

## Glossary

- adaptation** An inherited (genetically controlled) characteristic of an organism that helps it to survive and reproduce in the environment it inhabits. These are often interpreted as evolutionary changes in response to selection pressures present in that environment.
- antivenom** Antivenoms are purified antibodies against venoms or venom components. Monovalent antivenom is a species-specific antivenom. Polyvalent antivenom targets all snake species.
- carnivorous** description of an animal, which primarily eats other animals.
- caudal** referring to the tail.
- cloaca** a body opening that serves both for excretion and for the reproductive organs.
- clutch** a group of eggs that is laid in the same place at the same time (or nearly the same time), and will hatch at the same time.
- crepuscular** active during the evening and early morning hours.
- diurnal** active during the day.
- dormancy/dormant** reptiles typically become inactive or dormant during cooler months of the year.
- dorsal** referring to features on the back or along the spine of the animal.
- ectotherm** an animal whose body temperature varies with the temperature of its surroundings (also called cold-blooded).
- endotherm** an animal that maintains its body temperature at a relatively constant level by physiological means regardless of the temperature of the environment (also called warm-blooded).
- envenomation/envenoming** the result of venom effects in the body.
- genus** in the classification of living things, a group of similar species. e.g. The black snake species all belong to the genus *Pseudechis*.
- gravid** carrying eggs or developing young.
- gular** relating to the throat of the animal.
- habitat** the kind of place where a plant or animal naturally lives.
- herbivorous** said of an animal that eats only plants.
- herpetologist** person who works or studies with reptiles.
- insectivorous** said of an animal which mostly eats insects.
- keel** a ridge down the centre of a scale. Very sharp keeling may make an animal appear quite rough.
- lateral** referring to the sides of the body. 'Laterally compressed' means flattened in such a way that the thing is high but not very wide.
- live birth** in reptiles, this is when the eggs hatch while still inside the female, and the young soon emerge alive. The young do not obtain nutrients from their mother while in the reproductive tract, as is the case with most mammals. A condition known as oviviviparous.
- metamorphosis** the developmental transition between larval and adult stages that can include extreme morphological transformations.
- microhabitat** where an animal lives in its niche.
- nocturnal** active primarily at night.
- ophidiophobia** the fear of snakes or snakebite.