

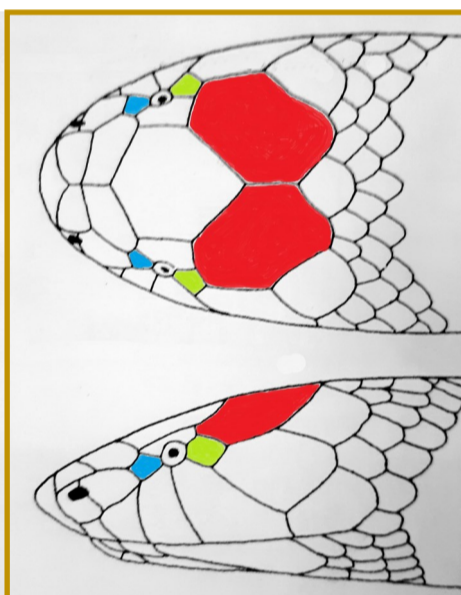
How to identify one of the three little black snakes of Zambia

There are three common little black snakes which look quite similar in Zambia. They are the Bibron's Stiletto Snake, the Purple Glossed Snake and the Common Wolf Snake. This poster aims to help 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 which causes intense pain and swelling and can lead to necrosis and loss of a finger, toe or worse. It is therefore always advisable to treat every small black snake as a dangerous snake until it is positively identified.

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



The arched neck of a Stiletto Snake

Photo credit: Tyrone Ping

Bibron's Stiletto Snake (Atractaspis bibronii)

Venomous snake.

Parietal scales: slightly rounded

Pre-ocular: 1

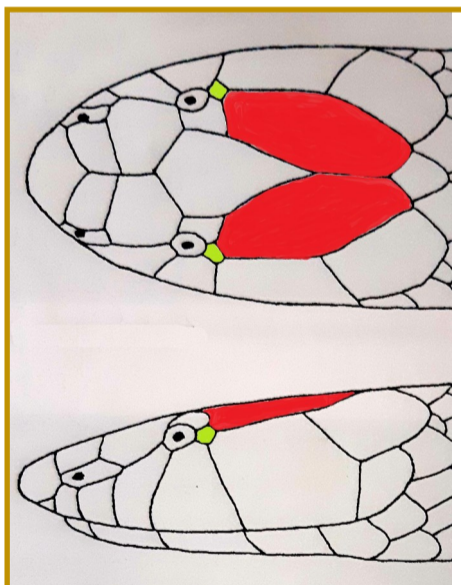
Post ocular: 1

Tail: stubby

No clear neck

Average length: 30—40 cm, reaching up to 80 cm

Arched neck if threatened



Head with elongated parietals

Stubby tail >

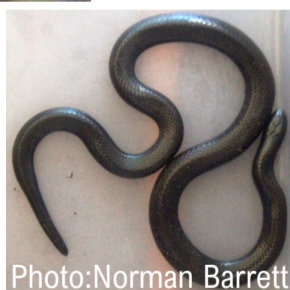


Photo:Norman Barrett

Common Purple Glossed Snake (Amblyodipas polylepsis)

Mildly venomous snake. (harmless to humans)

Parietal scales: clearly elongated

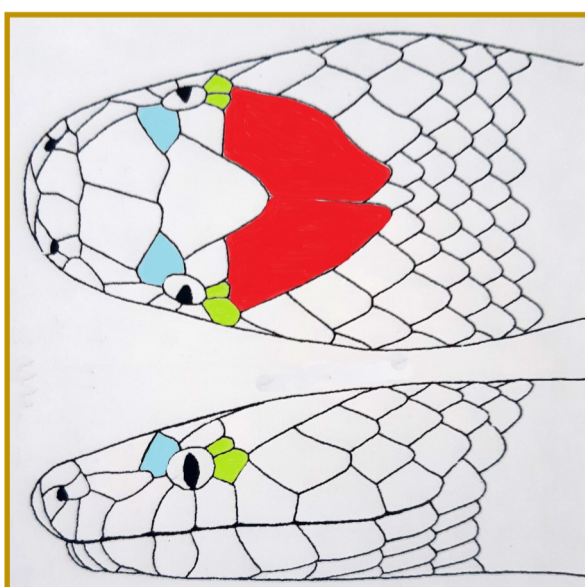
Pre-ocular: 0

Post ocular: 1

Tail: stubby

No clear neck

Average length: 75 cm, reaching up to 110cm



White scale edges & thin, tapered tail

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