



I've heard people say that the only good snake is a dead snake but in reality that's not true. Snakes are wondrous creatures and play an important role in keeping vermin like rats, mice and geckos under control. Along with other reptiles, they make up a significant proportion of the middle-order predators that keep natural ecosystems working. Without them, the numbers of prey species would increase to unnatural levels and the predators that eat snakes would struggle to find food. Nevertheless, snakes can be extremely dangerous, which is why many people are frightened of them.

Recently while out walking, I saw a plastic shopping bag in the bushland, only about 10m from the footpath I was on. Of course, I went in to retrieve it as I didn't want this plastic pollution ending up in waterways or the ocean. Thinking it was empty, I grabbed the bag from its base and was very surprised when I lifted it up and a snake fell out onto the ground. After a very rapid retreat of a few metres, I realised that the snake was very dead and covered with ants. I thought "Why would a snake go into a plastic bag to die? and quickly realised that, of course, it hadn't.

The snake was a small carpet python, less than a metre long and it had a deep bloody wound about 15cm below its head that was unlikely to have come from being run over. Obviously, it had been attacked by a human with a spade. A python this size is harmless to humans and most pets, except maybe budgies or chicken's eggs.

When left alone, snakes pose little or no danger to people. Snakes usually prefer to retreat when disturbed but if they feel threatened, they can become defensive.

So why did someone kill this harmless carpet python? One can surmise that fear caused this action when the animal perhaps entered the homeowner's property. The lack of rain has meant that snakes, like other animals, are in search of water. Most people cannot identify snakes by sight, and you need to assume that all snakes are venomous—except when it is obviously a python. It is also a fact that most snake bite victims are usually men who were trying to kill the snake with a spade. Snakes are protected under the Nature Conservation Act 1992. It is an offence to kill, injure or take snakes from the wild and attracts a fines of up to \$10,000 and two years imprisonment enforceable.

Whilst snake bites are by far the biggest killer of humans of any animal, most of these deaths are in Asia and Africa, where the medical services are significantly less developed, and the snake venom travels through the blood circulation system. Australian snakes notably have the most toxic venom in the world, however, they do not inject as much with each bite, and it travels through the lymphatic system.

Now that there is anti-venom for all Australian snakes, no one that has applied the compression bandage treatment has died. If you don't have any bandages, do your best with what you've got and above all stay calm.

What to do when you see a snake?

- If you see a snake within 3m of you then freeze! Stand still like a statue. They won't realise you are there and will ignore you. Try to remain calm and let it pass by.
- If you see a snake further away than 3m, move very slowly away from it. Snakes feel threatened by sudden movement and may be provoked into defending themselves. Moving slowly, remove children and pets from the area.
- Keep an eye on the snake from a safe distance as a snake lost inside a house is a nightmare situation because they are experts at hide and seek.
- Stop snakes entering your home by screening doors and windows, and blocking all potential entry points.
- If you find a snake in an area that you don't want it to be in, eg inside your house or garage, or in your yard, do not attempt to remove the snake yourself. Instead, close your internal doors, open your external doors and give the snake a chance to leave.
- Alternately, you can phone a snake-catcher. There are several that service the Greater Springfield area, such as N & S Snake Catchers.

If anyone would like to join our Group, membership is free and meetings are every first Monday of the month at 6.30 pm at BLVD Restaurant, Springfield Lakes Boulevard, Springfield Lakes. You can follow us on [www.facebook.com/SpringfieldLakesNatureCare](http://www.facebook.com/SpringfieldLakesNatureCare) or contact [info@springfieldlakesnaturecare.org.au](mailto:info@springfieldlakesnaturecare.org.au).



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