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ODATRIA

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Odatria

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Any articles should be sent to the editor in electronic form and/or in printed paper format. All articles are refereed to person/s in the respective field. Photos, slides and diagrams are encouraged as all can be used and should be sent via registered post or email. Taxonomy usually follows Wilson & Swan, 2003 but authors can cite other references if used. The VHS editorial staff have the right to refuse publishing any articles that are deemed unsuitable, offensive or controversial.

The VHS would like to thank the following individuals for their help & support:

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Boyd's Forest Dragon *Hypsilurus boydii*
by Brian Barnett

EDITORIAL

by Brian Barnett

Oh well, a second chance of saying goodbye. I was under the impression that my last editorial was to be my last and it was written in that vein.

With a new committee due to come in this December, I wish them luck in all that they are about to take on and look forward to a stable fulfilling future. There are enough members on the present committee to continue on the road of rebuilding and reaching the goals set through discussions over this past year.

One of the main objectives will be to have the meetings topics and speakers and *Odatria* published well in advance and have the deadlines met. Particularly with *Odatria* it should serve as a reminder that there is a meeting coming up as well as giving the members some informative reading material roughly mid way between meetings. *Odatria* requires more control by the Executive Committee than has been in the past few editions. It was never planned to replace *Monitor*, the other publications *Reptiles Australia* & *Scales and Tails* were to do this. The average size of *Odatria* over the past three issues has been 25 pages, in my opinion – aiming too high. This can result in the difficulty of getting enough material and creating those dreaded deadline overshoots. As we have the other two major publications, and of course *Herpetofauna*, *Odatria* should be scaled back to what it was originally designed for. We don't expect any major articles to be presented for publication in *Odatria*, any writer would be going for a much greater circulation in either of the other publications. When we initially designed *Odatria* we planned on it being probably about half the size. Contents would include news from newspaper articles, updates from Australian Customs releases, article on the previous VHS guest speaker, upcoming events, general keeping type material, an exchange of material from other societies' on-line newsletters and if space permitted, a rerun of an old article, if still relevant, that many of our current members would not have seen.

I have nominated Phil Elliott for the position of President of the VHS for this coming year. I have known Phil for several years now and have spent time with him on this current committee. Naturally I believe he is the right choice, he is a very enthusiastic herper, has been in the scene for a relatively short time but has all of the qualities required to maintain and grow this society into the future. I wish him all the luck for the future and he knows that he will have the full 'unofficial' support from myself in the background. I know that Phil will give 100% to this position, if his nomination is successful, and work unselfishly for the members in general.

A special mention of thanks must go to Peter Comber who has worked tirelessly on the submissions for species presented to WPTAC for possible inclusion on our schedules. We are now keeping several new species that up until now were out of our reach. All species that were applied for in the appropriate manner were accepted and listed by the DSE. The VHS has a good relationship with the DSE and once again thanks particularly to Peter Comber respect is acknowledged by both parties. There are **no** negative planned changes or restrictions being aimed at the private keeping or trading in reptiles and amphibians in this state.

Contrary to what you may hear, the VHS numbers are on the increase and have risen by 63% since 2006. Membership numbers are now in excess of 200. We are down on numbers from the 'glory days' but with changes of life style over the past decade or so we would never expect to reach these highs again. We didn't have to compete with the internet, Foxtel etc. in those days.

See you all down the track,

Best Wishes
Brian Barnett
VHS President 2009

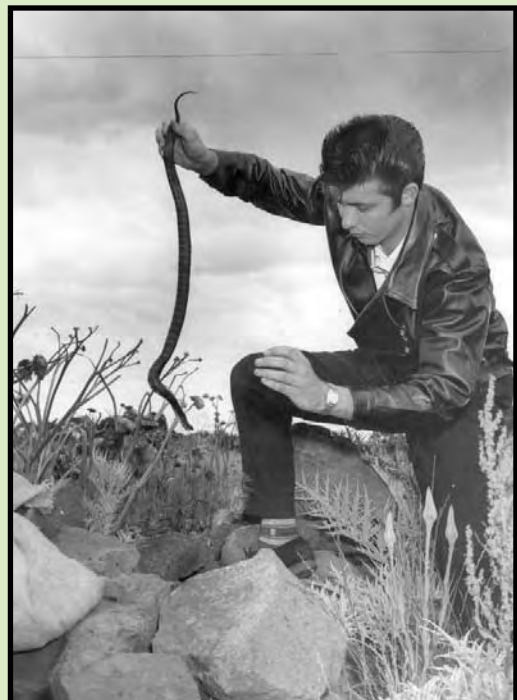


Photo: Herald Sun 1960

Keeping and Breeding Diamond Pythons



Images and Text
by Rob Sullivan

Introduction

Let me start by stating the obvious. There is probably dozens of ways to go about keeping and breeding Diamond Pythons or any python for that matter, this is what works for me.

Over time I have chatted with a fair few breeders, not just diamond breeders but python breeders in general and come up with a medley from all the information I collected.

Like most keepers, I started out with a Diamond Python, then another, then a few more. There is something about this animal that just seems to catch a lot of enthusiasts like me, into wanting to have them in my collection. It might be their graceful nature or their lovely colouration or simply the cluster of rosettes that just mesmerise you. I'm not sure, but out of all the snakes I have kept these are the ones at the top of my list.



Yearling Diamond Python

Housing

I simply keep mine housed in an enclosure 1200 x 600 x 600mm x 3 banks high (old scale; 4 x 2 x 2ft) unit that butts up to another unit the same size with a sliding door in between, a mirror image type look. I can either open the sliding door so there is a 2400 (8ft) long unit for roaming or I can simply drop the slide in to separate for feeding or for a period of time during breeding. I find this type of unit handy at cleaning times as you can just have the snake up one end, clean the unit at the other end without having to have extra tubs floating around to keep your reptile in whilst cleaning.

Light and heat is provided through a 40w basking lamp and floor heating from the unit below, with each unit being able to be isolated individually.

I aim for 28 degrees at the basking spot and depending on the ambient temperature the cooler end averages 25 degrees in the peak of the day. I use a 40w basking globe in my enclosure but obviously that may not suit your enclosure as every area a person lives in is different so some homework needs to be done to get what suits individuals needs.

Feeding

Our adult females and males are fed every 14 days on 200g rats, quail or rabbits. *Note for yourself "they seem to really love rabbits". I have never seen so much excitement as when a Diamond Python checks out a rabbit. They hit it that hard you nearly lose the feeding tongs with the rabbit.

Come the end of January our females feed every 7 days as I believe new body fats need to be available for their egg development period.

The males will stay as they are all year round except when cooling as I prefer to keep them leaner so they are/should be a bit more enthusiastic and not lazy when introductions are started. Hatchlings up to juveniles are fed every 7 to 10 days on appropriate sized rats.



Adult Male Diamond Python

Brumation

Brumation or winter cooling is for me started at the end of April. Towards the end of April the average night temperature (in Victoria) is around 6 degrees with mid 20 degree days, so the ambient temperatures are ideal for the cooling period to start. As I said earlier, we run a basking light with a thermostat during summer in order to prevent over heating even in a cooled house.

During winter no thermostat is used. We basically just run the basking for heating from 8am to 3pm; it takes some 2 to 3 hours for the enclosure to heat up that's why we start it at 8am. The basking spot gets to 26 to 28 degrees between about 12 o'clock and 3 o'clock. Our diamonds seem to love these conditions and move between the basking spot and cool end several times a day. 3pm is the cut off time for the basking light because when I lived in Ulladulla on the east coast of NSW the temperature started to cool down in the winter around this time. The way our units are setup I keep Bredli underneath the female diamonds, as the heat from their unit rises and acts as floor heating so no night heat is required.

I might add that the herp room has windows at either end so natural lighting hours are achieved from when the sun comes up until when it goes down. I don't seem to worry about 3 hours of this and 4 hours of that, in the wild the sun comes up and the sun goes down.

We do not offer food during brumation, our feeding stops at the end of April and resumes in the middle of August.



Diamond Pythons copulating

Breeding

The female generally has a pre breeding shed in mid to late August and the introductions start at the beginning of September; I've tried earlier but never any success.

I use 2 males at any one time; I try to give 1 male 2 days with the female prior to introducing the next male. Then the 3 are together for 2 days until the first male is taken out and the second stays with the female 2 more days before being removed. So a 6 day event for 1 female which during this time at least 2 matings generally would have occurred. From my observations the females seem to choose which male they are receptive to so really a choice is made by the female even though the male is the one searching for the female. I can't recall ever seeing a second male breed with the female, I'm not saying it doesn't happen, just I have never seen this happen.



Diamond Python laying a clutch of eggs in the provided nest box

After each 6 day breeding session small food items are offered to the female. Food is offered after each mating session until she refuses, which generally would determine that the female has become gravid. From our records females are generally refusing food at the start of November.

We supply a nesting box with a hole cut in the top for access and a thick layer of paper kept moist at approximately day 20 after a pre lay shed. We used a plastic tub with a hole in the side one year and ended up with more sphagnum moss in the enclosure than in the tub, what a pain! The gravid female will spend the majority of her time in the box coming out a few times over the day to bask for a short time then returning to her nesting box.

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Incubation

We have noticed that our females are more active in the last couple of days prior to egg laying than any other period whilst she has been gravid - she just seems to be restless. Our excitement has also grown so the female diamond is not the only one that is restless; especially overnight when most of our females have laid we are up every couple of hours checking them out.

On collection of the eggs for artificial incubation a towel is placed over the female to assist collection. Sometimes we collect the eggs as they come out and other times she is left alone to finish the lay. It just depends on the female and where the eggs lay, sometimes it is just too stressful on the female and she is left alone. We have separated and left clumps together with no ill effects either way; however we have been fortunate never to have had bad eggs in the bottom of a clump.



Clutch of Diamond Python eggs adhered together

Artificial incubation is done by using an esky, heat cord, thermometer/hygrometer and a dimming thermostat.

A container of sufficient size is used to house the eggs for the next 30 days. Vermiculite and water mixed at 50/50 weight is used, aiming for a layer approximately 30-40mm deep.

I measure temperatures in the incubator and the humidity in one of the containers aiming for 31 degrees and 99%+ humidity. It has not been too often I have had to add water to lift the humidity. The containers are set up well in advance; I find condensation builds up until the container has reached the incubator temperature.

A week before the eggs slit open there are noticeable changes with the eggs starting to collapse. Not long now!

At 35 days I slit the eggs myself if there is no sign of the little ones slitting them. They have been known to drown in their own fluids by not having an egg tooth to slit the egg themselves, so the process is done for them.



Incubator set up with tubs and premixed vermiculite

Hatchlings

Once the hatchlings' heads are poking out it will generally take a few days for them to come out completely. Once one starts the others follow suit.



Hatching Diamond Pythons

When they are completely out of their eggs they are removed to their new home. Food is not offered until a week after their first shed which is generally after 7 to 10 days. We start them off by just leaving a pinky mouse on the floor of their tub. Some take it straight away, some are more reluctant. No force is needed with diamonds from what I have found, just a heap of patience. After 2 feeds on pinky mice we start them on new born pinky rats, after that there is no stopping them.



Hatchling Diamond Python

Herping for the Tussock Skink

by Micah Bonnici
images by Chris Bonnici

About two weeks ago I saw my first Tussock Skink, *Pseudemoia pagenstecheri*. It was a privilege to see one because I had never seen one before. That day was a successful trip, as I got to see the skink and other herps. My Father and I went to the swampland at Westgate Park near the Westgate Bridge. I was looking through the tussock grasses when suddenly I saw a beautiful skink species that I had never seen before. As I approached the skink it darted into the water and swam away



Tussock Skink habitat in Westgate Park

This beautiful species of skink belongs to the family of skinks (Scincidae) with 370 species of skink in Australia and with new species being discovered all the time. It belongs to the genus *Pseudemoia*, which has six species in the whole genus. Distinguishable from other genera by being a small to medium skink species and found in cold temperate areas.

The species has a brown to olive colouration with strong black vertebral stripes down the body and stopping part way along the tail. Some specimens have a little speckling on the body. They have a white to grey mid-lateral stripe and under that, they have an orangey mid-lateral stripe, with some having a reddish brown tail. Females are the larger sex and males may develop red colouration on their throat. It is a small to medium sized skink, with an average length of 15cm.

They can be found where tussock grasses are abundant, near waterways, particularly near or at the edge of swamps. It often shelters beneath rocks and fallen timber. It is found through the highlands of New South Wales, in southern Victoria, the south east of Tasmania and eastern South Australia.

Tussock Skinks probably eat a variety of invertebrate species. It most likely feeds on insects including aquatic species, making it more likely to be insectivorous than anything else.

This species comes out during the day and spends most of its time in the tussock grasses. It also comes out to bask during the day. When disturbed they escape to the water. When picked up, one of their defensive behaviours is playing dead. This species is a semi aquatic species spending some of its time in the water. They can drop their tail to escape from a predator.

Most of their subfamily or genus gives birth to live young. Most cold adapted species give birth to live young, and this species is restricted to the cold temperate areas including the alpine region. It gives birth to an average of four live young.

This species of skink is a threatened species being endangered in Tasmania and rare in South Australia. This may be the case of habitat loss and severe fragmentation from urban development. But they are quite a common species through the Victoria region especially the Melbourne area and also the highlands of NSW (north east NSW).

It is a truly beautiful and fascinating skink species.



The Author - Micah Bonnici

Micah Bonnici is a 13 year old herp enthusiast, who belongs to a number of herpetological and wildlife societies.

ASK THE VHS

The VHS receives a number of email enquiries from both members and non-members alike about aspects of animal husbandry and other associated topics. We have reproduced a few here verbatim to give you some idea of the range of subjects we deal with. Please feel free to contact us at vhs@optusnet.com.au with your questions. You never know - you may even find your question and answer published here!

Hi VHS,

I'm hoping that you are able to help me find out a little more about snakes and particularly ways of deterring them.

I live in Viewbank which is a suburb just out of Melbourne and our house is not more than 100m from the Yarra River.

Last month our Kelpie was killed by a snake in our back garden and only a few days ago we found a brown snake near the back door. The common snakes found in the area are Tiger Snakes, Brown Snakes and Red Belly Black's.

So far all we've done is remove all overgrown plants and keep the grass mowed, we don't have any ponds or food out that may attract snakes either.

Do you know anything about the Sentinel Snake Repellents? They are a solar powered electronic discs that send low frequency vibrations through the ground www.snakerepellent.com.au I hear that there are also various types of chemical based repellents too, although from reading opinions on forums they don't seem to be very effective at all.

Do you have an opinion on the repellents mentioned above? (particularly the Sentinel)

Do you have any other ideas that may help to repel snakes?

Your opinion would be greatly appreciated?

If you are not the best person to comment would you mind sending this email on anyone that you believe may be able to help?

*Thanks again,
Louise*

Hi Louise,

I'm writing in regard to your query above, and answer as a committee member of the VHS. Firstly, sorry for your loss, I am a fellow dog lover.

There is not a great deal people are able to do to prevent snakes from 'visiting', you are more likely to have success discouraging them to stick around. The age old advice of not having long grass around and things lying on the ground etc is very good advice (your info. above suggests you're onto that though).

Living so close to the river (a bit of a travel route or corridor for snakes) you will from time to time have a visitor. Bird aviaries and chook runs that may attract mice also mean that snakes may have a reason to visit. Keep in mind though that you can have the most unattractive (to a snake) property and you still may get them passing through if they live nearby - after all they won't know it's not worth visiting until they've been there (you know like Canberra!).

I have had the opportunity to trial the solar powered snake repeller with a Red-bellied Black Snake and can confidently say that I and my colleague did not see any kind of behaviour at all to indicate that the snake was deterred, bothered or put off by the immediate presence of the device. I have tried a number of times to contact the company and query them on their product and after repeated attempts through their own web site I have given up. I can not recommend the product and in my experience it did not work.

I am aware of at least one chemical based repellent, I am keen to trial but can not comment on the effectiveness of any of these as I have not yet had any direct experience. One very expensive method is to completely 'line your property with some very fine mesh or sheet metal, all the way around the base of your fence. This is not a perfect solution, far from it, as you would need to go completely around, and should a snake find it's way in it may have difficulty getting out and then all you have achieved is the reverse of your original intention.

I understand it can be difficult living where these guys visit and clearly not wanting them around. Do you have any contact details for snake controllers in your area? If not let me know and I can help you out with some names and contact numbers (although going away shortly and back on Tuesday)

Hopefully I have been some (a little bit) help,
Regards, Peter Comber VHS

Hi how are you?

My name is Mathew McCulloch and im 24 years of age. I was wondering if you could please give me some information on getting a job related to reptiles. I already do part time work with a reptile display company down here in geelong, victoria. What im interested in is what avenues i have to explore, what kind of jobs are out there and what training and education do i need to get there. Any help would be greatly appreciated. I have been a keep reptile keeper for a few years now with several snakes and other herps already in my collection.

Plus i will soon have a croc to add to it. Thankyou for taking the time to read this and im looking forward to your reply,

Regards, Mathew

Hi Mathew,

I'm writing in regard to your query below, and answer as a committee member of the VHS. As I am sure you are well aware it can be quite difficult to gain employment in this field, even more so if you have a particular group of animals you are keen on. There are a few things you can do to improve your chances.

On the training and education side of things, tertiary science degrees certainly do not hurt, but these are not necessary. The TAFE institutions are the educational bodies that 'are in cahoots' with the zoos in respect to qualifications, Box Hill TAFE is the main one, but certainly not the only. The zoo keeping certificate can only be completed whilst employed in this field, check out your nearest TAFE for further info. Charles Sturt Uni in Wagga Wagga NSW also offers some courses via correspondence that can be quite beneficial.

The jobs available in this state are limited to the three government run zoos, the many privately run wildlife parks and of course the smaller mobile wildlife demonstrators. It sounds like you've taken a couple of steps, at least, in the right direction: keeping reptiles and working with a wildlife demonstrator. Zoos Victoria run 'interview days' a couple of times a year. The go there is they have a number of people all turn up for a full day of 'activities' and interviews, where you participate in basic zookeeping duties, team activities and one-on-one interviews. The idea is that at the end of the day they have a number of people that they know have 'passed' and are already rated as suitable, then when jobs pop up they have a ready list of people to contact, have a look at www.zoo.org.au for more info - go to the HR section and follow the links.

As well as this it is well worth getting yourself on the mailing list of www.australasianzookeeping.org you will receive an e-mail every fortnight or so detailing jobs in this field. Alternatively you could go to the positions vacant tab regularly on this same website.

Hope all of this is in some way of assistance to you and good luck,

Regards, Peter Comber VHS

Hi, I'm writing this letter with regards to obtaining some information on how to get a aerosol can of 20g/kg d-phe-nothrin 20:80 .this would be used to do a fogging treatment for our blue tounge lizzards who seem to have mites . or is there another product you could recomend to get rid of mites that would be great . Hope to hear back from someone.

Yours gratefully, Stephanie

Hi Stephanie,

I'm writing in regard top your query above, and answer as a committee member of the VHS. The product you query is better known as 'Top of Descent', it does indeed work quite well and I can recommend it. It is also the product of choice for a number of Australian zoos/parks/institutions as an effective means of snake (reptile)mite eradication and/or prevention. It is widely available and (I believe) stocked by a number of pet shops that retail reptile related goods. I usually source it direct from the distributor and you will find all the info you need at www.herpshop.com.au , this is a well known herp products business and comes personally recommended as a fellow herp and VHS member!

I hope you're able to sort out your mite problem,

Regards, Peter Comber VHS



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday December 4th, 2009
7:00pm - 10:30pm

Monash University - Wellington Road - Clayton

Usual venue - Building 72 (see website for directions)

**Guest speaker will be Jane Melville
from Museums Victoria**

For further information <http://www.vhs.com.au/>

Entry is \$5 for non members and free for members

VHS MEETING REVIEW

September 4th, 2009

Chris Banks

Monash Uni was again the venue for the second Victorian Herpetological Society meeting of 2009. This time we all ventured out to listen to Melbourne Zoo's own, Chris Banks.

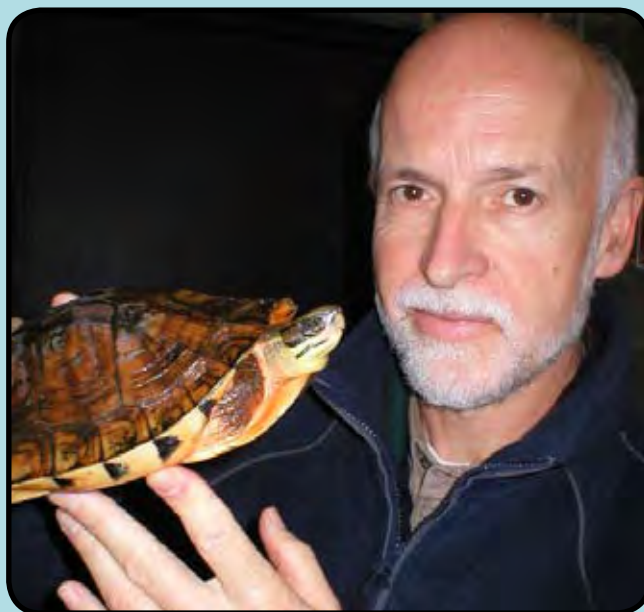
After an update on the VHS from our president, the committee got stuck in to the auction. Some useful herp equipment was picked up, although there also seemed to be a couple of items up for grabs for the second and third time that have turned out to be tough to give away!! Thanks to the punters that continue to bid on them and re-donate them! Mike Alexander from Black Snake Productions donated several classic editions of Herpetofauna that had some very eager bidders. The auction had fewer items on offer than we have seen in the past - if anyone has any useful items they are willing to donate they can contact the VHS by email at vhs@optusnet.com.au or even just bring them on the night of a meeting. It would be a great help to our society.



Phil, Kevin and Brian get the auction going

Peter Comber then took to the microphone and did a very impressive job of introducing our guest speaker for the night.

Chris Banks started at Melbourne Zoo in 1969, working mainly in the Reptile Department for three years before leaving for the UK. The following three years were spent at Bristol and London Zoos, before returning to Melbourne in 1975. Keeping and curatorial roles focused on reptiles and amphibians, including Chair of the ARAZPA (Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria) Reptile & Amphibian TAG (Taxon Advisory Group) for 10 years.



Guest speaker - Chris Banks

An interest in the role of zoos in conservation in the late 1980s led to initiating Zoos Victoria's participation in south-east Asian projects in the early 1990s - in Hong Kong (Romer's Tree Frog), Vietnam (threatened freshwater turtles and tortoises) and the Philippines (Philippine Crocodile). In 2003, Chris transferred to the Wildlife Conservation & Science Department, where his main role is managing ZV's international conservation partnerships.



Mike Swan's herp books are always popular

Supporting his zoo position, Chris is Chair of the Tenkile Conservation Alliance Board; a member of the IUCN/SSC (International Union for the Conservation of Nature/Species Survival Commission) Specialist Groups for Crocodiles, Tortoises & Freshwater Turtles, and Conservation Breeding; International Coordinator on the Philippine Crocodile National Recovery Team; and Board member for the Turtle Conservation Fund and Zoo Keeper Association of the Philippines.



Chris Banks speaking about the Philippine Crocodile

Chris got started on his first talk "Securing a future for the Philippine Crocodile" and began by telling us the Philippine crocodile is the most endangered crocodile in the world. A survey conducted in 1982 estimated less than 100 of the crocodiles remained in the wild, with only a small number of them being adults. It didn't take long for everyone to see the passion Chris has in securing a future for this species, and we were all on board with him! When Chris began working with this species the first step was to establish a recovery plan. He spoke of the difficulties of where to start and the frustrations he encountered, including changing the locals' views of the crocodile.



Chris and a slide of a photo he took of a young local girl with a Philippine Crocodile



One of Chris' slides of a Philippine Crocodile

There are two main populations of these crocodiles left in the Philippines, one at Luzon Island which is accessible for animal studies and the other in Mindanao Island which is unsafe due to civil unrest in the area. DNA tests on animals from both areas show that there is no major genetic difference between the two populations.

After an extensive survey, Chris and the team dedicated to working on the recovery of the crocodiles had found a total population of 330 crocodiles. Thankfully, due to funding from some governments and private zoos, a facility was built to house and raise the crocodiles until 18 months of age. At this stage they are released into the wild with a much higher percentage of survival than if they were hatchlings emerging from the egg.

Another area Chris helped work on was educating the locals about the crocodiles, their behaviour and just how endangered they are. The locals have now come up with the word MABUWAYA which means "long live the crocodile"!



A slide of a local group being educated about the Philippine Crocodile

Classic Article

Frilled To Bits
Breeding Frill-Necked Lizards

by David Klier

Originally published in Monitor Vol. 9 No. 2 April 1998

In June 1995 I decided to initiate a breeding program for Frill-necked lizards (*Chlamydosaurus kingii*). I had 8 Frill-necked lizards from the Northern Territory, 6 of which were old enough to breed; of these 2 were females, the remaining 4 were males. The adults were between 14 months and 5 years of age.

Housing

The breeding colony was housed in a cage 7 foot (210cm) long and 5 foot (150cm) high and 3 foot (90cm) in depth. Heating was supplied by 6 globes and was thermostatically controlled. In addition to this, one 4 foot double florescent was installed to provide UV and full spectrum lighting; all of this was controlled by a timer.

Upright vertical branches were supplied for the reptiles to perch on. The branches were placed so the Frillies could bask close to the heat source. The substrate consisted of a fine red soil about 1 inch deep.

Since the original housing arrangements I've extended the herp house and built a new indoor/outdoor enclosure for the Frillies. The dimensions now being 12 foot (3600cm) long, 7 foot (210cm) deep and 7 foot (210cm) high. The enclosure is fully insulated with a large window on the northern side for sun. It has a skyroof with a sliding door to close, in cold conditions. All windows are fully insulated. The enclosure is heated with 6 x 250 watt heating lamps, five are mounted on the ceiling and one mounted part of the way down one wall, as well as natural sunlight. Heating is controlled by a thermostat.



Male Frilly

Photo: Phil Elliott

A misting system was installed overhead to increase humidity during the wet season, which is controlled by a timer.

The enclosure is landscaped with numerous branches and indoor plants, example: indoor fig trees, grass trees, palms etc. As well as the Frillies being housed in the enclosure there are four adult Land Mulletts (*Egernia major*) and two adult Gidgee Skinks (*Egernia stokesii*) all of which seem to get along with each other.



Photo: Jo Comber

Initiation of Breeding

On the 1st of June, 1995 I decided to cool the Frillies and decrease their daylight hours. I cooled them down to a daylight temperature of approximately 29°C and the nightly temperature to approximately 18°C. The timer was set for a nine hour day and a fifteen hour night. I kept this procedure going for the months of June and July. The humidity in the cage was approximately 34%. During this time the cage was kept dry with no water spraying. The Frillies were given water directly from a small bottle every 2 to 3 days.

On the 1st of August, 1995 daylight hours were increased to 12 hours. The temperature was increased to approximately 33°C in daylight and 22°C at night. I began spraying the cage twice weekly. This procedure was done by using a 2 litre pressure pump spray bottle. The entire cage was sprayed, including the walls, branches, ground and lizards, with about 1 litre of water. This increased the humidity to approximately 50%. On the 12th of September daily spraying commenced, thus increasing the humidity to between 70 and 80%.

Mating

I first noticed mating behaviour towards the end of August from one of the smaller males, this consisted of the head bobbing, with frill extended and circular arm waving motion. However, this lasted only a couple of days due to another male being more dominant, this male was the same age but a lot larger. Although I never witnessed any fight between these two males I believe there would have been a fight or conflict of sorts for dominance. From that point in time the larger male had complete control over the other 3 males, who would shy away whenever the large male would begin his mating.



Photo: Nick Stock

Since daily spraying began mating behaviour had increased to a high level with the large male bobbing his head and waving his arm regularly throughout the day.

The females would respond by pointing their nose straight up in the air, waving their arm in a circular motion and lifting their bodies up on all four legs.

The male was observed chasing the females on a number of occasions. On the 22nd of September 1995, I witnessed copulation between the dominant male and the youngest female (17 months old, length in total was 19 inches (47.5cm)).

I noticed that for 2 days after copulation the female stayed high on the branch without descending, when she did descend she walked around on all four legs swaying her body from side to side with her head lowered and moving in a circular motion. Her frill was half erect. This behaviour continued all breeding season. I feel this behaviour was a signal to tell the male she was gravid, because I noticed the male did not bother trying to mate with her again until after egg laying.

On the 13th of October, 1995 copulation was noticed with the older female (4½ years old, length in total 23 inches (57cm)), this was noticed twice within half an hour. Her behaviour was identical to the younger female.

After I witnessed the actual mating with the younger female I decided it was time to set up an area in the cage for egg laying.

Preparing for Egg Laying

I used an area of approximately 3 foot (89cm) square with a depth of 10 inches (25cm). I partitioned this area off with two large logs in order to retain the egg laying medium.

The medium consisted of two thirds garden loam and one third peat moss. This was well mixed together. After the medium was in place I watered the area until it was fairly moist. With the daily water spraying the medium was sprayed as well to keep the area moist. After I added the medium I found it to be of a great benefit in keeping the humidity at the level I wanted.

Laying of Eggs

On the 14th of October, 1995 the younger female deposited a clutch of 9 eggs in a hole she had dug in the corner of the cage in the prepared medium. All eggs appeared to be fertile so I removed them for incubation.

A second copulation was noted on the 24th of October, 1995 and four weeks later on the 22nd of November, 1995 the female laid a second clutch of 12 eggs, laying them in exactly the same place as the first clutch. These eggs appeared fertile and were removed for incubation.

All eggs were approximately 30mm (just over an inch) in length when deposited. No weights were measured.

Incubation of Eggs

A large clear sealed container was used for the incubation medium, which consisted of 815gm of medium sized vermiculite mixed with water to a one to one ratio. In the lower half of the container a hole was drilled so the probe from the digital thermometer could be placed inside the container just under the surface of the vermiculite to read the temperature. I adjusted the incubating temperature to between 29 and 30°C. Humidity was 95% plus.

All eggs incubating were monitored at least once a week to check progress and to remove and that may have died. Approximately 52 days after the first clutch was laid one egg appeared to have died. The egg was removed and opened for inspection. Inside was a partly formed baby that had died. The only reason I could come up with was that this was the egg I had accidentally dropped when initially collecting them and it was not placed in the container correctly due to not knowing which way it had been laid. All other eggs were developing well and all looked very good. Growth in the first clutch was astounding. By 2 months of incubation the eggs had more than doubled in size, and still had approximately 20 days to go.

In the meantime the second clutch which was in the same container was developing well with slight growth noticed as approximately 30 days incubation, but looked small compared to the first clutch of eggs.

Hatching of Eggs

First clutch. Between the 2nd and 3rd of January, 1996 exactly 80 days after being laid, the first two baby Frillies slit their eggs and hatched out overnight. It was a great felling to see these beautiful little lizards out of their eggs alive and well, both were removed from the incubator. I measured and weighed them then placed them in their cage. During the first night more eggs were slit and more babies emerged, some babies had their heads protruding. The following morning, 4th January, 1996 two more babies had hatched out with the remaining two babies hatching later that day, so all eight babies hatched over a two day period and all were fit and healthy.

Second clutch. The second clutch of 12 Frilly eggs started hatching on the 10th of February, 1996. After 80 days incubation, all had emerged by the end of the day on 11th of February, 1996.



Photo: Nick Stock

Housing and Feeding of Baby Frillies

All babies were housed in 4 foot aquariums and provided with a 2 foot fluoro (full spectrum) and a basking lamp to provide a hot spot. Air temperature in the aquariums was approximately 32°C.

All babies began feeding within a couple of days of birth. The food consisted of small crickets, cockroaches and small white mealworms. I decided to have a daily feeding routing for the babies with every alternative day the insects being dusted with Reocal and Herp-Vite multi vitamins and minerals, then one day off feeding for the week. The aquariums were lightly sprayed daily and babies were given water from a spray bottle to drink, all accepted this very well.

With this feeding pattern in place the growth rates of the babies was very good. Measurements were taken on the 23rd of April, 1996 of the length and weight of the remaining babies from both clutches after the sale of the others.



Photo: Jo Comber

Breeding

Female No. 1 has yet to produce a god clutch of eggs, the reason for this is unknown but on both occasions when gravid she dropped the eggs from the branch she was perched on. The first clutch of eggs were retained for months after they were actually due for deposition, being dropped in April 1996. The second clutch were dropped at the right time but were no good after being dropped from a height. Eggs from both clutches were examined, with most proving to be infertile but a number of them having embryos.

All eggs from female No. 2 were fertile and developed well during incubation, apart from the second clutch in 1996 in which the eggs developed at a slower rate and did not increase in weight to the same size as the first clutch.

As can be seen by the data on the 2nd clutch (Female No. 2) the babies were born smaller and lighter in weight, this is due to a minor mistake on my part. Instead of setting up a new container for incubating I used the same container which was used for the 1st clutch, obviously the moisture content had reduced enough for the eggs to develop at a slower rate and not increase to the size of the 1st clutch, as indicated by the weights of the eggs taken just prior to hatching. Unfortunately a couple of the babies were weak at birth and one died after 53 days. As you can see by growth rates after 35 days the babies are only now reaching the size of the babies from the 1st clutch at birth. Apart from the other ill baby all appear to be progressing well and appear to be healthy and without problems.

Sexing the Babies

This proved to be very difficult because the babies were small. Brian Barnett and I attempted to extrude the hemipenes but this was short lived because the babies were too small and delicate. Later, with the use of a magnifying glass I decided to try to count the pre-anal pores which in itself worked well, except for the inconsistency in the number of pores counted on each animal which ranged from 6-8 on different animals. It was decided to leave sexing until the animals old enough to physically see the changes in the animals.

Table 1. Breeding Data 1995-96

Female	Date Deposited	No. Eggs	Length	No. Hatched
No. 1	25 April 1996	8	32mm	0
No. 2	14 October 1995	9	30mm	8
No. 2	22 November 1995	12	30mm	12
No. 1	23 December 1996	10	32mm	0
No. 2	13 September 1996	11	30mm	11
No. 2	9 December 1996	10	30mm	10

Table 2. Hatching Data 1995-96

Date Hatched	Inc. Period	No. Hatched	Av. Length	Av. Weight
3 January 1996	80 days	8	140mm	3.8g
10 February 1996	80 days	12	138mm	3.6g
28 November 1996	79 days	11	138mm	4.0g
25 February 1997	78 days	10	102mm	3.8g

Table 3. Growth Rate of Babies

Date Hatched	Days Old	Av. Length	Av. Weight
3 January 1996	30	178mm	4.8g
3 January 1996	110	242mm	10.5g
10 February 1996	30	152mm	4.7g
10 February 1996	70	216mm	9.0g
28 November 1996	38	165mm	5.0g
28 November 1996	150	178mm	10.3g
25 February 1997	35	133mm	4.3g
25 February 1997	70	127mm	4.7g



Photo: Jo Comber

Acknowledgement

Brian Barnett provided guidance and assistance during this project and helped ensure my successful breeding of Frillies.

HERP HAPPENINGS

Snakes In Decline As Habitat Changes

When Peter Mirtschin recently found a tiger snake in his garage at Clayton on the lower reaches of the Murray in South Australia, he was over the moon.

He couldn't get the smile off his face as he gently cornered the serpent, gripped it by the neck and tail and held it up to admire the stripes that give it its name.

It was like meeting a long lost friend.



Peter Mirtschin excited by his tiger snake find (ABC)

The herpetologist has been handling snakes for more than 30 years and has built an international business based on selling venom taken from several dozen varieties of snakes.

While he milks such exotic species as spitting cobras, diamondback rattlers and west african gaboon vipers, he has a fondness for the local breeds like brown, red belly black and tiger snakes.

But while the brown snake in particular continues to thrive, Mr Mirtschin worries tiger snakes are starting to disappear in South Australia, particularly near Lakes Alexandrina and Albert on the lower Murray.

"Populations in those areas will disappear in 20 years or sooner because of lack of water in those two bodies and the loss of habitat," he said.

On hearing the news that tiger snake numbers are dropping, the question flashes in your head whether this is a good or a bad news story.

After all, tiger snakes carry lethal doses of venom in their tiny fangs and grow up to 1.5 metres long.

Thirty years ago, more Australians died from tiger snake bites than from any other species.

BIG DECLINE

Now that dubious distinction belongs to brown snakes but Mr Mirtschin explains that losing tiger snakes is a bad thing.

"Twenty or thirty years ago tiger snakes used to be the most important snakes in Australia in terms of envenimation for both humans and animals. The crude evidence supports the view that tiger snakes are on the decline big time in all habitats.

"They are a medically significant snake species in terms of fatalities and morbidity; they are more importantly a critical predator in the ecology of the lakes."

Tiger snakes are most at home around water because their main food source is frogs.

They give birth to live offspring and a female can deliver several dozen young per year.

As a result their numbers used to be so high that legends abound from the Murray-Darling Basin of hundreds being caught in a single day, particularly in times of flood when they wriggle to higher ground.

Unlike the nervous brown snake, the tiger snake is generally more passive which might be another reason it is so easily caught and killed.

Mr Mirtschin says tiger snakes are not being killed off but are a victim of changing ecosystems.

"Frogs and tadpoles are the link between juvenile tiger snakes and adults. Without plentiful frogs, the recruitment drops off. Adults are quite happy to feed on a variety of prey but juveniles are restricted to frogs and tadpoles," he said.

Mark Hutchinson from the South Australian Museum agrees that human intervention in changing rivers and wetlands is responsible for the reduction in numbers.

"Waterways have been drained or have low flows and increased salinity has also damaged wetlands."

After catching his visitor, Mr Mirtschin released the tiger snake into a wetland on his property with the hope it won't be the last he sees of it.

"It is a sad story. Tigers are a critical predator in the ecology of the lakes. That link is going to disappear."

MIKE SEXTON
7.30 Report - ABC News
November 2009

2m Croc Caught On Busy City Road

A CROCODILE has stunned residents in Darwin's northern suburbs after it was caught taking a stroll on a suburban footpath.

The 2m-long male saltie was basking next to Vanderlin Drive near Homes Jungle Nature Park - only 5km from the police headquarters.

Kim Lock, of Woodroffe in Palmerston, said she was shocked when she spotted the croc about 7.30pm on Friday.

She said she thought there had been a crash when she saw several cars on the side of the busy road, with passengers craning their necks to get a closer look at the reptile.

"I didn't believe it," she said. There were heaps of cars.

"I thought the people who had (their car headlights) on it had killed a big cat because it was just lying flat on the road. It was a real spectacle."

Several cars pulled over and onlookers stopped while the croc stood still on the bitumen footpath - only metres from the busy road.

The beast may have escaped from the nearby Crocodylus Park. But the croc farm and parks and wildlife rangers could not confirm that yesterday.

Territory croc catcher Robbie Risk was called to remove the strolling saltie.



Robert Risk and Dylan Risk with Anthony Vincent and David Espie who helped capture the animal. Picture: NICHOLAS WELSH

He said the croc was moving towards the nature reserve when he arrived at the scene.

"The croc didn't move much, he wasn't too fussed at all," Mr Risk said.

"As soon as I got there I put the snap rope on him, taped his mouth and covered his eyes. He's actually in a good condition."

The catch came only a week after croc catchers nabbed a 4.7m reptile from Berry Springs - the biggest saltwater crocodile caught in a trap this year.

Ms Lock, a public servant, said she had seen many crocs while fishing in Territory waters but the latest sighting was the tip of the iceberg.

"It was pretty close to the road," she said. "That's the closest we got up to one outside an enclosure."

NADJA HAINKE
Northern Territory News
November 2009

Komodo Dragon Evolved In Queensland, Scientists Reveal

THE world's largest living lizard, Indonesia's komodo dragon, was actually an Aussie that evolved here three to four million years ago.



Queensland Museum scientists have found komodo dragon fossils at Mt Etna, near Rockhampton in central Queensland, showing the lizard was roaming around there about 300,000 years ago.

It's believed that at least two giant lizard species evolved here before dispersing northwest to the islands of Timor, Flores and Java over the past million years, The Courier-Mail reports.

Museum senior curator of geosciences Scott Hocknull and colleagues from Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia released a research paper yesterday challenging a long-held scientific hypothesis that the komodo evolved from a small ancestor in isolation on the Indonesian islands.

Mr Hocknull said the fossil record showed that over the past four million years Australia was home to the world's largest lizards, including the 5m giant megalania.

BRIAN WILLIAMS
The Courier Mail
October 2009

Aussie Lizard Rolls Over To Avoid Sex

Females of an Australian species of lizard rely on testosterone for a most unusual method of keeping amorous males off their back, researchers have found.

Evolutionary ecology Dr Devi Stuart-Fox of the University of Melbourne, and colleagues, report their findings online ahead of print publication in the Journal of Comparative Physiology A.

In most animals that use colourful displays for attraction, it's usually the male that's flashy, such as the peacock.

But the female Lake Eyre dragon lizard (*Ctenophorus maculosus*) is an exception. She displays a bright orange belly and throat during parts of her breeding season, which researchers think is driven by the hormone testosterone.



Surprisingly, this pose of a female Lake Eyre dragon lizard stops unwanted males from mating with her

Interestingly, the colour features prominently when the female wants to put off a male from copulating with her.

Stuart-Fox and colleagues took a close look at a number of female lizards taken from Lake Eyre in South Australia and observed what happened when they were in the company of males.

PERSISTENT MALES

When Lake Eyre lizards copulate the male bites the female's neck, climbs on top of her, wraps his tail around hers and inserts one of his two penises.

This can be hazardous to the health of the female because when the males bite them on the neck this can pierce the female's spine and result in death.

Therefore once the female's eggs have been fertilised, she will try to avoid mating. But males aren't easily put off.

"The males are really persistent," says Stuart-Fox. "They try and force copulation and they harass females all

through the breeding season."



A male Lake Eyre dragon

Unreceptive females scare off advancing males by taking on a threatening posture.

If this doesn't work, they throw themselves on their backs and reveal their bright orange underside.

"Males can't actually force themselves onto a female when she's on her back," says Stuart-Fox.

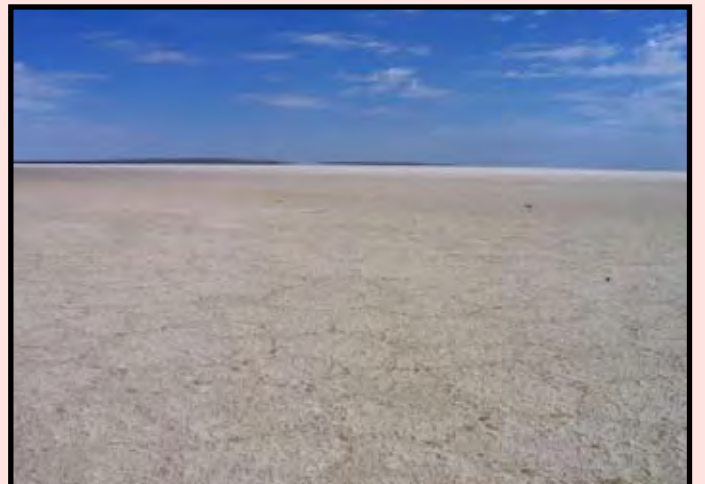
SEX STEROID

Stuart-Fox also measured the levels of sex steroids in blood samples taken from the lizards over time.

Progesterone and testosterone usually decrease once female lizards are no longer receptive to mating, but not in the Lake Eyre dragon lizard.

"They maintain high testosterone levels all through the reproductive cycle including when they weren't receptive later in the cycle," says Stuart-Fox.

The researchers believe the testosterone is used to drive the female courtship rejection behaviours.



Lake Eyre - Home to the lizards

WAR OF THE SEXES

Sexual conflict between persistent males and reluctant females has led to an evolutionary tit for tat involving all manner of behaviours, says Stuart-Fox.

"You get this runaway process where males evolve elaborate ways of trying to gain matings and females evolve elaborate ways of trying to avoid matings," says Stuart-Fox.

But she wondered about the evolutionary benefit to females of spending time on their back, which makes it difficult for them to run away from predators.

Especially given they live in a rather drab landscape, the bright orange could be a flag to predators that says "come and get me", says Stuart-Fox.

But she says more recent studies have suggested predators do not recognise the brightly-coloured female lizards as prey.

So, says Stuart-Fox, the risk of being vulnerable to prey is much lower than the risk of having unwanted sex.

ANNA SALLEH
ABC Science Online
September 2009

Two Heads Are Better Than One

A TWO-HEADED snake was on display for the first time at an Ipswich reptile festival at the weekend as hundreds of families flocked to the showgrounds.

The two-headed spider children's python as well as a conjoined turtle were the star attractions at the inaugural Scales and Tails Australia Reptile Festival in Ipswich.



Snake farmer Warwick Denshire said the conjoined snake was very unusual and the first of its kind he had seen survive.

"It's very uncommon to get a conjoined snake and it's very uncommon for them to survive," he said.

"There seems to be a difference of opinion between the

two brains."

The Newcastle farmer said the 10-month-old 35cm-long snake had one set of internal organs and he had to be careful to feed both heads smaller food it could digest.

Mr Denshire said people had at first called for him to euthanase the animal because it might not survive but it was now living a happy, healthy life.

Turtle breeder Craig Latta's two-headed common eastern snake neck turtle called Hydra has six legs, three lungs, one stomach and one tail and scuttled around for amazed reptile-lovers.



The Sunshine Coast man said the turtle was found in New South Wales and given to him to look after as it would not have survived in the wild.

Mr Latta said the turtle's heads used to fight against each other but they now worked together.

"One can be up surfacing for air while the other one is feeding," he said.

The Crocodile Hunter's father Bob Irwin was another attraction at the festival, sharing his opinions on conservation with fellow wildlife enthusiasts.

Mr Irwin, who worked closely with Australian reptiles in his youth, said events like the reptile festival helped keep people aware of current wildlife issues.

Mr Irwin also used the event to highlight the need to stop land clearing in Ipswich to protect the area's koalas.

"The government have had years and years to get this right and they've just made a mess of it," Mr Irwin said.

"We've lost 50 per cent of our koalas in three years - which is terrible.

"And 50 per cent of the females left are infertile which makes it even worse because we can't get the breeding programs going.

"We've got to have progress with a little bit more thought going into it so we don't destroy the very reason we all came to this part of Queensland," he said.

Ipswich snake breeders and publishers of Scales & Tails magazine, Troy and Denver Kuligowski, organised the festival.

They said they were thrilled with the number of people who came to see the reptiles.

FELICITY CALDWELL
Gold Coast Mail
October 2009

Snake Terror For Pensioner

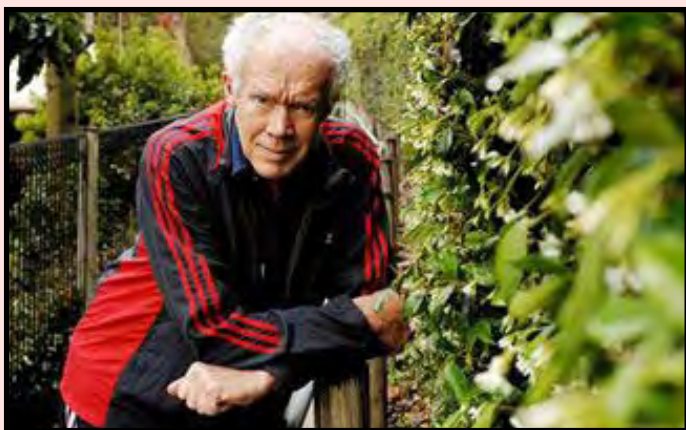
GOONELLABAH man Frank Howell didn't know what hit him when he awoke in his lounge chair at 3am last Wednesday.

"I thought someone had belted me on the back of the hand with a broom handle," the shaken pensioner said.

Mr Howell was bitten by an unidentified snake in the lounge room of his Mountain View Drive home, but did not fully comprehend what had happened until much later that day.

Groggy and tired he went to bed, only to wake at 7am with a 'violent headache'. He continued with his plans for the day, which included driving to Coolangatta to be with his wife, who recently suffered a stroke.

"Basically I did everything wrong and the doctors said I am a very lucky man, so I wanted to warn others. I've been so incoherent and am only coming out of the stupor now," he said.



LUCKY: Snake-bite survivor Frank Howell, of Goonellabah, won't go home until he's sure his uninvited guest is gone.

Mr Howell was admitted to Tweed Hospital on Wednesday afternoon. The hospital confirmed his case was serious, that he was treated for an unidentified snake bite and had sustained local tissue damage.

After nine hours, Mr Howell was discharged and returned home only to realise with a chill on Saturday there was no way a snake could enter or exit his heavily screened home except through an open door.

Having not left a door open since the attack, he knew

whatever had bitten him was probably still there.

He has moved into a motel until he can locate the reptile and has had a builder confirm there are no other possible entry or exit points.

Local reptile handler, George 'the Snake Man' Ellis, is familiar with such scenarios and said he has pulled a lot of deadly eastern brown snakes from Mr Howell's area recently. He offered to assist Mr Howell find the snake, or snakes - as he put it ominously.

"It's been a crazy snake season this year and there's much worse to come," he said.

"Unless you're an expert the only way to respond to them is do nothing. Just wait. Whether it's five minutes or five hours, do not move. You don't see snakes biting trees, do you? I suggest to everyone to put my number on speed-dial and just wait for me to get there.

"I had a woman from St Helena call me to say she'd woken with two large red-bellied black snakes in her bed. Luckily she froze, though in terror. She reached for the phone beside her bed and called me and I made her promise not to move an inch until I got there."

Mr Ellis described another time where a man had an eastern brown wrapped around his leg and someone tried to beat it off with a rake. He was saved by his thick work trousers.

"That's just stupid. It's like running into a bikies club and calling them all pansies," he said.

DAVID NIELSEN
The Northern Star
October 2009

Fisherman Reels In Monster 6ft Perch... After Battling With a CROCODILE!

It's not often that you'd describe the angler, rather than the fish, as the one that got away.

But that was certainly the case for Tim Smith, who lived to tell the tale after tussling with a crocodile over this monster 6ft Nile perch.

The art teacher, 39, had already been engaged in a titanic battle to reel in the 249lb fish for 45 minutes in his tiny motor boat on the Victoria Nile in Uganda when he realised he had a fiercer rival.

Fortunately, however, it was the 39-year-old art teacher who turned out to be the one that got away, managing to tether his catch to the boat before firing the motor into life, leaving his opponent empty-mouthed in his wake.

And he was able to pose by his giant prize - which may be a record - for this spectacular photograph.



Back from his Ugandan trip and home to mercifully crocodile-free Northern Ireland, he told yesterday of his transformation from being the hunter to the hunted.

He had been grappling with the fish while in a small boat on the Victoria Nile in Uganda, about a mile downstream from the stunning Murchison Falls, for about 45 minutes when he realised he had competition.

'Suddenly the boat lurched and I nearly fell out,' he said. 'I didn't really know what had happened.'

'The next thing is, the crocodile launches itself at me, mouth wide open.'

JAMES TOZER
Daily Mail
October 2009

Man Bites Snake In Epic Struggle

A Kenyan man bit a python which wrapped him in its coils and dragged him up a tree during a fierce three-hour struggle, police have told the BBC.

The serpent seized farm worker Ben Nyaumbe in the Malindi area of Kenya's Indian Ocean coast at the weekend.

Mr Nyaumbe bit the snake on the tip of the tail during the exhausting battle in the village of Sabaki.

Police rescued Mr Nyaumbe and captured the 13ft (4m) reptile, before taking it to a sanctuary, but it later escaped.

The victim told police he managed to reach his mobile phone from his pocket to raise the alarm when the python

momentarily eased its grip after hauling him up a tree on Saturday evening.

Mr Nyaumbe used his shirt to smother the snake's head and prevent it from swallowing him.

His employer arrived with police and villagers, who tied the python with a rope and pulled them both down from the tree with a thud.

Peter Katam, superintendent of police in Malindi district, told the BBC News website: "Two officers on patrol were called and they found this man was struggling with a snake on a tree.

"The snake had coiled his hands and was trying to swallow him but he struggled very hard. The officers and villagers managed to rescue him and he was freed.

"He himself was injured on the lower lip of the mouth - it was bleeding a little bit - as the tip of the snake's tail was sharp when he said he bit it."



Mr Nyaumbe told the Daily Nation newspaper how he resorted to desperate measures after the python, which had apparently been hunting livestock, encircled his upper body in its coils.

"I stepped on a spongy thing on the ground and suddenly my leg was entangled with the body of a huge python," he said.

"I had to bite it."

'Very mysterious'

Supt Katam told the BBC the officers had wanted to shoot the snake but could not do so for fearing of injuring Mr Nyaumbe.

"If it wasn't for the villagers and officers who helped him, he would have been swallowed by the snake over the Easter holiday," said Supt Katam.

He added: "It's very mysterious, this ability to lift the man onto the tree. I've never heard of this before."

The police officer said they took the snake to a sanctuary in Malindi town but it escaped overnight, probably from a gap under the door in the room where it was kept.

"We are still seriously looking for the snake," said Supt Katam. "We want to arrest the snake because any one of us could fall a victim."

**BBC NEWS
October 2009**

Family's Dogs Kill Deadly Taipan

Todd Harrington and his heroic dogs, Oscar and Jade, who protected the family by killing a deadly snake just metres from a children's sandpit in their Eimeo backyard.

The two dogs killed a deadly taipan at the Harringtons' Eimeo residence after it slithered its way under their fence.

Mr Harrington's house backs on to a reserve and he believes that is where the snake came from before his dogs tore it in two.

He said he called a wildlife ranger and described the features of the snake to him.

"The man said he was 90 per cent sure it was a taipan."

Mr Harrington said the wildlife ranger had told him it wasn't every day you heard of two dogs surviving an encounter with a deadly reptile like a taipan or a brown snake.

"I have two young children so I am very thankful," he said.

"The snake was found only metres from the sandpit where they play.

"I guess the key message is that there are snakes about and to proceed with caution if you see one in your backyard."



TODD Harrington's two dogs, Oscar and Jade, look proud as punch sitting on the lawn in their backyard. Photo - Tony Martin

Australian Wildlife Rescue Service snake handler Fay Paterson said yesterday Mackay was well and truly into snake season. "It is the mating season at the moment and

there has been a lot of snake movements."

She said in the past six weeks she had caught about 44 snakes in the region.

It was easy to detect a brown snake, she said, as they had small heads and a creamy belly with a flicker of red through it, while a taipan was distinguishable by its head and its square nose, which gives them the title 'Coffin Head'.

She said nine times out of 10, when people called to say they had a brown snake or a taipan it ended up being a tree snake.

"Normally you can get rid of a green tree snake by putting the hose on it." But Ms Paterson said if someone found what they believed to be a dangerous snake they should not touch it or go near it and call a snake handler or a wildlife ranger.

She said 95 per cent of people were bitten because they had been trying either to catch it or kill a snake.

"The best thing is to leave it alone," she said.

**FALLON HUDSON
Dailey Mercury
October 2009**

Tossing Live Snake Was No Joke

WHEN Malcolm Marriott spotted a large group of youths walking along Lennox Street on Friday night, he never imagined they would throw a live carpet python at his passing car.

The alcohol bottles they were swigging from, maybe. But a snake? Never.

"I couldn't believe it," the long-time Maryborough resident said. "The fact they'd throw a defenceless animal under a car is disgusting."

Mr Marriott said he and his wife were driving home about 9.30pm and were passing the Doon Villa Bowls Club when the incident happened. He said he saw two boys rush to pick something up, before realising they were holding a carpet snake.

"They threw it out in front of our car and we ran it over," he said.

"I was angry - if my wife swerved she could have hit an oncoming car."

Mr Marriott said the couple pulled over to confront the youths - aged about 13 to 15-years-old - but they ran off.

"I went back to check on the snake and it had obviously been hurt. It started slithering off the road but I knew it wouldn't live for long."

The snake, in Mr Marriott's opinion, was about six to eight foot long.

"I've reported the incident to police. What (the kids) need is a good kick up the a***."

Police said yesterday the youths could face a charge of public nuisance.

AVERYLL LOFT
Fraser Coast Chronicle
October 2009

Customs And Border Protection Socks It To Lizard Smuggler

Along-running Customs and Border Protection investigation has led to the arrest of a 34-year-old Japanese man for allegedly attempting to smuggle 14 native reptiles out of Australia through Perth International Airport.

The reptiles were detected in the man's checked bags during x-ray screening of outgoing passenger luggage by Customs and Border Protection Officers after the man checked in for a flight to Singapore on Tuesday 1 September.

Officers then conducted a baggage inspection, at which time 14 shingleback skinks were allegedly found concealed in socks and small pet carriers.



Customs and Border Protection investigators responded and arrested and charged the man with attempting to export native species without a permit and doing so in a manner that subjects the animals to cruel treatment.

Customs and Border Protection National Manager Investigations, Richard Janeczko, said wildlife smuggling was a serious crime.

"Customs and Border Protection continues to prevent, investigate and prosecute wildlife smuggling attempts into and out of Australia in a bid to end this cruel practice," Mr Janeczko said.

The reptiles are currently in the care of Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation. Two of the shinglebacks have been identified as taken from Rottnest Island.

The Rottnest Island shingleback is specially protected as a threatened (vulnerable) species in WA and is only found on Rottnest Island. Under the state's Wildlife Conservation Act the maximum penalty for taking specially protected fauna is \$10,000.

The man has been refused bail and is due to appear in Perth Magistrates Court today (2 September 2009).

Under the national environment law, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the export and treatment of native species is strictly regulated.

The maximum penalty for breaching this law is \$110,000 and/or 10 years jail.

Customs and Border Protection supports the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts by enforcing this legislation at Australia's borders.

CUSTOMS MEDIA RELEASE
September 2009

Customs and Border Protection cracks egg smuggling attempt

Customs and Border Protection has cracked its third wildlife smuggling attempt in Western Australia in the last month with the arrest of two men in Perth.

The first man, a 53-year-old Australian, was arrested for allegedly attempting to smuggle 39 parrot eggs into Australia through Perth International Airport. He was stopped by Customs and Border Protection officers when he arrived in Perth on a flight from Bali on Sunday 6 September.



During a baggage examination, officers became suspicious that the man may have been concealing prohibited items under his clothing. Further examination revealed the man was carrying 39 parrot eggs concealed in a specially made vest. The man was subsequently arrested and charged by Customs and Border Protection investigators with attempting to smuggle wildlife into Australia.



The eggs were secured by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service and have been sterilised because they are such a high biosecurity risk. Illegally imported bird eggs can carry diseases that have the potential to devastate our poultry industries and kill our native wildlife.

Customs and Border Protection investigators then executed warrants on premises at High Wycombe, where another man was arrested and charged with the alleged possession of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) specimens and wildlife smuggling offences.

Customs and Border Protection National Manager Investigations, Richard Janeczko, said wildlife smuggling is a serious crime.

"Customs and Border Protection continues to investigate and prosecute wildlife smuggling attempts into and out of Australia in a bid to end this cruel practice.

"This illegal trade endangers the animals involved, creates a risk to our environment and involves the possibility of transferring diseases to our poultry industries and native species," Mr Janeczko said.

The first man appeared in Perth Magistrates Court on Monday 7 September.



Under the national environment law, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the import and export of wildlife is strictly regulated.

The maximum penalty for breaching this law is \$110,000 and/or 10 years jail.

Customs and Border Protection supports the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts by enforcing this legislation at Australia's borders.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday December 4th, 2009
7:00pm - 10:30pm

Monash University - Wellington Road - Clayton

Usual venue - Building 72 (see website for directions)

**Guest speaker will be Jane Melville
from Museums Victoria**

For further information <http://www.vhs.com.au/>

**Come and check out the entertaining auction. Enjoy
the refreshments served.**

Entry is \$5 for non members and free for members