

How to identify one of the three little black snakes of Zambia?

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There are three common, similar looking, little black snakes found in Zambia. They are the Bibron's Stiletto Snake, the Common Purple-glossed Snake and the Common Wolf Snake. This poster helps to tell them apart.

One of these three snakes, the Bibron's Stiletto Snake, is dangerous. It has a potent cytotoxic (cell-tissue destroying) venom causing intense pain and swelling and can lead to necrosis and loss of a finger or toe. **Do not touch a snake unless you are sure it is harmless!**

Parietal scales:

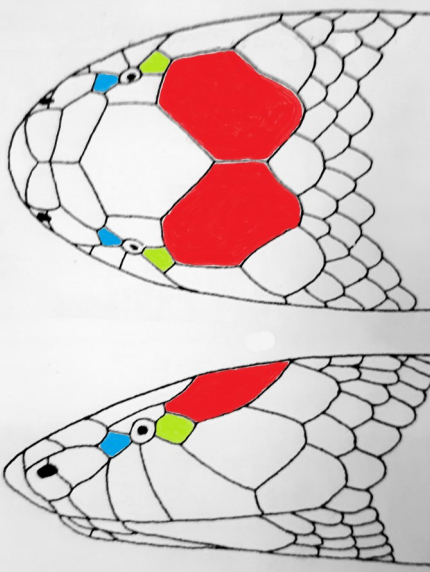
large scales on the head of the snake

Pre-ocular scales:

scales in front of the eye

Post ocular scales:

scales behind the eye



Bibron's Stiletto Snake

(*Atractaspis bibronii*)

Venomous snake.

Parietal scales: slightly rounded

Pre-ocular: 1

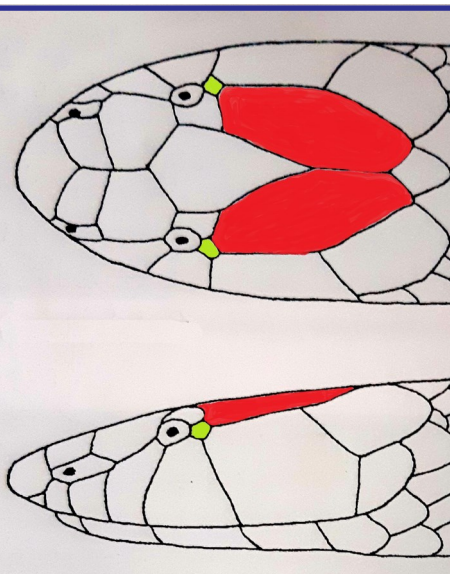
Post ocular: 1

Tail: stubby

No clear neck

Length: average: 30—40 cm, max 80 cm

Arched neck if threatened



Common Purple-glossed Snake

(*Amblyodipus polylepsis*)

Mildly venomous snake.

(harmless to humans)

Parietal scales: *clearly elongated*

Pre-ocular: 0

Post ocular: 1

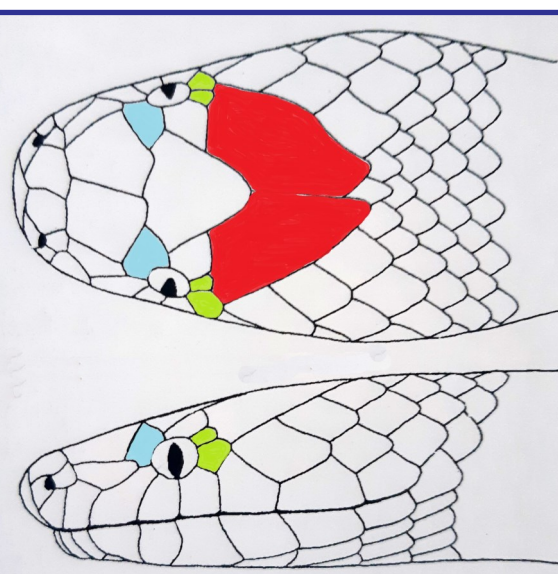
Tail: stubby

No clear neck

Length: average 75 cm, max 110cm



Head with elongated parietals



Common Wolf Snake

(*Lycophidion capense*)

Non-venomous snake.

Parietal scales: slightly elongated

Pre-ocular: 1

Post ocular: 2

Tail: *long and thin* (tapered)

White edges on each body scale

Clear neck and head

Average length: 40 cm



*White scale edges &
thin, tapered tail*