

Electronic publication of the Victorian Herpetological Society

ODATRIA

Issue 6 May 2010



Issue 6

Odatria

Newsletter of the Victorian Herpetological Society No. 6, May 2010

2010 VHS Committee:

President: Phil Elliott
Secretary: Kevin Welsh
Treasurer: Andrew McKenzie
Exec. Comm. Member: Peter Comber
Exec. Comm. Member: Michael Alexander

Chief of Support Services

Brian Barnett

Odatria Editors/Producers

Andrew Owen
Kevin Welsh

"Odatria" is published by The Victorian Herpetological Society Inc, Copyright 2010 all rights reserved. Apart from any fair dealing, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced or stored by any process without written permission. Enquiries should be directed to VHS committee.

Any views or opinions are entirely those of the relevant author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Victorian Herpetological Society Inc.

Correspondence:

PO Box 4208, RINGWOOD VIC 3134
vhs@optusnet.com.au

www.vhs.com.au

Photo credits with photos. Uncredited photos are from VHS archives. Photos published are the property of both the Victorian Herpetological Society Inc. and the respective authors. Subject to full copyright and all rights are reserved.

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:

Lani Barnett, Daavid Turnbull, Judy Turnbull, Jennifer Lewin, Marriane Beatty, Kerrie Alexander, Jo Comber, Steph McKenzie, Robyn Welsh, Mike Swan, Mimmo Zagarelos



Contents

Editorial

by Phil Elliott
3

Herping Along the Spit Bridge to Manly Walk

by Micah Bonnici
4

Snake Man Calls it a Day Tribute to John Cann

6

Meeting Review First at Prahran Mar 31st, 2010

9

Pictorial Tiger Snake Rescue by Baz Goldsmith

11

Classic Article Aspects of Snakebite and Venom Properties by Andrew McKenzie

12

St John Snake Bite First Aid

15

WPTAC & Schedules by Peter Comber

16

Herp Happenings

17

Cover Photograph:
Diamond Python *Morelia spilota spilota*
by Steph McKenzie - Animal Tracks

EDITORIAL

by Phil Elliott

Hello again friends and members, well the time has come again for an edition of Odatria, your society newsletter, time sure does fly when you're having fun!

Talking of fun, how good was the last meeting? We have had lots of positive feedback about the new location and day for meetings, I only heard of one complaint and that was from a member who had to park 100metres away, I guess he must have had a bad leg that night! For the next meeting we plan to reduce tables and increase chair numbers in the main room so that everyone should be able to get an uninterrupted view of the speaker. I have also learnt a bit more about the PA system so it will be set loud enough for everyone to hear well. My apologies for setting it too low for the first speaker at the last meeting, I offer no excuses apart from it having been the first meeting with new equipment and at a new venue.

While on the subject of time flying and having fun we are also getting closer to the 2011 Victorian Reptile and Amphibian Expo! Our coordinator, Gary Cahill, has just returned from the Sydney Wild Expo where contact was made with many prospective vendors for our upcoming expo. Keep an eye on our website and the next Odatria for details on these sponsors/vendors. Sponsors will get their names up on our website and in Odatria from the time they sign up right through to the time of the Expo with the major sponsors' details remaining even after this time.

Also, don't forget the private breeders tables where you will be able to view and purchase animals on the day. If you are a breeder yourself why not consider having your own table where you can sell your hatchies or excess animals? If you have mates that you think may be interested in having some space at the expo why not invite them to be a vendor on the day? They don't have to be a V.H.S. member, just have an interest in furthering this great hobby of ours! If they are breeders they have a great opportunity to sell their hatchies or excess stock on the day. It is also a great opportunity to network with other herpers and meet those that you have only heard of due to their prominence in the hobby. Some big names are sure to be there and you'll be surprised how friendly and approachable they are. It has become "the expo to be seen at" for a lot of leading breeders and herp related businesses both in Australia and overseas.

Well, enough of my enthusiasm about the expo, (after all Odatria is supposed to be a newsletter not a huge sounding block for my opinions☺).

We will have Roy Pails as the speaker at our next meeting and it should make for another interesting and fun night so I'll see you all there.

That's it from me for now so happy herping everyone,

Phil

NEXT VHS MEETING

Wednesday 23rd June 2010
7:15pm - 10:30pm

PRAHRAN RSL - 301 HIGH STREET - PRAHRAN

Guest speaker will be Roy Pails

For latest meeting information go to <http://www.vhs.com.au>

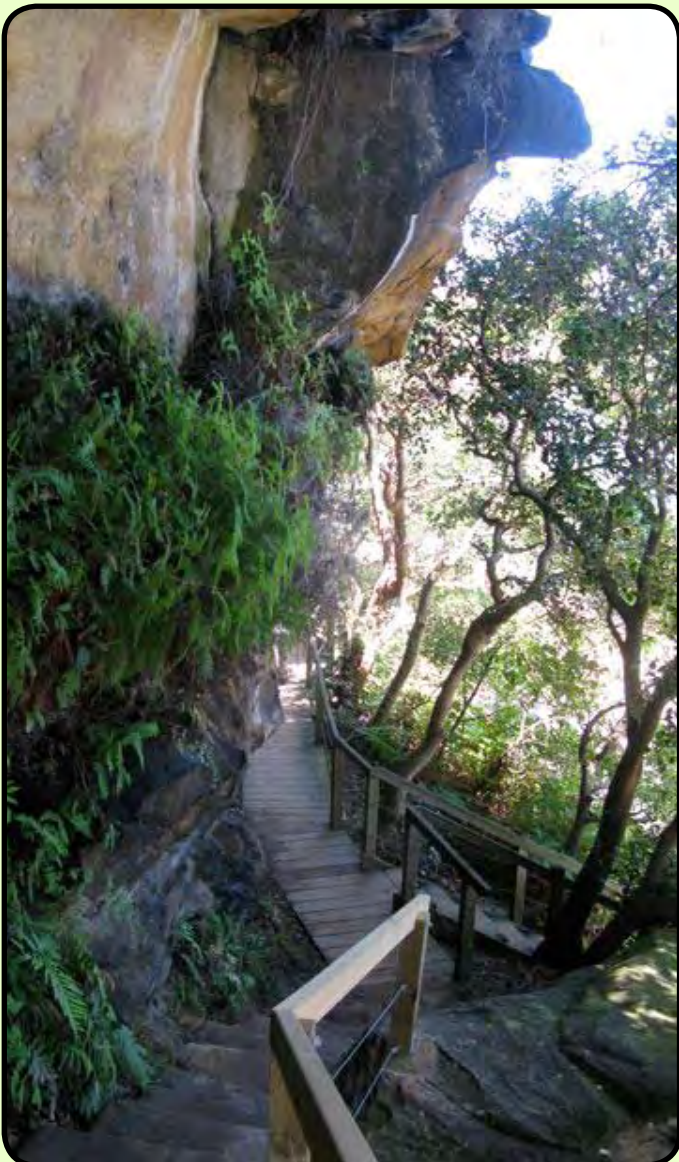
Entry is \$5 for non members and free for members

ANY DONATIONS FOR THE AUCTION WELCOME

Herping along the Spit Bridge to Manly Walk

On a morning in December 2009 my father and I went herping on the 'Spit Bridge to Manly' walk in Sydney. I was really excited about doing this walk for the second time, as it is my favourite walking trail.

The walk starts on the northern side of the Spit Bridge in the Sydney suburb of Seaforth and follows the shoreline of the Middle Harbour and Northern Harbour to Manly. It is about 9 kms (one way) and goes through forests, beachfront and some suburban areas along the way. We only walked the first 2 - 3 kms (from the Spit Bridge) because we have found that to be the best herping area.



The 'Spit Bridge to Manly' Walking Trail



Eastern Water Dragon

By Micah Bonnici

images Chris Bonnici

Our goal was to find and photograph the Eastern Water Dragon (*Physignathus lesueurii lesueurii*) we have previously seen here and to possibly find other species of lizards. We haven't seen snakes here and they would be hard to find because in most areas either side of the trail is densely covered and forest. In other areas it is too busy with people. But a stranger on the walk told me that he had seen a snake on the trail in late 2008.



Eastern Water Dragon

Almost as soon as we arrived, I saw two juvenile water dragons and they quickly darted away into the bush. A bit further along the walk, I suddenly noticed a medium sized skink but didn't get a good look as it quickly darted into a log. A short time later I saw some more of what seemed to be the same species, which turned out to be the Greater-barred Sided Skink (*Eulamprus tenuis*).

This species is a small to medium sized skink, averaging 16 cm in length. They can be found sheltering and basking on cracks of trees, rock crevices, hollow logs and grassy areas. They are diurnal (being active by day) and are also arboreal. You can find them in forests and woodlands which makes sense, as I found them in a forest like area.

I saw about 10 or more of these guys, which are slender, fast and agile creatures. As well as seeing adults, we also saw some juveniles, which have a brighter colouration. We absolutely nailed these guys with heaps of camera shots.



Greater-barred Sided Skink

We also saw the very common Delicate Skink (*Lampropholis delicata*) that is pretty easy to spot.

This time we didn't see as many water dragons, but there were still heaps of them. Last time, I found a big male and three other specimens which we photographed. I wondered what I was going to come across this time.

The first specimen I found was possibly a female. Males have red colouration under their bellies and black saddles along their vertebrae which runs down the back. They have got a large head crest, are overall the larger sex and the tail base is wider. Whereas females are smaller in size, have smaller heads and have less patterns and colours. These are some characteristics regarding how to tell them apart.



Eastern Water Dragon

Adult water dragons average 75cm and can get to nearly a metre in length. When walking along the trail I saw them in trees (arboreal), rock crevices, on the forest floor and at the edge of cliffs. When disturbed they will drop into the water as they are semi aquatic. They can be found in forests, including rainforests, and woodlands. They are really fast and it took several attempts to get decent photos. I also found a juvenile water dragon which was on a rock. It was pretty cute so we took some photos of it.

I guess we didn't see as many water dragons as we did last time, but I thought it was still a successful trip. All up we spent about 4 hours on the trail and I am pretty happy with what we saw and photographed. That area has a really good population of Eastern Water Dragons. On hot days you can see hundreds of them along or near the walking trail. You just can't miss them.

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



Greater-barred Sided Skink

REFERENCES

1. Gerry Swan, Glenn Shea & Ross Sadlier, "A Field Guide to Reptiles of New South Wales" 2nd Edition, Reed New Holland, 2004, p 152, and, in relation to habitat, my own experience on the walk.
2. Jason Goulding & Darren Green, "Keeping Australian Water Dragons", Australian Reptile Keeper Publications, 2006, p 25
3. Stephen Swanson, "Field Guide to Australian Reptiles", Steve Parish Publishing Pty Ltd, 2007, p107
4. Ibid

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Jason Goulding & Darren Green, "Keeping Australian Water Dragons", Australian Reptile Keeper Publications, 2006
Gerry Swan, Glenn Shea & Ross Sadlier, "A Field Guide to Reptiles of New South Wales" 2nd Edition, Reed New Holland, 2004
Stephen Swanson, "Field Guide to Australian Reptiles", Steve Parish Publishing Pty Ltd, 2007



Spectacular view of the beach from the trail

Snake Man Calls It A Day

This is a transcript from an item that was presented on the ABC on 13 April 2010. It features the story of one of those unique Aussie characters who has done so much to enhance our knowledge of reptiles and amphibians and their place in the scheme of things. The VHS was fortunate to have John as a guest speaker at our meeting in May 2009. Photos accompanying this transcript are taken from those presented on that night.

TRACY BOWDEN, PRESENTER: For close on a century, the snake man has been a weekend and holiday fixture in the Sydney suburb of La Perouse.

You could only guess at how many parents and wide-eyed children have peered into the pit and watched almost mesmerised as the snake man shared his patch with some of the most deadliest creatures on Earth.

It's gone on generation after generation, father to son, but at 72, the snake man is hanging up his stick and a tradition will come to an end this Sunday.

Geoff Sims has spent some time with the snake man, also known as John Cann.



John with one of his beloved turtles, in this case a Broad-shelled River Turtle (*Macrochelodina expansa*)

GEOFF SIMS, REPORTER: Just another date at the office. In fact, just another day in the life of John Cann and his mates, his workmates - same thing.

Throughout his life, there've always been snakes.

JOHN CANN, THE SNAKE MAN: There's nothing unusual about it because I came up with it. Always a lotta snakes and snake people were coming here all the time. So this was part of our life right from the word go. Our house was always snakes.

TRACY BOWDEN, PRESENTER: (archive footage): This is no ordinary baby. It's the child of George Cann and snake-charming's in the blood. Why, when they asked baby what Santa Claus should bring, it suggested a nice rattler.



John's mother Essie with, among others, a large Scrub Python (*Morelia kinghorni*)

GEOFF SIMS: It wasn't young John, it was his sister Noreen. John was yet to be born. But with parents like George and Essie, their lives would be entwined with snakes. There was a lot of them about. Not just in the Cann home near La Perouse in Sydney, but the whole country it seemed was crawling with them.

And just as George Cann felt among friends with black snakes, John is equally on their side.

JOHN CANN: Red bellies are my favourite type of reptile, there's no doubt about that. And when you consider that they love eating browns and tiger snakes, while they're in your area, they're working to your advantage.

GEOFF SIMS: Now here's a contradiction.

JOHN CANN: This one's pretty quiet. A good quiet brown. I'll take him and the lunatic down.

GEOFF SIMS: Which one's the lunatic?

JOHN CANN: He's up alongside your leg.

GEOFF SIMS: Look out. I can see why you call him the lunatic.

JOHN CANN: Hello, we had a win. That wasn't too bad.

They are a nasty snake. They are most certainly the most dangerous snake in Australia. When he stands up he'll give you that figure "S" in his neck and he'll make a strike with his mouth open.

GEOFF SIMS: John's older brother George Jr. knew about it. They both did. They encouraged it.

JOHN CANN: When we was younger, George and myself would be down on our hands and knees teasing the brown snakes with a hat in our hands so they could bite into the hat and knock you in the face, but I don't do that now.

GEOFF SIMS: The First World War, then the Depression, gave snakes a certain flavour. Men and women could make money catching them, selling them to zoos, selling them for their skins and doing things with them.



John herping in the US with friends, here with a Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*)

TRACY BOWDEN, PRESENTER: (archive footage): Unfortunately, Melbourne's cold weather makes his flesh creep. So Bernie's solved the problem of keeping the snake alive by taking it to bed.

GEOFF SIMS: Some snake men and women built up immunity, accepted the bite, then demonstrated their secret antidotes and flogged them. They were brave, or foolish.

JOHN CANN: We couldn't do what the old timers used to do. But a lot of them died. Dad had 16 personal friends that died of tiger snake bite alone, you know.

GEOFF SIMS: Young John could have been an early casualty himself, with his father looking on.

JOHN CANN: I got bloody bit. I never said nothing. It was a scratch. He said, "You've been bitten, haven't ya?" And I said, "Yeah." And he spun me around and kicked me up the bloody bum, he did, you know.

GEOFF SIMS: You knew about snakes, you got bitten by a tiger and you said nothing?

JOHN CANN: It was always embarrassing to get bit by a snake.

GEOFF SIMS: Some might say, quite simply, you're mad - as a cut snake, in fact.

JOHN CANN: No, well, most snakemen are mad.



John's late brother, George Jr., in action at La Perouse

GEOFF SIMS: George Cann survived hundreds of bites. He lived to 68 - almost unheard of in his trade. And he did better than some of his stool pigeons. Imagine doing this these days.

JOHN CANN: I really think he was the best snake man, not because he was my old man. I think he was the best. In his era he was the best known. He was immune from snake bite. He used to do some very reckless things. He used to put the snakes - their heads in his mouth. He stopped doing that when a black snake bit him on the tongue.

GEOFF SIMS: You were never tempted to try that?

JOHN CANN: Wouldn't dream of it.

GEOFF SIMS: It was a stroke, not snake bite that got George Cann in 1965 and the sons found themselves sharing the role of snake man of La Perouse.

JOHN CANN: I just said to brother George, "What do you reckon, we give it a go," and he said, "Oh, yeah. OK."

GEOFF SIMS: And when George Jr died in 2001, John was left carrying the can for the Cann clan. But at 72 and having been bitten near fatally a good few times, enough is enough - not just for his own sake.

JOHN CANN: When my daughter came in here once when the wife was away and she heard a noise and she looked around and there was a big brown snake sitting up on the (inaudible) here, ready to bite it in the neck, well, that's when I said to myself, that's it.

GEOFF SIMS: So that's the reason you're giving up.

JOHN CANN: That's the true reason.

GEOFF SIMS: How did the brown manage to get out?

JOHN CANN: I left the cage open.

GEOFF SIMS: With snakes you can never be too careful - losing a couple of death adders, for example?

JOHN CANN: That's mum.

GEOFF SIMS: But where's dad?

JOHN CANN: Sometimes I've searched in their cage and I'm sure she's swallowed him.

GEOFF SIMS: But not the offspring.

JOHN CANN: I got a suspicion it's a record amount of death adders, 42.

GEOFF SIMS: All of them to find new licensed owners along with his other venomous snakes - most of them anyway.

JOHN CANN: I might keep an adder and a couple of very nice red belly blacks which I don't think anyone else deserves - they're too nice and you can't let 'em go.

GEOFF SIMS: And he'll keep the lizards - he breeds them, and the turtles: he's a recognised authority on Australian freshwater tortoises or turtles, and his big carpet snake.

JOHN CANN: There's nothing that compares with this bloke in the carpet world. Come on, mate.

GEOFF SIMS: But he'll be turning his back for keeps on the La Perouse snake pit.

JOHN CANN: Thinking about it I don't want to go down there and look. It's gonna be hard. Just part of your life.

GEOFF SIMS: There with will be another snake man or other snake men and women at La Perouse, just not from the Cann clan. That chapter is closing.

And your kids are not interested in taking over?

JOHN CANN: No, my kids are scared of blue tongue lizards.

TRACY BOWDEN: The end of an era. Geoff Sims with that report.



VHS MEETING REVIEW

March 31st 2010

**Heath Butler & Kwai Chang-Kum
Ryan Hart**

The first meeting for 2010 came round quickly. It was almost as though people had just finished opening their herpy Christmas presents when it was time for the VHS to christen its new meeting venue and night.

Much thought had been given to the selection of the new venue with the Prahran RSL getting the nod due to its close proximity to the city and general ease to get to. We also decided to return to our roots and hold a mid week meeting as many people had told us that Friday's were a bit difficult for them to make it. The original intention was to trial this location/day for a number of meetings but owing to the success of our first night I think it would be safe to say that it will be there for some time to come.

Apart from a few small technical teething problems the night went very well. Attendees commented on the location and the general ease of access to and into the meeting room. Many were also grateful for the opportunity to have a relaxing social drink with their herping buddies. One improvement we will make for the next meeting will be to reduce some of the tables in the main room and place more seats to make it a bit more comfortable for those listening to the talks and activities. All seats were taken early in the night and some members were left standing at the back and sides of the room.

The evening commenced with a brief introduction by Phil Elliott our new 2010 President and quickly moved on to the popular auction with a number of herp related items going quickly and for good prices. We also had a larger than usual number of animals due to Mike Alexander and the Lost Reptiles Home working overtime. Many members acquired some good animals at bargain basement prices. Remember if you have any useful items at home that you are willing to donate, please contact the VHS by email at vhs@op-tusnet.com.au or even just bring them on the night of a meeting. It would be a great help to your society.

We then moved on to the first talk for the evening:-
A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY ACROSS NORTHERN AUSTRALIA by Heath Butler & Kwai Chang-Kum.

Heath & Kwai are both keen naturalists, who have been keeping captive reptiles for more than 15 years.

Kwai is a Keeper at Werribee Open Range Zoo, with a particular interest in native herpetofauna and fish.



Heath has a degree in zoology, with a particular leaning towards the ecology of elapid snakes.

Heath and Kwai will presented a wonderful photographic record of their multiple herp trips across the northern half of Australia, from the arid red centre, to the tropical savannahs of the Kimberley, and the lush vine forests of Cape York Peninsula, as they search for iconic and rare species such as Pilbara Rock Monitors, Death Adders and Green Pythons. They provided an insight into the reptiles, amphibians and other wildlife of the north, and the diverse habitats that they occupy.





After a short break we then moved on to the second talk for the evening:- **KEEPING COMPARISONS WITHIN MAJOR ZOOS** by Ryan Hart. Ryan also filled us in on a survey in Vietnam and a look at overseas trade in herp



Ryan is new to Victoria, having lived all his life in Queensland, and spending his last 7 years working at Australia Zoo on the Sunshine Coast. He is now employed as a senior reptile keeper by Zoos Victoria at Melbourne Zoo. Ryan spoke about his experiences in the different styles of keeping he experienced between these two institutions. The contrasts between the two climates has forced him to be much more mindful of establishing particular micro-climates for indoor exhibits where outside environmental factors can vary so greatly. Australia Zoo had Ryan out in the field on conservation properties and on croc research regularly.

Ryan also recently conducted a survey in the Southern Mekong Delta in Vietnam which may interest members. Some of the observations of reptiles in the trade were quite alarming and unexpected. Ryan spoke about some of his findings on the survey and in the trade as it is very different to what we experience here.



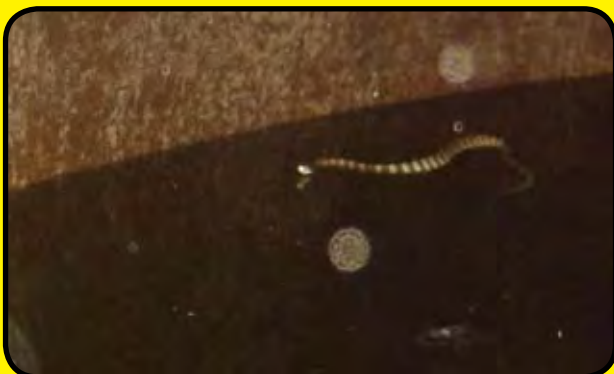
Tiger Snake Rescue

Text and images by Barry and Kaz Goldsmith

One morning I received a call from a nice lady who had this little tiger in her concrete water tank. The tank was approximately 20 feet across, 7 feet deep and 3/4 full of water.



The poor guy had been in the tank for about two weeks before she rang, the lady didn't know if she was seeing things when she first saw it, so she didn't call until much later.



She was watching it as it floated, raising its tail so it wouldn't sink. Make sense?

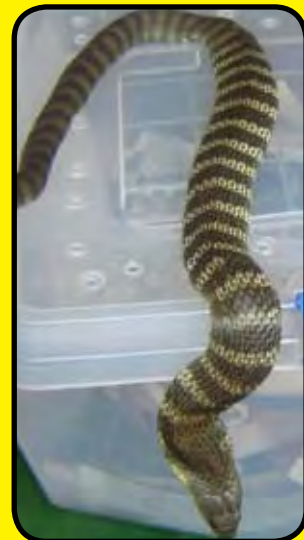
Anyway, when I got there I stuck my head in with the torch and sure enough; it was floating on top of the water with its tail up in a little curl.

It seemed to be able to find its centre of gravity and float effortlessly without sinking.

I guess after about two weeks you'd get pretty good at treading water!



Fortunately the lady had a pool and a long handled pool cleaner - (I've now incorporated a long handled pool cleaner in my gear).



Classic Article

ASPECTS OF SNAKEBITE AND SNAKE VENOM PROPERTIES

by Andrew McKenzie

Originally published in *Monitor* Vol 13 Issue 1 2004

INTRODUCTION

The following article has been written to explain what happens to a bite recipient if they suspect they have been bitten by a potentially venomous snake. The issues investigated are as follows;

- i) How most bites occur,
- ii) What to do if bitten by a snake,
- iii) How venom affects the body, &
- iv) Methodology in determining whether or not to administer antivenom

HOW MOST BITES OCCUR

Most snake bites involve the lower parts of the body, therefore, the lower leg and foot are commonly bitten. Some bites occur on the hands. Bites can occur when poking hands into hollow logs, under rocks or under common household or farmyard shelters such as sheets of tin. Bushwalking and walking through long grass are activities which can lead to people being bitten.

Other bites occur when people attempt to injure or kill a snake that they have encountered. The bottom line is that in the majority of cases of snakebite, the snake is only trying to defend itself. It should be noted that snakebite in domestic and farmyard animals is also a common occurrence (Mirtschin, et al. 1998), but the bitten animals again have in most situations provoked the bite by attacking the snake themselves.

WHAT TO DO IF BITTEN BY A SNAKE

The most important thing to do if bitten by a snake is to keep calm and encourage others to do so as well so that you can focus on application of first aid and seeking medical attention as soon as possible.

See the first aid description on the AVRU web site. The PI method is thought to slow the movement of lymph in the lymphatic system. This has never been proved but there is good evidence to support it. Venom is thought to move from the lymphatic system to the blood stream. There are some good references on this topic (see references I have included at end). What you should not do is wash or wipe the site where the bite is, as any venom on the skin surface is useful (but not critical).

If at all possible do not drive a vehicle as you may collapse

and cause an accident. An ambulance or another driver is advised. Finally, do not use drugs or consume alcohol as the effects of these may mimic the symptoms of venom in the bloodstream leading to administration of an antivenom where it is not really required. Antivenom is only given if venom is detected, or in its absence, if systemic envenomation is indicated by the symptoms.



Lowland Copperhead (*Austrelaps superbus*)

photo Peter Comber

HOW VENOM AFFECTS THE BODY

Venom can affect the body in a variety of ways.

In general, venom appears to be a mixture of enzymes and proteins that can act on several biochemical pathways or on a single physiological pathway within the body. The effects are characterised by:

Neurotoxins:- which inactivate the nerve and smooth muscle function of the body by upsetting the sodium (Na⁺) and potassium (K⁺) channels required for neurotransmission and cardiac function. There are also ion channel blockers and inhibitors.

Cytotoxins:- which affect the cells that come in contact with the venom, either at the bite site or in the blood.

Hemotoxins:- can either be toxins which affect haemostasis in some way (those that activate the clotting cascade, or inhibit its activation). Also there are toxins which cause haemorrhage (act on the blood vessels) and toxins that alter the shape of red blood cells.

Myotoxins:- are toxins which break down muscle cells. They are usually PLA type molecules. Myoglobin from the muscle cells leaks into the blood and can cause myoglobinuria.

The chemical proteins and enzymes that have been identified so far are:

- L-arginine ester hydrolases, which breakdown the bodies amino acids.
- Hyaluronidase, which effects the hyaluronic acid production vital for connective tissue in the body.
- L-amino acid oxidase, which also breakdown the bodies amino acids.
- Cholinesterases destroy or block acetylcholine thus interfering with neurotransmission.
- Phospholipases, which destroys phospholipids essential for cell walls.
- Ribo and deoxyribonucleic oxidases, essential for the manufacturing of genetic material in the body.
- ATPases, essential for energy production of cells within the body.



Eastern Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*)

photo Mike Alexander

METHODOLOGY IN DETERMINING ANTIVENOM TREATMENT

As a medical scientist, one of my duties is to perform the venom identification testing on specimens, both animal and human, so that the correct antivenom treatment can be administered or in the case of livestock, insurance claims can be processed.

At present, the Commonwealth Serum Laboratory (CSL) manufacture the only detection kit that is a rapid Enzymic Linked Immuno Sorbent Assay (ELISA) that takes approximately 25 minutes to perform. The kit is useful in identifying the correct antivenom to use in snake bites in Australia and Papua New Guinea. Specimens can be collected via bite site swabs in urine, blood or bodily tissue. In the detection process as a medical scientist, I have found that urine specimens are more accurate than blood as red cells from whole blood can give false positive

readings if the reaction wells are not fully washed properly during the wash stage of the kit. Swabs may detect venom but envenomation may not necessarily have occurred.

It is very important not to administer antivenom until venom has been detected, and the correct monovalent, i.e. serotype specific antivenom, can be administered. If the patient has been bitten and clearly showing signs of envenomation, a multipurpose polyvalent antivenom can be used. If identification is to be delayed, however, there may be some adverse effects. Dosages are usually required in higher amounts.



Red-bellied Black Snake (*Pseudechis porphyriacus*)

photo Mike Alexander

The kit categories include five monovalent antivenoms each of which contain a number of snake venoms that the antivenom neutralises. These are as follows:-

Tiger Snake: intended to neutralise Tiger Snake (*Notechis scutatus*), Copperhead (*Austrelaps superbus*), Red-bellied Black Snake (*Pseudechis porphyriacus*), and the Clarence River or Rough Scaled Snake (*Tropidechis carinatus*).

Brown Snake: intended to neutralise Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*), Dugite (*Pseudonaja affinis*), and the Gwardar (*Pseudonaja nuchalis*).

Black Snake: intended to neutralise King Brown or Mulga Snake (*Pseudechis australis*), Papuan Black Snake (*Pseudechis papuanis*), and the Red-bellied Black Snake (*Pseudechis porphyriacus*).

Death Adder: intended to neutralise Death Adder (*Acanthophis antarcticus*), and the Desert Death Adder (*Acanthophis pyrrhus*).

Taipan: intended to neutralise Taipan (*Oxyuranus scutellatus*) and the Small Scaled or Fierce Snake (*Oxyuranus microlepidotus*).

The principal of the test is that a colour change will develop in a 'well' of the required antivenom thus allowing the choice of a specific monovalent antivenom.

Antivenom is made by administering horse blood with snake venom in small amounts, which causes an immunological

response by the blood to develop antibodies against the venom. The serum proportion of blood is then separated and freeze-dried. The product is reconstituted (liquefied) prior to use.



Common Death Adder (*Acanthophis antarcticus*)

photo Peter Comber

REFERENCES

- Bohinski, R.C. (1987), Modern concepts in Biochemistry, 5th Edition, Allyn & Bacon Inc, Massachusetts, USA.
- Brazaitis, P. & Watanabe, M.E. (1992), Snakes of the world, Michael Friedman Publishing Group, New York, USA.
- Curtis, H. (1983), Biology, 4th Edition, Worth Publishers inc, New York, USA.
- Ehmann, H. (1992), Encyclopedia of Australian Animals; Reptiles, Angus & Robertson Publishers Pty Ltd, Sydney, Australia.
- Rang, H.P., Dale, M.M., & Ritter, J.M.(1993), Pharmacology, 3rd Edition, Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, Scotland.
- Shine, R. (1994), Australian Snakes a natural history, Revised Edition, Reed Books, Chatswood, Australia.
- Slater, P. (1997), Amazing Facts about Australian Frogs and Reptiles, discover and learn, vol4, Steve Parish Publishing Pty Ltd, Fortitude Valley, Australia.
- Snake Venom Detection Kit; (kit insert), (1999), CSL Biosciences Department, Parkville, Australia.
- Mirtschin, P. J., Masci, P., Paton, D. C., Kuchel, T. (1998). Snake bites recorded by veterinary practices in Australia. Aust Vet J. 76: 3 195-1 98
- Sutherland, S.K. (1992). Deaths from snake bite in Australia, 1981 -1 991. Med. J. Aust.. 157: 740-746
- Sutherland, S. K. (1991). Snake Bites Patient Management Guide ERR: 62-63
- Sutherland, S. K. (1990). Treatment of snake bite. Aust. Family Physician. 19: 1 1-1 3
- Sutherland, S. K. (1974). Venomous Australian creatures: The action of their toxins and the care of the envenomated patient. Anaesth. Intens. Care. 11 :4: 31 6-328
- Sutherland, S. (1983). First aid management of snakebite. Med. J. Aust. Feb 5: 106.
- Sutherland S. K., Duncan, A. W. (1980). New first-aid measures for envenomation. Med. J. Aust. April 19: 378-379.
- Sutherland, S. K., Coulter, A. R., Harris, R. D. (1979). Rationalization of first-aid measures for Elapid snakebite. The Lancet . Jan. 27: 183-1 86



Eastern Tiger Snake (*Notechis scutatus*)

photo Mike Alexander



Juvenile Eastern Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*)

photo Mike Alexander



SNAKE BITES

MANAGING A SNAKE BITE

1) Check for signs of life:

- if casualty is unconscious, follow DRABCD (Danger, Response, Airway, Breathing, CPR, Defibrillation).

2) Calm casualty.

3) Apply pressure immobilisation bandage:

- apply a firm roller bandage starting just above the fingers or toes and moving up the limb as far as can be reached
- the bandage needs to be very firm.

4) Immobilise casualty:

- apply a splint to immobilise the bitten limb
- check circulation in fingers or toes
- ensure casualty doesn't move.

5) Call 000 for an ambulance.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- puncture marks
- nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea
- headache
- double or blurred vision
- breathing difficulties
- drowsiness, giddiness
- pain or tightness in chest or abdomen
- respiratory weakness or arrest.

WARNING

Do not wash venom off the skin as retained venom will assist identification.

Do not cut bitten area or try to suck venom out of the wound.

Do not use a constrictive bandage (i.e. arterial tourniquet).

Do not try and catch the snake.

Carry the **Bites and Stings** first aid kit with you when camping or bushwalking. Call St John on 1300 360 455 for further information about the full range of first aid kits.

Wildlife Possession and Trade Advisory Committee



WPTAC

By Peter Comber



To all members of the V.H.S., The V.A.A.H. And all fellow Victorian reptile and amphibian keepers, the current set of wildlife regulations is due to expire in June 2012, between now and then the Wildlife Possession and Trade Advisory Committee (WPTAC) will be meeting regularly to discuss proposed changes, additions, deletions and overall streamlining of the new set of regulations due to replace those currently in place. For information relating to 'what you will need to know' please see the following web address:-

<http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/> - go to 'Victorian Law Today', then select 'Statutory Rules', then click on 'W', scroll down to rows 26 and 27 for the Wildlife Regulations of 1992 and 2002.

Keep an eye on the 'Keeping and Trading Wildlife in Victoria' page on the DSE website as well, links to the regulations as well as downloadable submissions forms will be posted in due time. The Wildlife and Game Licensing Service (WaGLS) of the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) will be developing a submission form expressly for the purpose of proposed changes and suggestions for the new regulations. The submissions process is open to anyone and everyone. This document will allow a consistent type of submission for consideration and processing (as it is expected there will be a lot of submissions - more than 1200 were received by the Hunting Advisory Committee for the Game Regulations) All people with sensible and achievable ideas are asked to please put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard and get your thoughts in, only those received by WPTAC on the submission forms designed for this purpose will be accepted and considered - telling your friends your good ideas or posting them on forums for discussion and dissection will not work.

Until the submission forms are developed and made available I can only (so far) accept expressions of interest from those people who wish to receive said forms as soon as they become available.

Please pass this information to friends and fellow keepers who you suspect may not be reached by the current means.

Please direct all queries via e-mail to myself at PC-WPTAC@live.com

Thanks to all in advance,

Peter Comber, Victorian Herpetological Society Inc., Executive Committee, Feb 2010.

EDITORS NOTE: We realise this has been printed in a previous edition of Odatria, but have decided to run it again due to its importance to our hobby. This is YOUR opportunity to put something into the future legislation regarding YOUR keeping. Remember that it was only last year that the VHS, with the help of some committed individuals negotiated the inclusion of additional species to the schedules. All correctly completed submission forms that were received by us were successful in being included in the amendments. Please consider contacting us and putting in a submission.

HERP HAPPENINGS

Croc's Whiter Shade Of Pale Has Boaties Looking Twice

A TERRITORY couple had a "one in a million" fishing trip on the weekend, when they caught a glimpse of a rare albino saltwater crocodile.

Belinda Trewartha and her fiancé Peter Bellis were fishing with friends at a Top End river when they saw a shadow in the water and a head "popping up near the boat".

"We thought it was a fish, but then realised it was a crocodile head - and it was all white," the 29-year-old told the Northern Territory News.

"My fiancé has been fishing on the river his whole life, we come here at least 20 times a year, but we've never seen anything like this."



The albino crocodile popped out of the water, shocking a Northern Territory fishing party

Ms Trewartha said the crocodile disappeared in the water, but the fishermen spotted the 2.5m saltie again later in the day.

"It was laying on the bank and it was really white.

"It was a truly amazing sight - probably one of the most awesome things I have ever seen in the wild."

Ms Trewartha said she believed the reptile was an albino with no pigmentation.

"It looked a bit like the white croc (Snowy) at Crocosaurus Cove," she said.

There is another white-skinned crocodile on the Adelaide River. Guides on board the Spectacular Jumping Crocodile Cruise have dubbed the 5m saltie Michael Jackson.

ANNIE SANSON
Northern Territory News
February 2010

Mum Finds Snake Head In Frozen Vegetables

A MOTHER-OF-FOUR found a snake head in a bag of frozen green beans while cooking for her family in Houston, Texas.

Ernestine Jamison said she opened the bag of Pictsweet frozen cut green beans last month to find what she first thought was a rock, MyFox Phoenix reported.

"I saw something in there I wasn't for sure what it was. I thought it was a rock because it was hard," Ms Jamison said.

But upon further review, the Jamison family concluded the green and black frozen object nestled in their dinner was a severed snake head.



Snake Head In Frozen Green Beans

"When I saw it was a snake's head I just threw it down and called my kids and said I got a snake head in the green beans, everybody said 'Oh lord, you got a snake head in the green beans'," Ms Jamison said.

After the screaming subsided, 15-year-old Sarah Jamison grabbed her camera and took video and pictures of their uninvited dinner guest.

"I saw big eyes, with a mouth open and a tongue coming out, it looked like it was ready to attack," she said. Ms Jamison called Pictsweet, and they offered her US\$150 (\$166).

But she wasn't looking for money and turned it down.

A letter sent by the company's insurance provider to Ms Jamison claims Pictsweet "is not responsible for this accident," and they are "denying liability".

The company also claims it wasn't a snake head - it was a frog head.

"But it's still gross whether it's a frog or snake," Ms Jamison said.

Now Jamison has to try harder than ever to get her children to eat their greens.

"Vegetables, umm, I don't look at vegetables the same, I never really liked the vegetables but like now I can't even go near vegetables," 17-year-old Mariam Jamison said.

MyFox Phoenix attempted to contact Pictsweet several times in recent weeks to respond to this story, but they did not return calls.

**STAFF WRITERS
NewsCore
February 2010**

Python Eats 35kg Goat At Kuranda

THERE was no kidding around for this 5m amethyst python when it came to dining out at Kuranda - it devoured a 35kg goat, horns and all.

The goat had gone missing from the Nathan Rd property bordering rainforest three weeks ago, when its owner stumbled on the enormous reptile, with a suspiciously large bump in its stomach.

The python had swallowed the pet goat and spent the next three days digesting its meal before it disappeared.



The python with its fully belly after devouring a 35kg goat

Neighbour Yuri Hagedorn kept a careful watch over the reptile and even put a corrugated iron shelter over it. Mr Hagedorn said the snake had been a regular visitor to the street.

"This particular python, I think because it's territorial, has been in the area for quite a while," he said.

"It eats mainly wallabies, and wallabies are as big as a goat."

Surviving goats from the woman's yard have since been donated to Kuranda's Uncle Pete's Petting Zoo.



The twin of the goat that was eaten.

Queensland Museum reptile curator Patrick Couper said amethyst pythons, also known as scrub pythons, were not shy about eating large prey.

"Large amethyst pythons will certainly eat tree kangaroos, they'll certainly eat wallabies," Mr Couper said.

"I've often seen photographs of large amethystines with bulky items in their gut like that.

"I believe they also take roadkill."

Stuart Douglas from the Australian Venom Zoo said scrub pythons were known to eat pets at Kuranda.

A 5m python at a Kuranda house in February stalked the owners' pet dog before eating it in March 2008.

"It's quite common for people's puppies to get eaten," Mr Douglas said.

**DANIEL BATEMAN
Cairns Post
February 2010**

Python-packing Tourists Not Penalised

RAangers have taken a 1.3m snake from two travellers at Mission Beach, south of Cairns.

The couple surrendered the scrub python yesterday, three days after they tried to get it identified at the Mission Beach Tourist Information Centre.

It is believed to have been living in a bag inside their tent.

The couple kept it, despite the man having been bitten on

the hand.

They told a ranger they had opened a bag of items at the weekend and found it there and had been tending to it ever since because it was injured.

The couple said they had even taken it to a vet.



Rangers are now caring for a 1.3m python that was understood to have been living in a bag in a tent with two travellers.

An Environmental Protection Agency spokesman yesterday warned it was illegal to keep native animals, including reptiles, without a permit or licence.

The snake has an open wound on its side and was yesterday being tended to by Queensland Parks and Wildlife officers and a vet.

Charges were not being laid.

The seizure comes the week after a man was fined \$450 for having two jungle pythons, a spotted python and a carpet python in his car when he was stopped by police for speeding in southern Queensland.

It also follows a \$75 fine for a Deeral man who kept a dead night tiger snake in a soft drink bottle at his home south of Cairns.

The EPA spokesman said penalties could apply to anyone buying, selling, possessing or keeping reptiles without an appropriate permit or licence under Queensland's wildlife laws.

Cairns Post
February 2010

Mum Ignores Deadly Bite - And Bakes A Cake

A DARWIN woman who was bitten by one of the deadliest snakes in the world while hanging out the washing, then went inside to bake a cake.

Tove Tagell, 45, is today recovering in hospital after she was bitten by a western brown snake.

Ms Tagell thought she had only received a scratch from the deadly snake and went inside to make a cake.

She is now in the high dependency unit at Royal Darwin Hospital where she is being treated with brown snake antivenene.

The mother-of-two said she was lucky to be alive after she responded so late to the snake bite.

"I should go and buy a lotto ticket," she said.



Tove Tagell is being treated at RDH's high dependency unit after she was bitten on her right foot by a brown snake at her home in Knuckey Lagoon, NT.

Ms Tagell was in the back yard of her Knuckey Lagoon home when the reptile bit her in the right foot about 1pm on Wednesday.

She kicked the snake when it leaped out from underneath the washing basket and thought the attack had only left her with a tiny scratch.

Ms Tagell said she drove to the hospital after strong head-

aches and nausea kicked in.

"I didn't think it was anything serious," she said. "I continued what I was doing - hanging up the washing and baking a cake. But then the headache hit and I thought I better go to the hospital."

Western brown snakes are the second most venomous snakes in the Top End - the only snake more toxic is the rarely found Coastal Taipan.

Darwin reptile handler Chris Peberdy said the snakes were common and had killed more Territorians than any other snake.

"The woman is very lucky," he said. "Brown snakes kill people very quickly. We had a death in less than two hours before."

Mr Peberdy removed at least four brown snakes from the Palmerston area in the past two months.

He warned residents to be cautious when spending time outdoors as the snakes were particularly transient during the wet season.

"They're on the move and are going to be on the move until April - it's the warmer weather," he said.

For snake removal or advice on how to avoid bites call Mr Peberdy on 0409 326 307.

NADJA HAINKE
Northern Territory News
March 2010

Bell Frog Thought To Be On Last Legs Spotted Alive And Kicking

In the world of amphibians, it is the equivalent of finding the Tasmanian tiger. A species of frog presumed extinct for nearly 30 years has turned up in the Southern Tablelands.

The yellow-spotted bell frog was once ubiquitous in the northern and southern tablelands of NSW, but was almost wiped out after the chytrid fungus arrived from Africa in the early 1970s.

It was found alive and well in 2008 by government researcher Luke Pearce, who was searching for a native fish, the southern pygmy perch. Instead, he spotted the bell frog, which has distinctive markings on its groin and thighs.

But Mr Pearce had to wait until last October before he could return with David Hunter, the threatened species officer of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, to confirm the finding.



Not dead ... a yellow-spotted bell frog.

Photo: Taronga Zoo

"We heard this bell frog call," Mr Pearce said. "[We] went down looking for it and actually nearly stepped on it. It was quite amazing. This frog was just waiting there to be found."

In one stretch of stream on a farm in an unspecified part of the Southern Tablelands, an estimated 100 yellow-spotted bell frogs have been found. Six tadpoles have been taken to Taronga Zoo to establish a breeding program.

"If it has a predisposition to being resistant to this fungus, as opposed to having site attributes resulting in resistance, that will afford it much greater protection when we start putting it elsewhere," Dr Hunter said.

Michael McFadden, an amphibian keeper at Taronga Zoo, said the fungus had caused the loss of seven frog species in Australia. It was thought to have wiped out two species that have been found in the past few years.

In all, almost a quarter of the state's frog species have been affected by the fungus, including 15 threatened varieties such as the green and golden bell frog, the corroboree frog and the spotted tree frog.

"Highland species of frogs crashed really hard," he said. Two years ago, the armoured mist frog of northern Queensland was found after not being seen since the early 1990s.

"This is the equivalent of discovering the Tasmanian tiger, in terms of amphibians, in terms of frogs," the NSW Environment Minister, Frank Sartor, said of the latest find.

BRIAN ROBINS
Sydney Morning Herald
March 2010

Lizards Control The Gender Of Their Offspring

The larger the male lizard, the more likely he is to father sons, suggests a new study on brown anole lizards that also determined smaller males tend to sire daughters. Adult females, however, help to control the process.

Female lizards are always attracted to big males, but when they do mate with smaller males, they somehow manipulate the gender of their offspring to produce daughters, according to a study in the March 4 issue of Science Express, the advance online publication of the journal Science. The authors believe the lizards exert such control to ensure that genes from large fathers are passed on to sons, which stand to benefit from inheriting the genes for large size.

"This species has figured out a clever way to pass on genes with gender-specific effects on fitness," said Bob Cox, the lead author on the paper and a post-doctoral researcher at Dartmouth. "Usually, when natural selection pulls genes in different directions for each gender, the species faces an evolutionary dilemma. But these lizards have solved this puzzle, they've figured out how to get the right genes into the right gender."

Cox and co-author Ryan Calsbeek, an assistant professor of biological sciences at Dartmouth, created opportunities for females to mate with males of different sizes, leading to their findings.



Image: Bob Cox and Ryan Calsbeek, Dartmouth

The scientists think the genes that make males more fit are often different from the genes that benefit females, even though males and females share most of their DNA. The valuable traits for one gender are not always the same for the other.

"In an evolutionary sense, what's good for the goose is not always good for the gander," as Cox put it.

The gender tweaking benefits survival. To prove this, the researchers documented the survival rates of lizard sons and daughters over eight months after the reptiles were released to their natural habitat in The Bahamas.

"As we predicted, the survival of the male offspring increased if they had large fathers," said Calsbeek. "But, we found that the survival of the daughters was not influenced by the size of the father. This suggests that the genetic benefits of large size are specific to sons."

It's still a big mystery as to how the females control the

gender of their progeny.

"That's the big question at this point," said Cox, who, along with his colleagues, hopes to solve the mystery in future.

JENNIFER VIEGAS
Discovery News
March 2010

Dog-eating Python Returns For More

A 3m python that swallowed a family's pet dog has struck again, attempting to devour a chihuahua.

But this time, the dog's owner was able to prevent the animal from becoming dinner, dragging it out of the snake's mouth.

Australian Venom Zoo operator Stuart Douglas was called to remove the python, keeping it temporarily at his zoo before releasing it into the wild at a secret location well away from domestic animals.

The same snake had stalked and eaten Dot, a nine-month-old Jack Russell terrier, while she playing in her backyard the week before Christmas.



Stuart Douglas with the snake that devoured Dot the Jack Russell (inset), and then tried to eat a second family pet.

Dot's owner, Keri Stewart, said the serpent had stalked her

beloved pet before consuming it whole.

"I had come home and let Dot out as usual (into the backyard) to do her business," she said.

"I went out an hour and a half later and came across this massive big amethystine python, with a big lump in it."

Ms Stewart said she had become so distressed over the incident she had moved out of her Fallon Close home to get away from the snake.

"I couldn't take the risk with my 11-year-old son in the house," she said.

The incident follows a report of a scrub python, also known as an amethystine python, devouring a 35kg pet goat in Kuranda two weeks ago.

The python, which had snatched the goat out of a backyard bordering onto rainforest, had disappeared back into its natural habitat.

Mr Douglas said it was not unusual for scrub pythons to consume domestic animals in Kuranda.

"It usually happens this time of the year, before winter," Mr Douglas said.

"They just try to get a real big feed."

Pet owners in rainforest areas such as Kuranda were urged to keep an eye on their pets.

"Around this time of year, if you have a small dog and you are surrounded by rainforest, you shouldn't keep your pet outside," Mr Douglas said.

DANIEL BATEMAN
Cairns Post
March 2010

Snake Preyed On Baby Dinosaurs

An ancient snake has been caught in the act - about to eat a baby dinosaur - 67 million years ago.

An extraordinary fossil from India reveals the 3.5-metre predator was coiled around a broken egg in a dinosaur nest.

Next to it was its prey: a newly hatched titanosaurs about 50 centimetres long, and two other eggs.

Dhananjay Mohabey, of the Geological Survey of India, who found the fossils, said the activity of the hatchling breaking out of its egg may have attracted the snake to the nest. "It was such a thrill to discover such a portentous moment frozen in time," he said.

Other snake skeletons and dinosaur eggs were also found

at the site in Gujarat, suggesting hatchlings were the snakes' preferred food, said a team member, Jason Head, of the University of Toronto.

"It would have been a smorgasbord. Hundreds or thousands of defenceless baby sauropods could have supported an ecosystem of predators during the hatching season."



Take that ... a reconstruction sculpted by Tyler Keillo

Researchers said the creatures appeared to have been quickly entombed in sand and mud, either in a landslide or storm, which then preserved them for 67 million years.

Mr Mohabey first unearthed the dinosaur and eggs in the 1980s, but it was not realised until a decade ago by the team co-leader, Jeff Wilson, of the University of Michigan, that a snake skeleton was present with the eggs and baby.

It has taken an international team more than six years to prepare the specimens from the slab and study them.

Their results, which provide the first evidence found that snakes ate dinosaurs, are published in the journal PLoS Biology.

Unlike today's snakes the ancient one, *Sanajeh indicus*, did not have a jaw that could open wide so it could eat a hard egg, but it was big enough to swallow a soft baby.

Titanosaurs were giant plant eaters that walked on all fours and weighed up to 100 tonnes.

DEBORAH SMITH
Sydney Morning Herald
March 2010

Revealed: Australia's Very Own Little Tyrannosaur

Tyrannosaurus rex was one of the most ferocious dinosaurs to walk the planet. Now evidence has been unearthed in Victoria that Australia had its very own tyrannosaur. It had the same little arms and powerful jaws, but it was a fraction of the size of its giant cousin *T. rex*.

An international research team discovered the fossilised hip bone of a tyrannosauroid dinosaur that lived about 105 million years ago. It is the first evidence the predator existed in the southern continents.

"*T. rex* and his buddies were previously only known to the northern hemisphere; to find one anywhere in the southern hemisphere is a first," said Tom Rich, a senior curator at Museum Victoria. Dr Rich said the fossil was found at a well-known underground research site called Dinosaur Cove, about 220 kilometres west of Melbourne on the Victorian coast. The hip bone is believed to have come from a dinosaur that was about three metres long and weighed about 80 kilograms, a fraction of the size and weight of the *T. rex*.

"The bone is unambiguously identifiable as a tyrannosaur because these dinosaurs have very distinct hip bones," said Roger Benson, a researcher at the University of Cambridge.



Tyrannosaurus rex

Dr Rich said the dinosaur would have had a large head and small arms, characteristic features of tyrannosaurs.

In the middle of the Cretaceous period, 100 million years ago, when this dinosaur lived, Australia was still attached to Antarctica and lay much further south than now. Victoria was placed well inside the Antarctic Circle and daily temperatures were low, frigid even, says Dr Rich, whose findings are published in the journal *Science*.

The discovery of the tyrannosauroid fossil shows the group was not confined to just one half of the globe, but probably lived everywhere, he said. "Fifty to 100 million years ago before [the time of *T. rex*], the continents were joined together in a vast land mass called Pangaea."

**NICKY PHILLIPS
Melbourne Herald-Sun
March 2010**

Snake Bite Victim Chooses Underbelly Over Hospital

Peter Grigg was not going to let a snake bite stop him watching the premiere of Australian crime drama *Underbelly - The Golden Mile*.

Bitten on the ankle by a 1m eastern small-eyed snake in his yard, Mr Grigg did not rush for help because he would miss his favourite show.



Peter Grigg shrugged off a snake bite to watch *Underbelly*

Despite battling cramps as a result of the bite, he then turned in for the night.

"My leg started cramping up real bad along with my chest, but I just went to bed and didn't get much sleep," he said.

"When I went to work the next day, everybody said I didn't look well.

"I finally called David Walton from Cairns Snake Removals who said I should definitely go to the hospital."

Mr Grigg, 25, was placed on a drip on Monday and medicos monitored his health.

"If I had died that night it wouldn't have been worth it," he said.

"But it's one of my favourite shows."

BEN BLOMFIELD
Cairns Post
April 2010

Doubly Endowed Lizard Discovered In Philippines

PARIS: Biologists have reported the discovery of a spectacular species of giant lizard, as long as a full-grown man is tall, and endowed with a double penis.

The secretive but brightly coloured monitor lizard is a close cousin of the komodo dragon of Indonesia. Unlike its relative, however, it neither kills to eat nor feasts on carrion. It is entirely peaceable and fruit-eating.

Dubbed *Varanus bitatawa*, the lizard measures two metres in length, says an account published by the Royal Society.

It was found in a river valley on northern Luzon in the Philippines, surviving loss of habitat and hunting by local people who use it for food.

How many of the lizards have survived is unclear. The species is almost certainly critically endangered, and might well have disappeared without being catalogued had not a large male specimen been rescued alive from a hunter last June.

Finding such a distinctive species in a heavily populated, highly deforested location "comes as an unprecedented surprise", say the authors, writing in the journal *Biology Letters*.

The only comparable recent finds are the Kipunji monkey, which inhabits a tiny range of forest in Tanzania, and the Saola, a forest-dwelling bovine found only in Vietnam and Laos.



Varanus bitatawa

V. bitatawa has unique markings. Its scaly body and legs

are a blue-black mottled with pale yellow-green dots, while its tail is marked in alternating segments of black and green.

Males have a double penis, called hemipenes, also found in some snakes and other lizards.

The two penises are often used in alternation, and sometimes contain spines or hooks that serve to anchor the male within the female during intercourse.

V. bitatawa has a relative in southern Luzon, *V. olivaceus*, but the species are separated by three river valleys and a gap of 150 kilometres and may never have met.

One reason the lizard has gone undetected, the researchers speculate, is that it never leaves the forests of its native Sierra Madre mountains.

The authors say it should become a "flagship species" for efforts to preserve the remaining forests of northern Luzon.

Agence France-Presse
April 2010

Rangers Nab Lazy Croc In Search Of Free Lunch

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers have nabbed a lazy crocodile intent on nicking the catch of the day from fishermen on Cape York.

The four-metre croc had started venturing onto the banks of the Mungkun River at Pormpuraaw in search of a free fish lunch.



The four metre croc stalks the bank of the Mungkun River

Photos of the whopper sized croc show it wasn't shy, coming within metres of gear used by fishermen at the popular spot between Karumba and Weipa.

Rangers moved in on Sunday after the estuarine crocodile was deemed a danger to public safety.

Environment Minister Kate Jones said the croc had also been trying to pinch fish from fishing lines.

"It's very unusual for a crocodile to come right out of the water and onto the bank within close proximity to people," she said.

She said local indigenous rangers and police were helping Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service remove the croc from the trap on Tuesday.

The croc will be sent to a farm or a zoo.

Melbourne Age
April 2010

Deadly Snake Joins Wedding Celebrations

Marriage celebrations for Cameron and Julia Geyer turned sour on Sunday when a death adder joined the party.

The newlyweds were having a barbecue with family and friends at their Kewarra Beach home to celebrate their wedding on Saturday.

About 8.15pm, Mr Geyer's Melbourne mate, Dustin O'Connor, walked in to the kitchen to be greeted by an almost fully grown northern death adder, the world's fifth deadliest snake.



Julia and Cameron Geyer with daughter Chloe had a nasty experience when a death adder was found in their QLD home
With Mr Geyer's five-and-a half-month-old baby girl Chloe

in the next room sleeping next to Mr O'Connor's 16-month-old son, Deikin, panic set in.

"We had a shovel ready in case it tried to get to their rooms," Mr Geyer said.

"The snake was still for about 20 minutes but in the last 10 minutes it started moving towards us."

Cairns Snake Removals owner David Walton removed the snake and said a bite from it could kill a child.

"I'm glad they called me and didn't risk a bite," he said.

Chef Almost Became Lunch For Crocodile

Northern Territory chef Kyle MacLennan almost became the meal during a recent swim.

And no one knew how narrowly he escaped until some days later.

Mr MacLennan, 26, was swimming from the beach to a boat in the small marina at Mandorah, west of Darwin, when his mum Lui MacLennan took a photo of her boy.

She did not check the photos over until she returned to Sydney a few days later.

"No one even knew (the crocodile) was there," Mr MacLennan said.

"I was at Mandorah with my mum and her friend. I was completely unaware (of the crocodile) until I saw the pic."



Kyle MacLennan didn't realise until days later that he made a lucky escape from this croc in the harbour at Mandorah

Mr MacLennan said it had to be a real crocodile.

"I was really hoping it was a practical joke being played by my mum," he said.

"But she assures me it wasn't. It looks like it was looking right at me."

Mr MacLennan said they were touring Mandorah, taking photos of lighthouses for his mum's friend, an avidophile who is writing a book on the topic.

"It was a couple of days later when they got back to Sydney (that they saw the photo)," he said.

"There were a couple of frantic emails. (Mum) is always telling me to be safe."

This followed news earlier this week that a crocodile had made a splash in a suburban Darwin pool.

A water aerobics class that was scheduled for the pool was hastily called off.

DANIEL BOURCHIER
Northern territory News
May 2010

Orange Snake Among Finds On Borneo

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) -- A lungless frog, a frog that flies and a slug that shoots love darts are among 123 new species found in Borneo since 2007 in a project to conserve one of the oldest rain forests in the world.

A report by the global conservation group WWF on the discoveries also calls for protecting the threatened species and equatorial rain forest on Borneo, the South China Sea island that is the world's third-largest and is shared by Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei.

"The challenge is to ensure that these precious landscapes are still intact for future generations," said the report released Thursday.



Dendrelaphis kopsteini - one of the new discoveries in Borneo, a snake that has a bright orange, almost flame-like, neck coloration that gradually fades into an extraordinary iridescent and vivid blue, green and brown pattern. When threatened it flares its nape, revealing bright orange colors

The search for the new species was part of the Heart of Borneo project that started in February 2007 and is backed by the WWF and the three countries that share the island.

The aim is to conserve 85,000 square miles (220,000 square kilometers) of rain forest that was described by Charles Darwin as "one great luxuriant hothouse made by nature for herself."

Explorers have been visiting Borneo for centuries, but vast tracts of its interior are yet to be biologically explored, said Adam Tomasek, leader of WWF's Heart of Borneo project.

"If this stretch of irreplaceable rain forest can be conserved for our children, the promise of more discoveries must be a tantalizing one for the next generation of researchers to contemplate," he said.

The scientists' discoveries include the world's longest known stick insect at 56.7 centimeters, a flame-colored snake and a frog that flies and changes its skin and eye color. In total, 67 plants, 29 invertebrates, 17 fish, five frogs, three snakes and two lizards and a brand new species of bird were discovered, said the report.

Borneo has long been known as a hub for monster insects, including giant cockroaches about 4 inches (10 centimeters) long.

Notable among the species discovered are:

- a snake that has a bright orange, almost flame-like, neck coloration that gradually fades into an extraordinary iridescent and vivid blue, green and brown pattern. When threatened it flares its nape, revealing bright orange colors.

- A frog that breathes through its skin because it has no lungs, which makes it appear flat. This aerodynamic shape allows the frogs to move swiftly in fast flowing streams. Although the species was discovered in 1978, it was only now that scientists found the frog has no lungs.

- A high-altitude slug found on Mount Kinabalu that has a tail three times the length of its head. They shoot calcium carbonate "love darts" during courtship to inject a hormone into a mate. While resting, the slug wraps its long tail around its body.

The Heart of Borneo, the core island area the conservation effort targets, is home to ten species of primate, more than 350 birds, 150 reptiles and amphibians and a staggering 10,000 plants that are found nowhere else in the world, the report says.

VIJAY JOSHI
Associated Press
April 2010

NEXT VHS MEETING

Wednesday June 23rd, 2010
7:15pm - 10:30pm

PRAHRAN RSL - 301 HIGH STREET