

Getting TO KNOW

VENOMOUS SNAKES OF SINGAPORE

**When a snake confronts you,
what should you do?**

Be calm and stay still.

**It will slither away, rather than challenge you.
Imagine, would you challenge someone who is
more than 4 times your size?**

This was the advice given by Dr Evan Quah Seng Huat. He is a Herpetologist (i.e. specialist in the study of reptiles and amphibians) and has assisted in research projects on snakes in Cambodia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar and Singapore.

Singapore Pest Management Association invited Dr Quah from Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang to conduct a seminar on "Snakes of Singapore" and the response from the industry was overwhelming, with some 168 participants, including 16 from Aardwolf Pestkare.

Dr Quah confirmed that there are 7 dangerously venomous land snakes in Singapore. They are:

1. King Cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*)
2. Equatorial Spitting Cobra (*Naja sumatrana*) or commonly referred to as the Black Spitting Cobra (*Naja Naja*)
3. Banded Krait (*Bungarus fasciatus*)
4. Malayan Blue Coral Snake (*Calliophis bivirgata*)
5. Stripped Coral Snake (*Calliophis intestinalis*)
6. Mangrove Pit Viper (*Trimeresurus purpureomaculatus*), and
7. Wagler's Pit Viper (*Tropidolaemus wagleri*)



Impressive audience.

The Aardwolf Pestkare team with Dr Evan Quah (4th person standing, from the right) and Suchart Lee from Thailand (person in the purple shirt in the front row).



Black Spitting Cobra.



Malayan Blue Coral Snake.



Mangrove Pit Viper.

There are 3 main characteristics that indicate that these are venomous snakes:

1. When disturbed they stand up to display distinct hood, and hiss. These are the cobras.
2. They are beautifully coloured, to warn the other animals to beware. The Banded Krait is strikingly attractive with its body marked with alternate black and yellow cross-bands. The Malayan Blue Coral Snake is probably the most attractive snake when found in its natural setting of brown leaves and grass.
3. The shape of its head is triangular, like an arrowhead. These are the vipers.

Photos of 3 snakes with these characteristics are provided by Dr Quah.

As with most things, there are imitators. But unless you are familiar with the identification, it is always better to avoid confronting them.

He also debunked some common myths about snakes. One is that snakes are deaf. New research has disproved this. Snakes possess inner ears, which are connected to the jawbones, meaning that their jaw can pick up vibrations from the ground when they rest their jaw on the ground. Their brains then process what they pick up.

So the next time you want to drive out a snake, stamp your feet hard on the ground. Do not shout until you are hoarse.

