

Dangerous Animals and Insects of Thailand

By Amber McCarthy

Tigers



It is estimated that there are 250-300 of these beautiful animals left in the wild in Thailand. While they are protected by law in every country of the world, they are still in danger from habitat destruction and poachers, but there is constant effort by several groups to conserve them and rebuild their population.

I never thought that I would have to be concerned about wild tigers, but I was wrong! On a recent trip to Khao Sok National Park, we had to take a detour on a guided jungle hike because a tiger had just killed a deer on the trail. It had been scared away by the noise of another approaching group, but it was still in the area. Very crazy! Our guide told us all to run in the same direction if we saw a tiger, but I think that was more so he didn't lose any of us in the jungle. If you are in the jungle and hear a deep, low growl, don't run.

Walk very quickly in the opposite direction. Tigers only attack humans if they feel threatened or provoked.

Cobras



There are 3 types of cobras in Thailand: Monocled, King, and Indo-Chinese spitting. All are incredibly deadly, so if you are bitten, get to the hospital immediately. Cobras are able to spit their venom into the eyes of their attackers or prey from 3 meters away, so if you see one, keep far away and remain calm. They are aggressive and quite common. Cobras are able to climb trees and swim. They are most active at dusk and dawn, but our neighbor almost stepped on one in our yard in the late afternoon so use caution, particularly in wooded areas. King Cobras are known to hide in bamboo thickets.

****Fun Fact****

The infamous King Cobra can grow up to 15 feet long and has been known to kill elephants!

Kraits



Kraits are nocturnal and prefer dark damp places to hide. They are mainly found in hilly areas near water. If you encounter a Krait during the day, they are usually lethargic and will attempt to bury their heads and ignore you. However, if you encounter one at night, they can be very aggressive and deadly. They prefer to eat other snakes, but that doesn't mean they won't bite you. The red-headed krait has been reported as being "too lazy" to bite people. If you are bitten, get to the hospital and you should be fine.

****Fun Fact****

If they are exposed to the sun, they thrash around and hide their head under the body loops or try to flee to a dark place.

Vipers

There are many types of vipers in Thailand. Below are the vipers that are common in Southern Thailand. Use extreme caution if you see a viper (or any snake really). They are extremely venomous. While their bites aren't always fatal, they can often result in paralyses and necrosis (the killing of flesh).

Chain Viper (Russell's Viper)



Considered to be one of the most dangerous snakes in SE Asia, the Chain Viper is very aggressive. It has long fangs that penetrate deep into the flesh to release venom. They are easily irritated and quick to bite. Luckily, they aren't found in Surat, but if you travel north, they are common in lowlands and mountains. They like dry, grassy areas.

Pit Vipers

There are several species of pit viper in our area of Southern Thailand. Pope's Pitviper, Brown-spotted Green Pit Viper, Mangrove Pit Viper, White-lipped Pit Viper, and Malayan Pit Viper.

I have seen a very young White-lipped pit viper hanging in a tree next to our house with a live salamander in its mouth. Only after seeing it did I realize it was a pit viper. It is recognizable by its red tipped tail. While its bite isn't usually fatal, it can lead to necrosis.



The Malayan Pit Viper is extremely aggressive and deadly. It is the only pit viper in our area that is not green. They are nocturnal, but can also be active during the day.

The Mangrove Pit Viper is usually near water, riverbanks commonly. This snake is very easily agitated and can move quickly. While it is quick to bite, it is rarely deadly.

The Brown-spotted Green Pit Viper is common on rubber plantations (which are plentiful in our province). They are mainly nocturnal but do come out in heavy rains. The full effect of their venom is not known, but it has been reported that they are not as poisonous as other green vipers.

The Pope's Pit Viper is mainly found in the rain-forested areas of Surat province. Like it's relatives, it is aggressive and quick to bite. It can cover short distances quickly and likes to be in trees. Their poison is very strong, although it isn't usually deadly.



Pythons

Pythons aren't that dangerous until they're huge. Even then, it's rare that they attack a human. However, I did want to mention them in here because they are in Surat and they are HUGE. We live on the other side of the river out in the jungle. On the way home one evening, we suddenly saw what we thought was a tree that had fallen across our road. It was too late to stop by the time we saw it and we ran over it with our motorbike and turned around to see a 14+ foot reticulated python slithering into the jungle. Not as scary as the venomous things, but still kind of freaky that they're out there!

Insects

There are apparently more insects in Thailand than anyone has been able to count and classify. A good rule of thumb is to just avoid them. There are caterpillars that shoot a cloud of venomous hairs at you, fire ants that attack, and spiders the size of your hand (although they aren't poisonous, just gross).

Scorpions

Thankfully, Thai scorpions aren't typically deadly. There are many scorpions in Thailand (Black Scorpions being the most common), but their sting is usually just painful and uncomfortable. It is still wise to seek medical attention to alleviate the pain of a sting. You're more likely to see scorpions for sale as food than you are to see one in the wild.

Thai people love their bugs and scorpions are no exception!

Centipedes

There are several types of centipede in Thailand. All deliver a painful bite that can be more painful than a snake bite. Some can grow to be as big as a man's forearm! The most common and creepy of centipedes is the takarp. They are so scary looking and their bite can be painful for several days. If you are bitten, go to the hospital. You probably won't die, and nothing will help the pain, but they'll give you stuff for tetanus and infection. One website I found said "For conservation reasons please do not kill these animals, but catch them and free them in the wild." The last one I saw definitely got chopped in half with a dust pan, but you can go ahead and catch it if that's what you're into.

