



## Mulga or King Brown Snake *Pseudechis australis*

**What do they look like?** Large, slightly flattened, powerful looking snake with blunt head and reddish eyes. Colour is variable from yellow or brown to black. There is often a criss-cross pattern over the body.

**Where do they live?** Mulga Snakes favour dry woodlands within the region and are rare in eastern areas. They probably spend much time underground.

**What do they need to live, eat and breed?** Mulga Snakes require mixed ground cover and a variety of food sources. They eat frogs, lizards, other snakes, birds and mammals, using large amounts of powerful venom to subdue prey. They lay their eggs in secluded places such as deep soil cracks and animal burrows.

**When might I see (or hear) them?** Most active on warm nights. Usually seen crossing roads. Large, fast, brown snakes seen during the day are often other species such as Eastern Brown Snakes or Common Tree Snakes.

**What management actions affect this species?** Maintenance of ground cover and diverse, vigorous native pastures and friable soil ensure that Mulga Snakes have a variety of food sources and shelter. Mulga Snakes are more common where Cane Toads do not occur. Though Mulga Snakes will readily kill and eat cane toads, they are usually killed themselves as a result of ingesting the toad's poison. At cattle watering points, careful use and maintenance of water troughs so that deep hoof prints do not form in soft mud may reduce toads' chances of access to cool, moist hiding places and improve snakes diet selection! Persecution by people may be a direct threat to some populations.

**How do they benefit the land I manage?** Though often feared by people, Mulga Snakes are very important predators of pest animals, maintaining ecological balance. Since they hunt largely by smell, they can seek out mice and rats in small cracks and under concrete building slabs. Unlike the household cat, they are likely to eat the whole nest of rodents, and not just those that enter the house or shed. While Mulga Snakes can be very dangerous to humans, they are usually shy and avoid confrontations. Snake bites rarely occur when people leave them alone.

**Similar species:** Eastern, Western and Spotted Brown Snakes (*Pseudonaja* spp.).

