

Meet the Wild Bunch

Some of Australia's wildest inhabitants are massive, others are minuscule. Some make you ill, others can kill. But despite their weaponry these animals aren't out to 'get' you. Most will avoid humans. Most will only sting or bite in self-defence. Even what may seem like a deliberate attack can turn out to be a case of mistaken identity. When it comes to Australia's more dangerous animals you should certainly be alert, but there's no need to be alarmed. Lurking around these pages are some of our wilder animals. Some you'll recognise, but others may come as a bit of a surprise.



Shells that Strike

Don't let the striking markings fool you. The thing that lives inside this **cone shell** is able to swiftly shoot out a **venom-squirting** dart. And no matter how you pick it up or hold it, this harpoon can twist and turn to stab you. And it could kill you.



Shiny Stingers

Shimmery tentacles streaming metres behind them as they swim through the sea, these fragile-looking creatures pack a powerful punch. One of the deadliest creatures found in Australian marine environments, **Box Jellyfish** are dangerous enough to make our northern beaches off-limits to swimmers for half of the year.



White-tipped Reef Sharks are not usually dangerous to humans, although occasionally they have bitten divers or spearfishers when excited by bait in the water.

Sea Shadows

There are over 160 **species** of shark in our waters, but only a few pose any real threat to people. Even so, many Australians feel uneasy while treading water in salt water. But humans kill millions of sharks every year, making people much more dangerous to sharks than sharks are to us.



Vivid and Venomous

They might look like plants but **corals** are made up of colonies of animals—carnivorous animals called coral polyps. The hard stuff we call coral is actually the home that the polyps build for themselves. The polyps are armed with stinging cells to kill their prey. Contact with some of their tentacles can prove painful for divers and swimmers.



Blue for Danger

Bold, bright colours in nature often mean 'danger, back off' and this **Blue-ringed Octopus's** dazzling rings are no exception. Although it can only give a small bite, its powerful **venom** can kill an adult human.



Funnel-web Fear

This is one wild Australian that it's best to avoid. **Funnel-web spiders** are large and can be aggressive. They are also quite capable of injecting a lethal dose of **venom**. But they won't attack unprovoked with the intention of biting you, despite many people's fear of this occurring.



The Venom Factor

Is a snake poisonous? No, it isn't. Can a snake poison you? Yes, a venomous one can, if it bites you. A poisonous animal is only dangerous if you eat it. A venomous animal produces **venom** to kill its prey. Venom is often strong enough to do us serious harm because it's designed to kill prey quickly—otherwise the prey might get away or, worse, fight back and hurt the hunter. It's just bad luck for us that venom made to kill mostly mice and other small creatures can have the same deadly effect on humans. So, you can eat a snake safely—just make sure you cook it first.

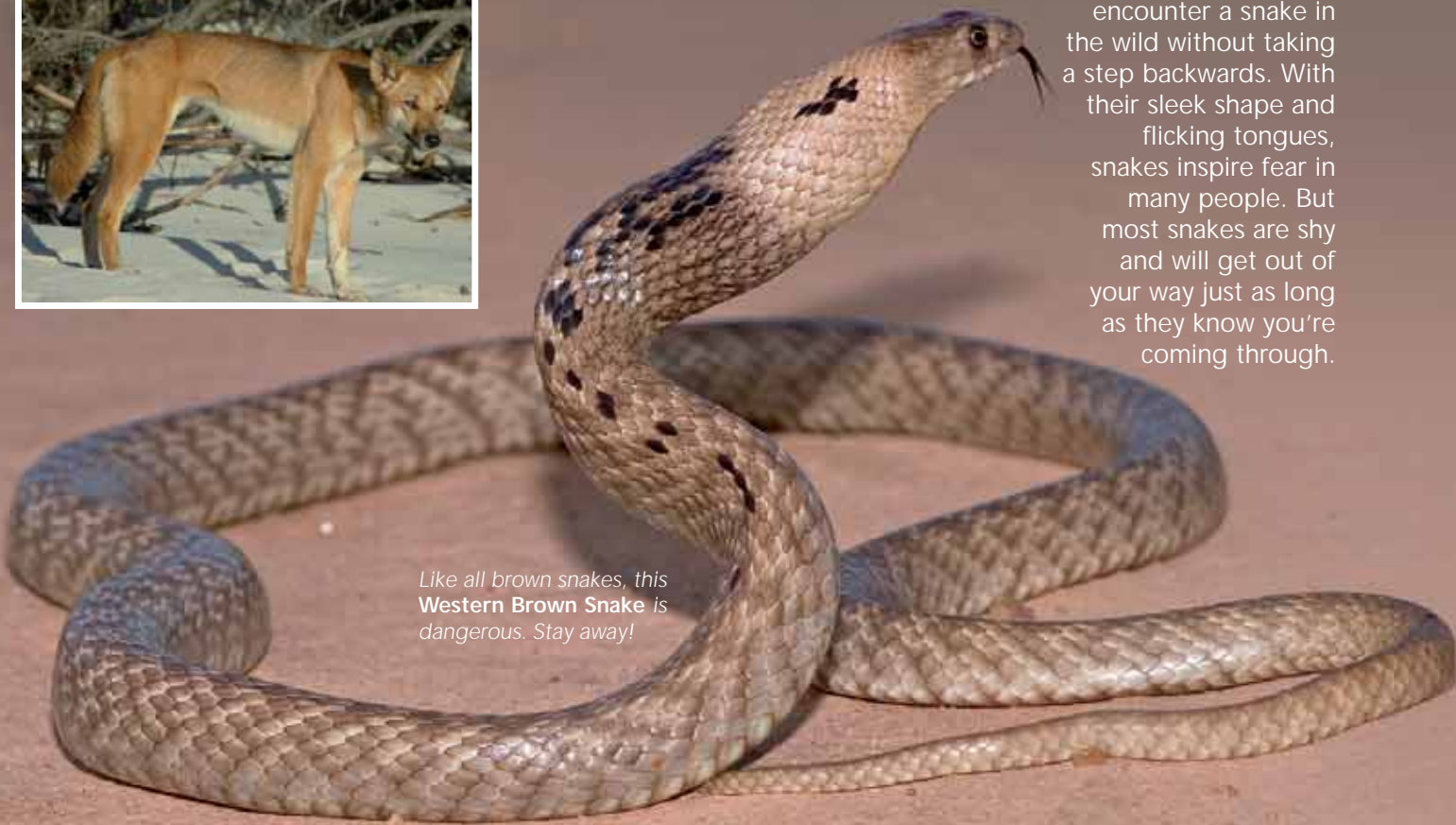
Dingo Danger?

You might think a wild **Dingo** would be more dangerous than one that is used to humans. But no—tame or semi-wild dingoes can be riskier to be around. Wild animals that have a lot of contact with people lose their fear of us. They can also start expecting that every person they come across is going to throw them some picnic scraps. If this doesn't happen, the animal can get aggressive.



Snakes and Us

Few Australians encounter a snake in the wild without taking a step backwards. With their sleek shape and flicking tongues, snakes inspire fear in many people. But most snakes are shy and will get out of your way just as long as they know you're coming through.



Like all brown snakes, this Western Brown Snake is dangerous. Stay away!

This Creature Can Kill

When we think of deadly and dangerous creatures, bees are probably not what first springs to mind. Unless, of course, you are allergic to bee stings. The introduced common **European Honeybee** kills more people in Australia each year than spiders and snakes put together.



Tiny and Troublesome

The tiny **tick** can burrow deep down into your skin without you even noticing. Losing the few drops of blood that the tick is sucking out won't harm you, but the **toxins** it injects into your bloodstream might. They can lead to illness and, in severe cases, paralysis.

A Powerful Predator

Billabongs, rivers and swamps around Australia's tropical north coast are home to **Saltwater Crocodiles** up to 7 metres long. You'll even find them swimming in the sea. Crocodile attacks are rare, but when one occurs it taps into our ancient fears of being hunted and devoured by a big hungry predator.

