

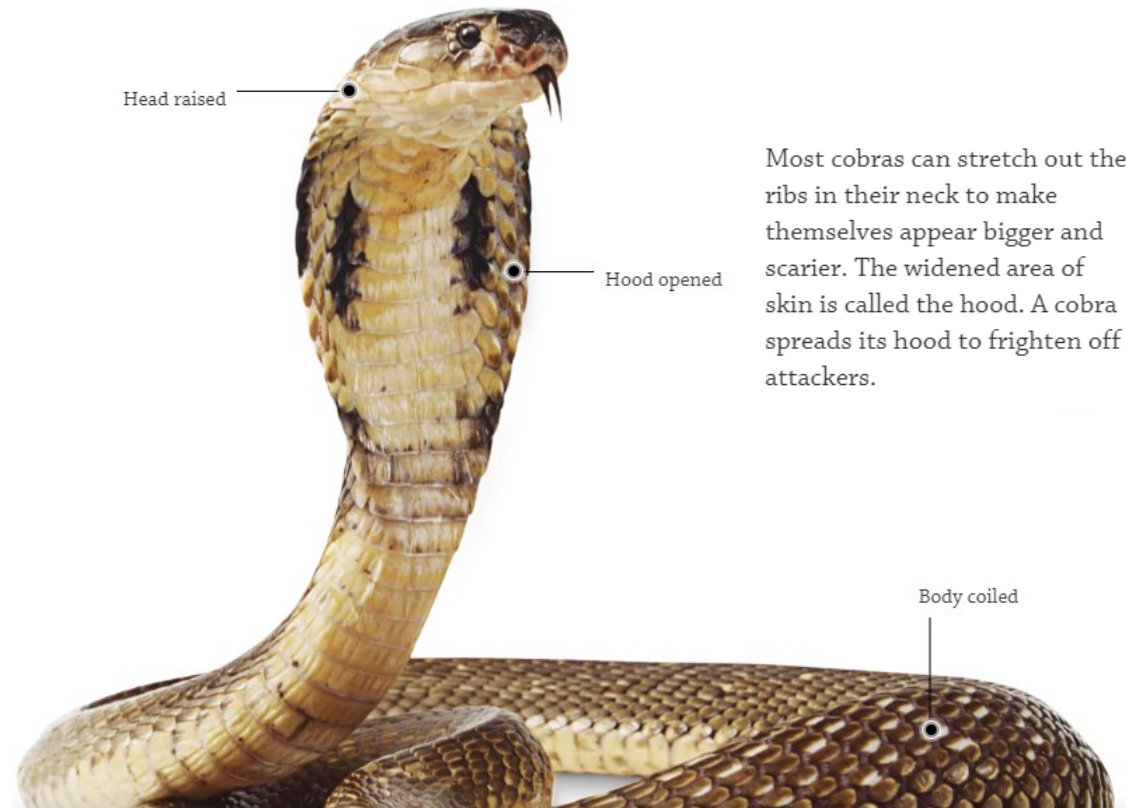
Cobras



Cobras belong to a group of snakes called elapids. This group also includes sea snakes, coral snakes, mambas, and kraits. At the front of the mouth elapids have a pair of hollow fangs for injecting venom, and some elapids are the most dangerously venomous of all snakes. The venom affects muscles and nerves, and it can kill quickly because it stops the lungs from working. Elapids lack the heat sensors of many vipers, so many elapids target cold-blooded prey, such as other reptiles. Cobras are famous for raising the front part of their body and spreading their hood when threatened. Some cobras can spray venom at the eyes of an attacker to cause blindness.

A king cobra can inject enough venom in one bite to kill 20 people – or one elephant.

When a predator approaches, a cobra raises its head and hisses in warning. If the predator comes too near, the snake will spring forward and bite the attacker.



Most cobras can stretch out the ribs in their neck to make themselves appear bigger and scarier. The widened area of skin is called the hood. A cobra spreads its hood to frighten off attackers.

The cobra coils its body into a spiral, ready to spring forward and attack.

Blue-ringed octopus

The blue-ringed octopus is only about 20cm (8in) long, but it is one of the most venomous animals in the ocean. Its bite causes paralysis (loss of feeling) in the muscles and can easily kill an adult human. The bite is so deadly because the octopus has toxic saliva (spit). The octopus grabs prey, such as crustaceans and fish, and bites them to inject the venom. Sometimes the octopus just releases its saliva into the water and waits for the venom to paralyze its victims. Blue-ringed octopuses live in the shallow waters of rocky shores from Australia to Japan. These octopuses get their name from their bright blue rings, which pulsate (throb) vividly just before they bite, warning other animals to keep away.

The blue-ringed octopus is packed with enough venom to kill 26 people within minutes.

The bright blue rings warn other animals that the octopus is deadly. They appear only when the octopus feels threatened.



Like all octopuses, the blue-ringed octopus has eight arms equipped with suckers. These help it to catch prey.

Honey badger



The honey badger, also known as a ratel, is a bad-tempered animal that lives in parts of Asia and Africa. The honey badger sometimes attacks animals the size of buffalos if they come too close to its burrow. It has a big skull with strong teeth, and its massive front paws have long claws. Tough skin protects the badger from serious harm and it is usually not bothered by bigger predators or snake bites. It hunts small animals on the ground, but loves honey too and is perfectly equipped to get hold of it. It uses its strong claws to rip open bee hives, and relies on its thick skin to protect it from the angry, stinging bees.

The honey badger can produce a stinking liquid from glands (small sacs) near its bottom, which helps to stop predators from getting too close.

The distinctive pattern of the aggressive honey badger may warn other animals to stay away, just like the yellow and black pattern of a stinging wasp. The honey badger's fur is very thick to protect it from angry bee stings.

The honey badger's skin is thick, but so loose that it can twist around to bite anything that grabs hold of the back of its neck.



The long front claws of the honey badger are well adapted for digging and breaking open bees' nests.