

# Oriental Whip Snake – Venomous – Not Dangerous



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The oriental whip snake is a very common rear-fanged venomous snake found here in Thailand's rain forests. You can find these snakes in the trees during the day, I have even seen them crossing my path twice on trips up a small local mountain in southern Thailand.

The beauty of these snakes is legend. There are green, yellow, or grey phases of this snake, all of which are spellbindingly beautiful. The juvenile whip snakes are often brown or yellow.

***Ahaetulla prasina*** (Oriental Whip snakes)

**Thai Language:** ngoo kee-ow hoo-uh jing joke pa

**Length:** Up to 190 cm. Girth: Body is finger thin, tapering to a very thin pencil-width neck. The head is spear shaped and bright green.

**Range:** All over Thailand. The species ranges from India to China and throughout Southeast Asia.

**Habitat:** During the day you can find these snakes in trees and bushes usually. Occasionally they will be at ground level hunting frogs and small lizards. I have seen these snakes in all kinds of habitat, but usually in trees and leafy bushes. At night these snakes sleep in the same environment.

**Active Time?** Diurnal – active during the daylight hours.

**Food:** Frogs, small birds, small lizards.

**Defensive Behavior:** The oriental whip snake can spread it's

neck area to increase by double in size as a defensive technique designed to scare attackers. It is quite beautiful when either solid green, or with the green, white and black checkered pattern displayed in full defensive posture. Sort of comical is what the snake does with it's tongue when molested. It sticks the tongue out and holds it there for some seconds, or minutes.

**Venom Toxicity:** Weak. Although this is considered to be a rear-fanged and venomous snake it is not very dangerous to humans due to it's non-aggressive nature and weak venom characteristics. The venom would need to be injected into the wound with time – with a chewing motion. Not many people bitten are going to let a snake hang off them for any amount of time. Some do, and they may have severe complications and require hospitalization.

**Offspring:** In Thailand the *Ahaetulla prasina* can mate during either of two times. Usually between April and July, and then also between December and January. Gestation period: ~ 6 months. Number of births: 4-10. Lengths at birth of offspring: 400 – 500 mm.

**Notes:** These are wonderful little snakes to catch and let go. These snakes do not do well in captivity and many die within days of being kept in an enclosure. They are as beautiful as snakes get, but please resist the urge to capture one to keep as they are very sensitive and die easily.

We have not been bitten by these snakes, but in the wild when catching them they will attempt to strike at times. They are fast and have a short striking range. What is really amazing about these snakes is the way they effortlessly glide down a hill or through trees like on ice. They can climb extremely fast and disappear before you have a chance to grab them. See video below!

These snakes are not often confused with other snakes here in

Thailand because they are quite distinctive. Their head is long and tapers to a fine point. They are very thin at the neck before the head unless they have flared up in defense.

## **Ahaetulla prasina**

Oriental Whipsnake (*Ahaetulla prasina*)

Scientific classification

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Serpentes

Family: Colubridae

Subfamily: Colubrinae

Genus: *Ahaetulla*

Species: *Ahaetulla prasina*

Binomial name: *Ahaetulla prasina*

(Classified by Shaw, in the year 1802)

Photo of a brown hued *Ahaetulla prasina* shot by Tom Charlton – shown here with permission:



Sometimes they are brown. Juveniles are usually brown.

Photo of an ~~*Ahaetulla prasina*~~ *Ahaetulla mycterizans*, very similar to *A. prasina* I found on a hike:



*Ahaetulla mycterizans* – Venomous – Not Dangerous

## **Oriental Whip Snake Videos:**

Another of the same type of snake – just further up the trail, different day: