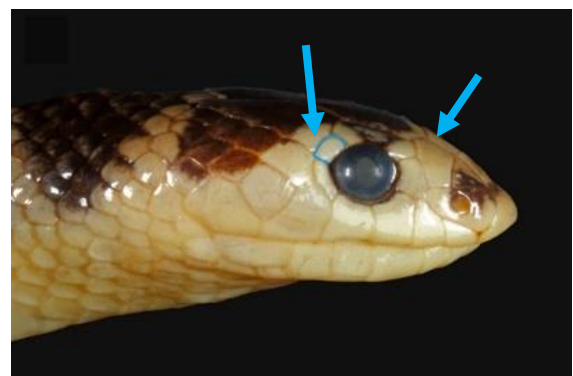
4b. Black continues to snout

- 5. a. Black colouring usually continuous down the middle of the head to the snout; parietal scale and upper postocular completely black ***S. gouldii***
Gould's Hooded Snake
- b. Black colouring discontinuous, divided completely by a pale bar across the snout; sometimes an additional partial or complete pale bar across the back of the head; upper postocular scale and front corner of the parietal usually pale brown ***S. spectabilis***
Mallee Black-headed Snake



S. gouldii

5a. Pale bar across the snout interrupted by black; upper postocular scale (blue outline) black



S. spectabilis

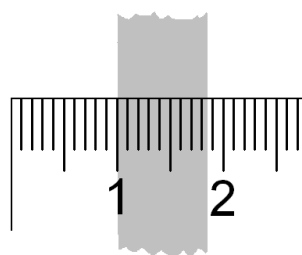
5b. Pale bar across the snout uninterrupted; upper postocular scale (blue outline) brown to cream

Family Typhlopidae (Blind-snakes)

Species of blind snakes are difficult to identify because precise identification depends on scalation features that often require microscopic examination. Field identification can make use of body proportions, as some blind snakes are very elongate and slender, others much more robust. If this is combined with the shape of the snout, the six South Australian species can in most cases be identified. **In addition to the information in the keys, drawings of the snout shapes of all species are on the last page.**

All endemic Australian blind-snakes have recently been returned to the genus *Ramphotyphlops*, after having been placed in *Anilius* for a period of time.

Body diameter is taken at approximately mid-body; the fore-body is often more slender than the rest and the posterior part may be full of eggs or fat stores. The measurement is best made using a clear plastic ruler. Round down.



In this case the diameter would be scored as 8 mm.



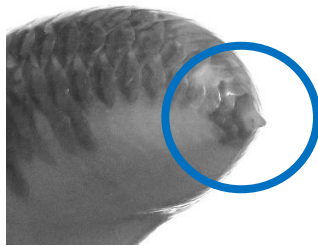
Measure body diameter and count mid-body scale rows about here

Ramphotyphlops bicolor

1. a Terminal spine on tail sits in a small patch of the dark dorsal colouring; snout smooth, no fingernail-like transverse ridge on the rostral scale; body robust, total length 28-35 times the body diameter
- b Terminal spine on tail surrounded by scales the colour of the belly; snout with a transverse, fingernail-like cutting edge across the front of the rostral; body slender, total length 45-80 times the body diameter

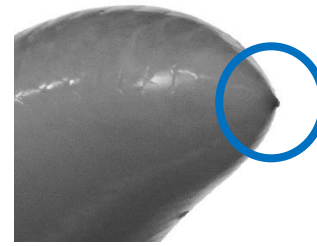
R. bicolor
Dark-spined Blind Snake

2



R. bicolor

1a. Tail spine surrounded by the dark dorsal colouring



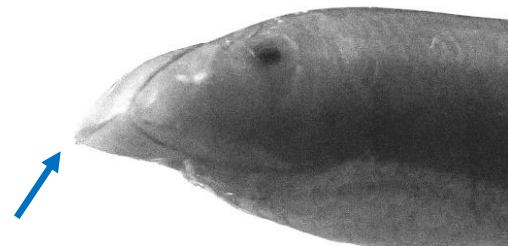
R. bituberculatus

1b. Tail spine surrounded by the pale ventral colouring



R. bicolor

1a. Snout rounded, no cutting edge



R. bituberculatus

1b. Snout with moderate to pronounced cutting edge

2. a Viewed from above the outline of the nostril area is angular and projecting, forming 'shoulders' on either side of the rostral scale. 3
- b Viewed from above the outline of the nostril area is slightly bulbous or smooth, following the curve of the snout 4



R. bituberculatus

2a. Nasal outline projecting, angular



R. endoterus

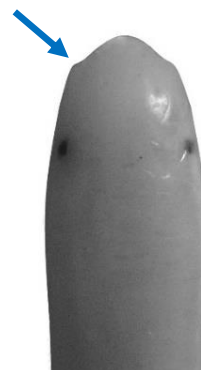
2b. Nasal outline smooth

- 3. a Nasal projections strong, sharply angular; body moderately slender, total length 45-70 times the body diameter; 20 midbody scale rows (MBSR) ***R. bituberculatus***
Prong-snouted Blind Snake
- b Nasal projections weak, obtusely angular; body extremely slender, total length approx. 80 times the body diameter; 18 MBSR ***R. margaretae***
GVD Blind Snake



R. bituberculatus

3a. Nasal area strongly angular



R. margaretae

3b. Nasal area weakly angular

- 4. a Snout with a small cutting edge on the rostral scale projecting forwards; body moderately slender, total length 45-65 times the body diameter; widespread over central and northern SA sandy deserts ***R. endoterus***
Desert Blind Snake
- b Snout with strong cutting edge on the rostral scale projecting downwards, forming hook-shape when seen in profile; confined to far north of SA **5**



R. endoterus

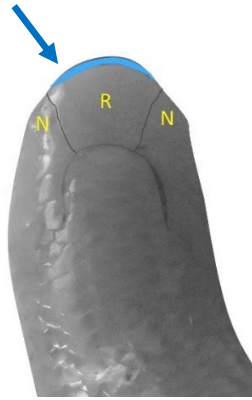
4a. Cutting edge weak, projects forward



R. centralis

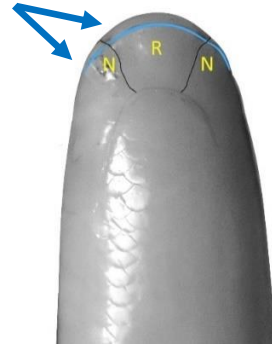
4b. Cutting edge pronounced, projects downwards

- 5. a North-eastern corner of SA; cutting edge on the rostral scale only, not extending on to the nasal scales; body very slender, total length 65-80 times the body diameter ***R. grypus***
Hook-nosed Blind Snake
- b North-western SA; cutting edge continuous from the rostral scale to the nasal scales; body slender, total length 50-65 times body diameter ***R. centralis***
Centralian Blind Snake



R. grypus

5a. Cutting edge (blue) on rostral scale (R) only



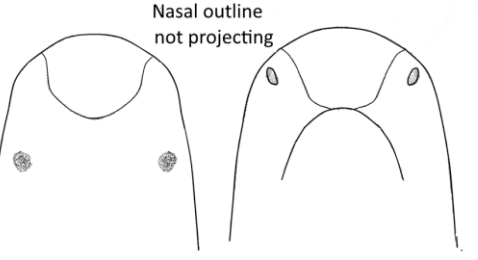
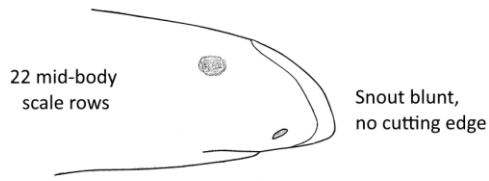
R. centralis

5b. Cutting edge (blue) on rostral (R) and on adjacent nasal (N) scales

**SEE ALSO NEXT PAGE
WITH
SUMMARY DIAGRAMS
FOR
ALL SIX SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BLIND SNAKES**

Snout shape diagrams summarising the features of the six South Australian blind snakes

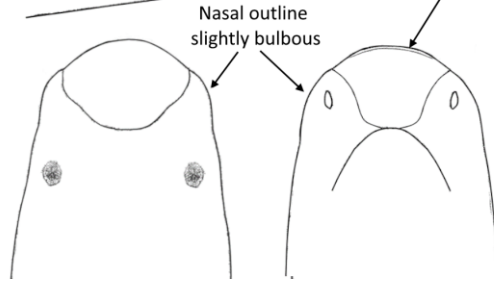
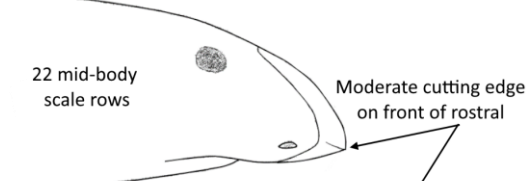
Body proportions $\left(\frac{\text{Length}}{\text{Diameter}}\right) = 28 \text{ to } 35$



Prominent dark tail spine surrounded by pale colouring

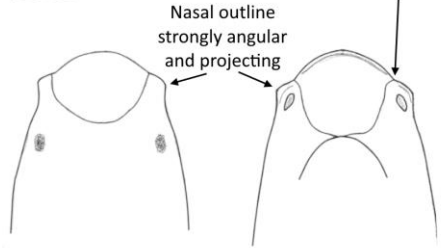
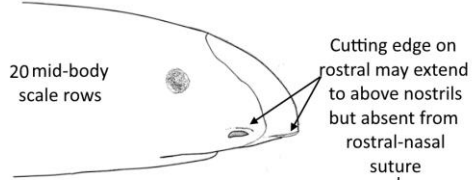
Ramphotyphlops bicolor

Body proportions $\left(\frac{\text{Length}}{\text{Diameter}}\right) = 45 \text{ to } 60$



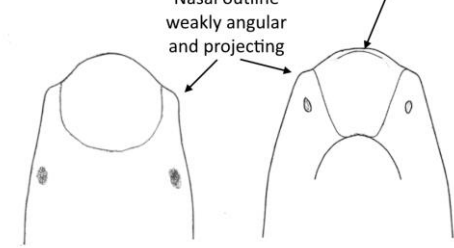
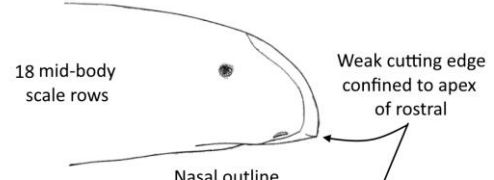
Ramphotyphlops endoterus

Body proportions $\left(\frac{\text{Length}}{\text{Diameter}}\right) = 45 \text{ to } 70$



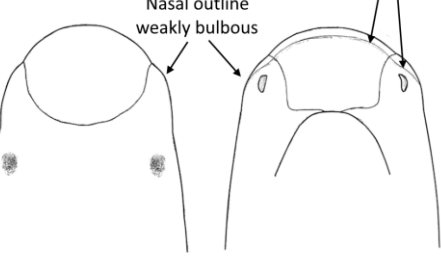
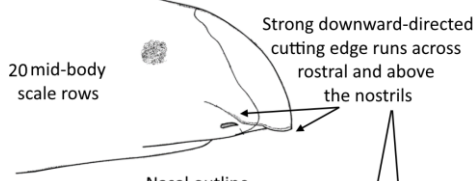
Ramphotyphlops bituberculatus

Body proportions $\left(\frac{\text{Length}}{\text{Diameter}}\right) \text{ more than } 80$



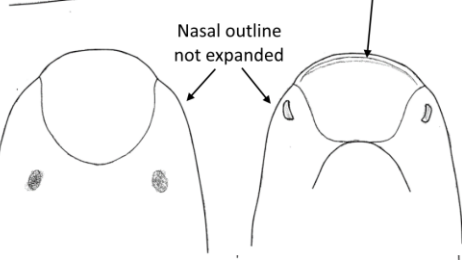
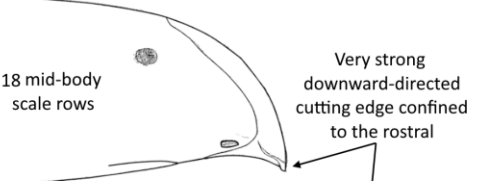
Ramphotyphlops margaretae

Body proportions $\left(\frac{\text{Length}}{\text{Diameter}}\right) = 55 \text{ to } 65$



Ramphotyphlops centralis

Body proportions $\left(\frac{\text{Length}}{\text{Diameter}}\right) = 65 \text{ to } 80$



Ramphotyphlops grypus