

# *Bitis rhinoceros*



## Scientific Classification

Kingdom:	Anamalia
Phylum:	Cordata
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Squamata
Suborder:	Serpentes
Family:	viperidae
Geunus	Bitis
Subgenus:	<i><b>B. rhinoceros</b></i>

## Binomial Name

***Bitis rhinoceros***  
([Schlegel](#), 18550)

## Synonyms

- *Vipera rhinoceros* Schlegel, 1855
- *Echidna rhinoceros*  
— [A.H.A. Duméril](#), 1856
- *C[lotho]. rhinoceros* — [Cope](#), 1860
- *V[ipera]. (Echidna) rhinoceros*  
— [Jan](#), 1863
- *Vipera (Bitis) rhinoceros*  
— [W. Peters](#), 1877
- *Bitis rhinoceros* — [W. Peters](#), 1882
- *Bitis gabonica rhinoceros*  
— [Mertens](#), 1951<sup>[3]</sup>
- *Bitis (Macrocerastes) rhinoceros*  
— [Lenk](#) et al., 1999
- *Bitis rhinoceros*  
— [Dobiey](#) & [Vogel](#), 2007<sup>[4]</sup>

**Common names:** *West African Gaboon viper*,<sup>[1]</sup> *Gabino viper*<sup>[2]</sup>

*Bitis rhinoceros* is a [venomous viper subspecies](#)<sup>[5]</sup> endemic to [West Africa](#). It is distinguished from the [nominate subspecies](#), *B. g. gabonica*, primarily by the presence of a set of large nasal "horns".<sup>[2]</sup>

## Description



Close-up of the head

*B. rhinoceros* has a distinctive set of enlarged [nasal scales](#) that look like a pair of horns on its nose. This is a characteristic that it shares with a close relative, *B. nasicornis*. However, *B. nasicornis* has a brighter color pattern and a narrower head.<sup>[6]</sup> *B. gabonica* has no such enlarged nasal "horns", and is overall somewhat smaller than *B. rhinoceros*. Also, in *B. g. gabonica*, the dark triangular marking leading back from the eye towards the angle of the mouth is divided. In *B. rhinoceros* it is not.

## Geographic range

*B. rhinoceros* is found in [West Africa](#) from [Ghana](#) west to [Guinea](#), including [Sierra Leone](#), [Liberia](#) and [Ivory Coast](#). [Togo](#) is also mentioned.<sup>[2][3][6]</sup>

According to [Spawls & Branch \(1995\)](#), Ghana and Togo are at the eastern limit of the range of this subspecies, and they begin to intergrade here with *B. gabonica*. The distribution map they provide indicates that the general range for *B. rhinoceros* does not include Togo, but that there has been at least one report of a specimen found there.<sup>[6]</sup> Togo, together with [Benin](#) and at least eastern Ghana, are part of a larger region known as the [Dahomey Gap](#); a relatively dry region that separates the rainforests of West Africa from those of Central Africa.<sup>[7][8]</sup>