

Monocled Cobras – Venomous – Very Deadly



Naja Kaouthia – Venomous – VERY dangerous and very common Thailand snake.

(Last Updated: 8 November 2017)

Naja kaouthia – Monocled Cobra

The monocled cobra is one of Thailand's most deadly snakes – with highly toxic (neurotoxic + cytotoxic) venom. One bite on your toe from one that jumps out from under your outdoor refrigerator can kill you. I heard the story direct from a woman which had this happen to her husband. Monocled Cobras are nearly everywhere across Thailand. I had a friend that found them in his kitchen often. I've seen them crossing the road (see video below), and there was a family of these cobras living under the office of my wife's workplace – with many 18" baby cobras.

I just heard about Grant Thompson, an 18-year-old man in Austin, Texas who was bitten on the wrist by a monocled cobra and died of cardiac arrest. Authorities are looking for the snake. Tips that might catch the snake 1. If cool in the mornings, the snake might be found in bushes sunning itself. These cobras prefer hot weather over 80°F. 2. They are most active during daytime, but can move at night. 3. *N kaouthia* will eat eggs, mice, rats, if no other snakes are to be found. They prefer snakes, but I don't know what Grant fed his snake. It might be unable to stalk prey and feed itself and die within a month.



Releasing a monocled cobra at a mountain location after it was found in a populated area of a village in Thailand. Screenshot from one of my videos. ©2015 ThailandSnakes.com.

This respect (fear) this snake because many have friends or relatives that have been envenomated (bitten and venom injected) by this snake. They even make Buddhist amulets with cobra snake images.

I've worked with two hatchling monocled cobras, and even at 12-15 inches – they are fierce. One snake handler described monocled cobras as “spastic” – and I have to agree.

If you are bitten by any cobra – get to the hospital as fast as you can. Monocled cobra venom is on par or even more toxic than some of the Thailand kraits, and much more toxic than King Cobra venom when compared drop to drop. Even if the bite is a small one, a nick, or a scrape, get to the hospital immediately. All it takes is a drop of venom to hit your blood stream for biological chaos to ensue.

Appearance: Monocled cobras are easily identified by looking

at the back of the hood – there is a monocle – or eye type shape there. They are light brown to dark grey to solid black. Most are very close to black.

Thais say: Ngoo how hom, Ngoo how mo (long o sound)


Length: Typical maximum length about 1.5 meters. Recently I saw one in a mangrove forest that was 2 meters long, a giant. They can get up to 2.2 meters – about 7.5 feet long.

Range: All over Thailand and most of Southeast Asia.

Notes: Neuro toxic venom affecting nerves, brain, and causing death very quickly without treatment. They are very fast strikers. The baby monocled cobras are every bit as deadly. Please be CAREFUL!

Recently a friend and I found a 1.5 meter long *N. kaouthia* on a dirt road near where we were herping. It was nearly paralyzed but gaped its mouth when touched on the head with a snake hook. The body didn't move. We think it was just bitten by either a krait, or a King Cobra – both of which prey on this species. There was one visible bite mark on the side of the body and nothing else. I'm guessing King Cobra.

Habitat: Both flat and hilly regions. I've seen them on hills, but usually near people – under houses and in places rats and frogs are likely to be found. I've seen them most often in residential areas bordering forest, or near the ocean. In the mornings they can be in trees and bushes – trying to get some sun to warm up. They love to hide under leaves, wood, anything really. Lifespan is around 30 years.

Active Time? The snake is mainly diurnal – active by day,  but I have seen a number of them still active at night. In fact, in Thailand – I've seen about a dozen active at night – the rest were active during daytime.

Food: Rodents, lizards, frogs, birds, eggs, other snakes.

Defensive Behavior: Lift head off ground and flatten out neck. The hood flares quite wide compared to the width of the body. When comparing the monocled cobra and the king cobra, the monocled cobras have a hood flare that is more extreme in relation to the width of their body and heads. They can hiss when they strike.

Monocled cobras are very active and ready to strike especially as the temperature climbs past 35°C (about 95°F). Do be very careful with them during this temperature range because they are very easily agitated and strike much more often.



Skull from adult Monocled Cobra shows medium length, strong fangs. Photo from Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute in Bangkok, Thailand.

Venom Toxicity: Very toxic, deadly. Even a small bite can kill you. See "[neurotoxic and necrotoxic / cytotoxic venoms](#)" (link).

Offspring: Lays 25-40 eggs. Young are fully prepared to

envenomate as they hatch. Mating takes place after the rainy season. Eggs incubate in about 2 months. Eggs hatch between April-June. Hatchlings are between 8 to 12 inches at birth.

Monocled Cobra Scientific Classification:

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Serpentes

Family: Elapidae

Genus: *Naja*

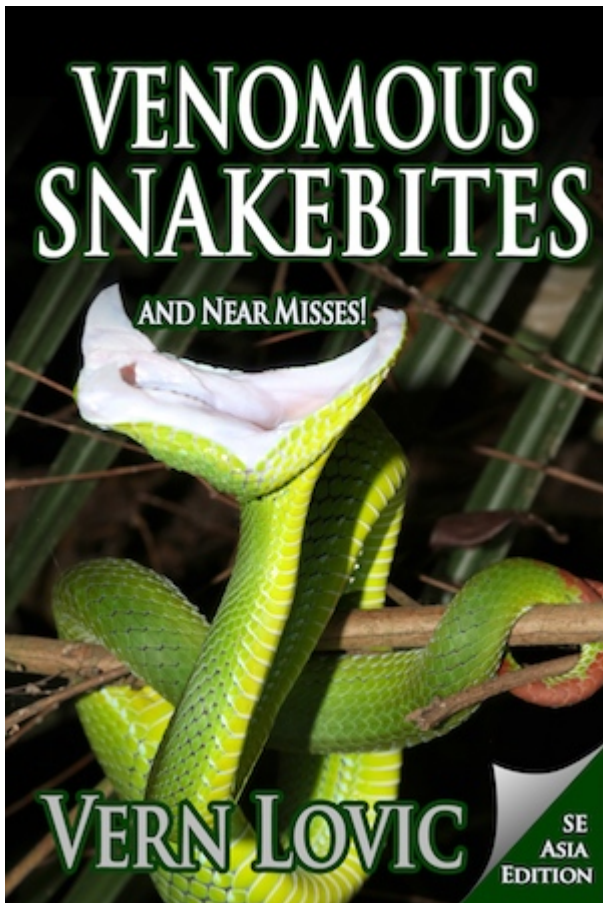
Species: *Naja kaouthia*

Classified by: Lesson, 1841

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