

Brown Kukri Snake – Non Venomous – Not Dangerous



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Oligodon purpurascens (Brown Kukri Snake)

Thais say: Ngoo koot

Appearance: Typical kukri shape – not long, but thick snakes with a short tail and no real separation between neck and head. Very small head. Pattern on top of head indicative of most kukri species. Venter is creme or pink.

Length: Average just under 1 meter (about 37 inches)

Range: All over Thailand. Brown Kukri snakes were once thought to be native to only the southernmost Thailand provinces, however J. Bulian has found one in Pattaya and there have been others discovered farther in the northeast. Assume the Brown Kukri's habitat is across most of Thailand.

Habitat: These snakes prefer life in the forest and can be found at great elevations – about 1 mile high (1,600 meters).

I have received numerous requests to identify this snake from readers who found them close to or inside their homes as well. The habitat is wide and varied for this species. Regardless where they are found, they enjoy living under brush, wood, rocks, and thick flora.

Active Time? Nocturnal, active at night and in the early morning as the sun rises. I have also found them in the middle of the day, and toward evening before sunset.

Food: Frogs, lizards, geckos, skinks, and their eggs.

Defensive Behavior: If the brown kukris are bothered enough they will roll their body to the side and lift up their tail – perhaps to present it as a place to attack – leaving the mouth free to strike when the aggressor does go for the tail. Kukri snakes have specialized egg-slicing teeth in the back of the jaw which are enlarged and shaped like a kukri knife. When held by the head, this snake can expertly twist the jaw around to stick the handler with these teeth. Holding is not recommended.

Venom Toxicity: No venom.

Offspring: Lay 6-12 eggs. A reader reported his snake had 8 eggs the first time and 10 the next. Eggs hatched after 60 days, incubated at 29 degrees C. Hatching in Bangkok latitude around late April.

Notes: Though this snake is not venomous, it is keen to bite and can inflict deep wounds due to its large, curved teeth and strong bite. Michael Cota, researcher, says, “Appears that it might be an evolutionary link on the way to being venomous, since it is the only snake that I can think of that has “fangs” (enlarged pair of teeth), but no venom delivery system or ducts to the teeth. They are not dangerous, but will give you quite a bloody bite that takes a long time to heal. What makes them so difficult is that their head is not distinct; therefore, it is extremely difficult to grab behind the head

and keep proper control of it. It maneuvers its head around on your grip and then uses teeth to bite – slash.”

You’ll need a tetanus shot if you are bitten, as with all snakes as a precaution.

Kukris are common and you might see one in Thailand if you live here.

Brown Kukri Scientific classification

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Subphylum: Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Serpentes

Family: Colubridae

Subfamily: Colubrinae

Genus: *Oligodon*

Species: *Oligodon purpurascens*

Binomial name: Oligodon purpurascens

Classified by Schlegel in 1837.



Oligodon purpurascens, a very common kukri snake in our area. These have a fairly wide range in the south of Thailand. Brown or Purple kukri snake.