

BIGGEST LIVE DEATH ADDER EVER RECORDED

- The Australian Reptile Park & Australian Museum Herpetology Department have declared 'Shazza' the largest living common death adder ever recorded in Australia.
- Measuring 110cm total length and weighing 1.55kg, she is double the size of the average common death adder
- Australian Museum Herpetologist Dane Trembath joined Park Manager Billy Collett to inspect and measure the record-breaking snake.

The Australian Reptile Park and the Australian Museum Herpetology Department have declared, that a common death adder (*Acanthophis antarcticus*) named Shazza, is the largest living death adder recorded.

Shazza has been part of the Australian Reptile Park's lifesaving venom program for 9 years after being wild caught in the Mid North Coast region. From the moment she arrived, keepers knew she was unusually large.

Common death adders are typically much smaller, with the average snout-vent length of adults from southeast Australia being 42cm for males to 55 cm for females. When Shazza underwent a health check at the Australian Reptile Park in 2023, she was already an extraordinary 102 centimetres total length and weighed 1.41 kilograms.



Shazza (right) next to a male common death adder (left) Credit: Australian Reptile Park

Since then, Park Manager Billy Collett has watched Shazza continue to grow and decided it was time to find out exactly how big she had become.

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Dane Trembath, Collection Manager of Herpetology at the Australian Museum Research Institute assisting in measuring Shazza. Credit: Australian Reptile Park

To add scientific expertise to the measurement, Mr Collett invited Dane Trembath, Collection Manager of Herpetology at the Australian Museum Research Institute, to inspect Shazza and assist with confirming her latest size. Mr Trembath manages the Australian Museum's Herpetology Collection, the largest collection of its kind in Australia. He has measured 1000's of snake specimens both in the field and laboratory.

Together, Mr Collett and Mr Trembath carefully measured and weighed Shazza, revealing she is now a whopping 110cm centimetres total length with a snout to vent length of 95cm and weighs 1.55kg.



Shazza was revealed to be 110 cm in total length. Credit: Australian Reptile Park

The result confirmed just how extraordinary Shazza has become, placing her well beyond the usual size range recorded for a common death adder.

"The moment I first laid eyes on her... I knew she was just a monster and her potential to get over a metre was definitely there." Bill stated. "I don't want to get bitten by any snakes, but I cannot get bitten by her. She's so big, her venom yield are so big, it's frightening.

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“She’s a big death adder, way bigger than I thought she would be.” Said Dane Trembath. “I’d say she’s almost double the size of a normal death adder.”

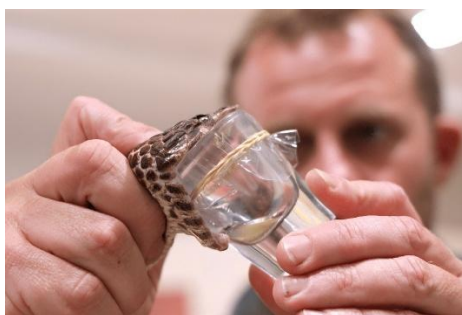
“Most snakes have this initial growth spurt when they are born ... she’s way beyond that so her growth will now slow down. As she slowly grows, she may actually surpass the biggest death adder ever recorded but we don’t know how long that is gonna take.”



Dane Trembath (L) and Manager Billy Collett (R) holding Shazza the death adder Credit: Australian Reptile Park

Shazza’s contribution to the Australian Reptile Park extends far beyond her remarkable size. She is also a valuable member of the Park’s venom program and currently produces the largest venom yields of any death adder in the program.

Shazza can produce an extraordinary 270 milligrams of venom in a single milking. She continues to provide significant venom yields during regular milkings, with her venom contributing to the production of lifesaving death adder antivenom.



Shazza being milked for venom. Credit: Australian Reptile Park

The Australian Reptile Park has been supplying terrestrial snake venom for antivenom production since the 1950s. More than 200 venomous snakes are currently part of the program and are milked fortnightly at the Weigel Venom Centre. The program is estimated to help save

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around 300 Australian lives each year and has contributed to saving more than 25,000 lives since its inception. Shazza has made her own contribution to that lifesaving work, providing venom that has helped maintain Australia's supply of death adder antivenom.

"Her venom yields are literally twice the size of the average common death adder so there's no doubt she's saving more human lives with the venom she's producing." Said Billy Collett.

At approximately 15 years of age, Shazza still has more growing to do.

Keepers will continue closely monitoring her length, weight and condition, with the possibility that Australia's record-breaking death adder could one day pass the largest specimen recorded at 117 centimetres with a snout-vent length of 101 cm. That specimen resides in the Australian Museum Collection, which is home to over 180,000 Herpetological scientific specimens, which Mr. Trembath manages.

For now, at 110 centimetres and 1.55kg, Shazza has well and truly earned her place as one of the Australian Reptile Park's most remarkable snakes.

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