

The King Cobra

The King cobra or *Ophiophagus hannah* (ah-FEE-ah-fuh-guhs HAN-nuh) is a large venomous snake. King cobras live in rain forests, bamboo groves and grassy plains of India, southern China, and Southeast Asia. They are brown, olive green or black with a creamy white or yellow belly. King cobras can live for about 20 years in the wild, can grow up to 18 feet long, and can weigh up to 20 pounds. They are considered the longest venomous snake in the world. The amount of venom in one bite is enough to kill an adult elephant or twenty people. They eat mostly other snakes or eggs, but have been known to eat small mammals as well. King cobras are shy and hide from humans when possible but they are fiercely aggressive if they feel threatened.

When a cobra feels threatened he can change the way the bones in his neck are shaped and flare out a 'hood' around its head. The hissing sound a cobra makes when threatened sounds like a growling dog. A King cobra can also lift up to one third of its body off the ground and still move forward. If a King cobra reaches the largest size of 18 feet, it can look a full grown human in the eye. King cobras have also been known to spit venom when threatened.

King cobras are the only snake in the world that builds a nest for its eggs. The nest is usually made from rotten leaves and other plants. They can lay 18 to 50 eggs at one time. The female cobra guards the nest for 70 to 77 days and leaves when the eggs begin to hatch. When King cobras hatch they are 12 to 25 inches long and young cobras are born with the same amount of venom in its bite as an adult King cobra.

Answer the following questions using the article above, the internet or the library.

1. Why is the King cobra considered the largest venomous snake in the world?

2. Name three other venomous snakes.

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3. What kind of sound does the King cobra make?

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4. What are some of the colors a King cobra can be?

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5. Explain how a King cobra cares for its young before they hatch.

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6. What types of things does a King cobra eat?
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Answer

1. Why is the King cobra considered the largest venomous snake in the world?

King cobras are considered the largest venomous snake because they can grow 18-20 feet in length which is larger than any other venomous snake.

2. Name three other venomous snakes.

(While there can be many answers to this question, these are the top ten venomous snakes in the world according to National Geographic) Rattlesnake, Black Mamba, Tiger snake, vipers, Taipan, Blue Krait, Eastern Brown snake, Belcher's Sea Snake, Fierce Snake or Inland Taipan, Philippine Cobra

3. What kind of sound does the King cobra make?

It makes a sound that sounds like a dog growling.

4. What are some of the colors a King cobra can be?

Brown, Olive green, and black with a creamy white or yellow belly.

5. Explain how a King cobra cares for its young before they hatch.

The female cobra builds a nest from rotting leaves and plants. The female coils herself around the eggs and incubates them for 70 to 77 days.

6. What types of things does a King cobra eat?

Mostly they eat other snakes and eggs, but they sometimes eat small mammals.