

# The Taxonomy of Australian Elapid Snakes: A Review

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**ABSTRACT.** Published data on Australian elapid snake taxonomy are reviewed. Both classical morphological studies and relevant ecological, chromosomal and biochemical data are summarized.

Attention is focused on two major areas:

- (1) the phylogenetic relationships between Australian terrestrial elapids and other proteroglyphs; and
- (2) the interrelationships among the Australian terrestrial elapids.

From this review four key questions are identified:

- (1) Are the continentally endemic groups of terrestrial elapids confamilial?
- (2) Do the Australian elapids represent a distinct familial group?
- (3) Are the Australian elapids monophyletic or have the extant forms been derived from distinct lineages which may represent more than one invasion of the continent?
- (4) What is the precise relationship between laticaudine and hydrophiine sea snakes and the Australian elapids?

There is considerable disagreement concerning generic allocations and suprageneric relationships within the Australian proteroglyphs. Ecological, cytological and biochemical studies currently under way may be useful adjuncts to morphological information in resolving these questions.

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