



WANTED! Invasive snake sighting information

Species that have been introduced to a habitat outside their native range by human activities are considered alien species. Among them, species that harm or are likely to harm the ecosystem, ecology, or human health are designated as **Invasive Alien Species (IASs)** under the Invasive Alien Species Act. It is important to remember that IASs are considered normal components of the ecosystems in their native habitats.

The three principles for preventing harm caused by **IASs** are: "No importation", "No release", and "No spreading", but ignorant human activities can lead to severe, often irreversible problems. It is illegal to possess, transport, or release **IASs** into new environments.

Both the Taiwan pit viper and Taiwan beauty snake are designated as **Invasive Alien Species**.

Can you tell the differences?

Editor / Publisher:



Okinawa Amami Nature Conservation Office

Design: Natural Box Co., Ltd.
English translation supported by Marine Corps Installations Pacific,
United States Marine Corps

Published the original in March 2020,
English edition in March 2025

The Taiwan pit viper and Taiwan beauty snake are Invasive Alien Species (IASs)

These invasive snakes have not yet been established in the three villages of the Yambaru area (Ogimi, Higashi, and Kunigami); however, early detection and prompt management are critical for the protection and preservation of Yambaru's unique biodiversity.

Venomous



[IASs]

80~130cm

Taiwan pit viper or Taiwan habu *Protobothrops mucrosquamatus*

Native to southern China and Taiwan. The Taiwan pit viper was originally imported to Okinawa to produce habu liquor; however, several escaped and rapidly spread to areas such as Nago. Even though it is smaller than the Okinawan Habu, it can be quite aggressive when carelessly approached.



[IASs]

180~270cm

Taiwan beauty snake or Taiwan sujio *Elaphe taeniura friesi*

Native to Taiwan. It has spread to urban areas such as Uruma and Okinawa City. Easily identified by the characteristic black stripes on both sides of its tail. While non-venomous, it can grow to over two meters (6.5 ft) in length and prey on small mammals and birds, which poses a potential threat to local ecosystems.

On the main island of Okinawa, these invasive snake species have adapted to their habitat, which is continuously expanding. In the northern region of Okinawa (Yambaru), the three villages of Ogimi, Higashi, and Kunigami are home to many endangered species. Once these snakes establish populations in Yambaru, they would cause a significant impact on the ecosystem by outcompeting the native snake species and preying on endangered species such as the Okinawa Rail *Gallirallus okinawae* and Okinawa Spiny Rat *Tokudaia muenninki*. Early detection and initial control measures are crucial in these circumstances. As such, we are collecting information on sightings within these three villages.

Native Habu Species

The Okinawan Habu *Protobothrops flavoviridis* and Okinawan pit viper *Ovophis okinavensis* are venomous, but they play an essential role in maintaining the ecological balance of the Yambaru area. If encountered, it is recommended to observe them quietly at a safe distance.

Venomous

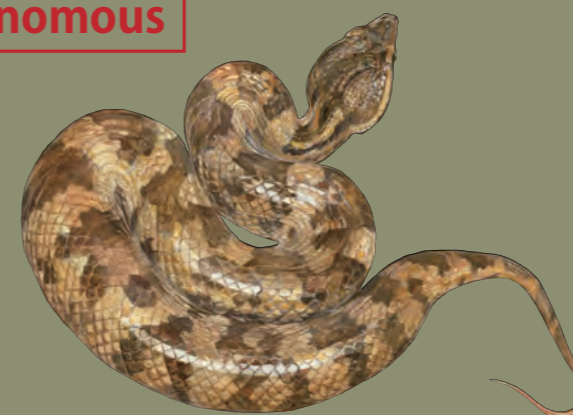


130~240cm

Okinawan Habu *Protobothrops flavoviridis*

A large snake that reaches up to two meters in length. It has a wide distribution and a large population. Because they prey on rodents, they inhabit areas close to human dwellings. They are nocturnal and are rarely seen during the daytime.

Venomous

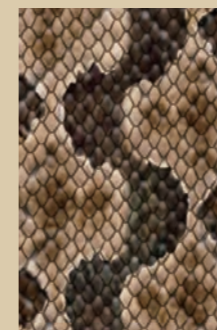


40~80cm

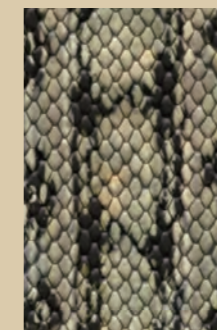
Okinawan pit viper or Hime habu *Ovophis okinavensis*

Nearly half the size of the Okinawan Habu, with a relatively thick body. It usually sits near water, as it primarily feeds on frogs. Slow-moving and often motionless. It is referred to as "Niibuyā" (sleepyhead) in the local Okinawan dialect.

Differences in Scale Patterns



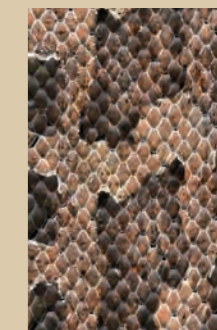
Taiwan pit viper



Taiwan beauty snake



Okinawan Habu



Okinawan pit viper



What to do if you encounter an invasive snake in Yambaru

- Avoid approaching and keep a safe distance of at least 1.5 to 2 meters (5 to 6.5 ft).
- Observe and identify the species without disturbing.
- Report the sighting to the Yambaru Wildlife Conservation Center and be sure to include a photo if possible.

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