Russel’s Viper

Russell’s viper (Daboia russelii) is a venomous snake species found mainly in Asia, particularly in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and parts of Southeast Asia. It belongs to the Viperidae family, which includes some of the most venomous snakes in the world. Russell’s viper is one of the most venomous snakes found in India and is responsible for several deaths each year.

Characteristics	Description
Name	Russell’s Viper
Scientific Name	Daboia russelii
Colour	Brown, yellow, grey with darker zigzag bands on the body
Length	Up to 1.5 meters
Habitat	Grasslands, scrublands, agricultural areas, and forests
Type of Venom	Hemotoxic and cytotoxic
Indian states where it’s found	Throughout India except for the higher altitudes of the Himalayas and some parts of the northeast
IUCN status	Least Concern

Features

Russell’s viper is a medium-sized snake with an average length of around 3 to 5 feet, though some individuals can grow up to 6 feet long. It has a stout and muscular body, with a broad and triangular head and distinctive, vertically elliptical pupils. The colour of the snake varies depending on the region and can range from yellowish-brown to grey, with a series of dark brown or black bands along the length of its body. It can move at a moderate speed, and its weight ranges from 1 to 5

kg.

Type of Venom

Russell’s viper is known for its potent venom, which is a complex mixture of enzymes and other substances that can cause serious health problems in humans. The venom is hemotoxic and can cause tissue damage, coagulation abnormalities, renal failure, and in severe cases, death. If bitten, a person can experience symptoms such as severe pain, swelling, bleeding, and blistering at the site of the bite, along with nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and difficulty breathing.

Habitat and Food

Russell’s viper is found in a variety of habitats, including grasslands, forests, agricultural areas, and human settlements. It is a carnivorous snake that feeds on a variety of prey, including rodents, lizards, birds, and other snakes. Russell’s viper is an ambush predator that waits patiently for its prey to pass by before striking.

Where is it found in India

Russell’s viper is found throughout the Indian subcontinent, from the foothills of the Himalayas to the southern tip of India. It is commonly found in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala.

Importance to Ecosystem

Russell’s viper plays an important role in controlling the population of rodents and other small animals that can cause damage to crops and carry diseases. However, the species is also known to cause significant harm to humans, and human

populations living in areas where the snake is common are at risk of being bitten.

IUCN Status

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species lists Russell’s viper as “Least Concern,” meaning that the species is not currently facing any significant threat of extinction. However, the loss of habitat due to human activities such as deforestation and agriculture, as well as overexploitation for its skin and venom, are potential threats to the long-term survival of the species. It is important to conserve this species as it is an integral part of the ecosystem and plays a vital role in controlling rodent populations.