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ACTHA NEWS OCT - NOV 2008

*Newsletter of the
ACT Herpetological
Association Inc.*

YOUR COMMITTEE

President	Dennis Dyer
Vice President	Ric Longmore
Secretary	Joe McAuliffe
Treasurer	Margaret Ning
Newsletter Editor	Mandy Conway
Public Officer	John Wombey
Excursion Officer	Ric Longmore
Committee Members	Christian Robertson Philip Robertson
Student Representative	Jake McAuliffe

DIARY DATE

The *bi-monthly* meetings of the Association are held on the *third Tuesday of the month* at 7.30pm, Western Districts Rugby Club, Catchpole Street, Macquarie, Belconnen.

UPCOMING MEETING

Tuesday, 21 October 2008

The critically endangered Fijian Crested Iguana

Guest speaker: Suzanne Morrison, School of Botany & Zoology, ANU

Suzanne will be talking about her PhD research on the Fijian Crested Iguana. This species is critically endangered and Suzanne's talk will detail data collection on reproduction, diet and behaviour of the species. The presentation will cover aspects of her fieldwork and also her overall experiences in Fiji and Kava.

IN THIS ISSUE

Snail collecting the safe way

Make sure your lizard's next meal is safe, page 2.

Living on 'burrowed' time

Dr Beth Mantle, ACT & Region Frogwatch Coordinator, gave an awesome talk about the results of her studies of a remarkable burrowing frog to ACTHA members at the August 08 Meeting. Can they do all they need to do in 3 months? find out from page 3.

The International Scene

The cane toad can't stand the cold, page 6.

The female Bribon's Toadlet partners up to 8 males

Dr Byrne, Monash University, led the study into the mating and nesting practices of Bribon's Toadlet, which also involved Professor Scott Keogh from the ANU, page 7.

LOTS OF RAIN = SNAILS

It's been raining a bit in our region which invariably means the snails living in our gardens will be on the move. "Great stuff" I hear you say, "my lizards will be stoked!"

Yep, they will love the snails being offered. But how do you know the snails are safe and unbaited?

The following advice will help.

- 1) Gather the snails and place them in a container: a plastic mouse tank with the well vented lid is ideal. It is very important to keep the snails in the container without any food, water or substrate. They can sleep in their shells for up to 2 months so you aren't being cruel. Add any food etc and you will end up with a frothy and wet mess with dead, fermenting snails. Store the container somewhere out of the weather.
- 2) Check the container in a week, especially the snail poo. If any of the poo is a bright, florescent green then the snails have recently dined on snail bait and are poisoned. Throw the whole lot out.
- 3) If the snail poo looks 'normal', then you can feed them something nourishing like fresh grass or vegies for 24 hours before, in turn, feeding them to your lizards.

Most snails come out after nightfall, so collect them using a torch and you'll have snail dinners for a couple of months.



Is it Spring yet??

ACT HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION INC. PROFILE

ACTHA aims to promote the study and conservation of reptiles and amphibians, and to foster a positive community attitude towards this much maligned group of animals. Our members encompass a broad cross-section of the community. Amateur and professional herpetologists are joined by interested members of the public in learning more about our local frogs, snakes, lizards and turtles, as well as other herpetofauna from Australia and around the world.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The views expressed by contributors and authors and any links to Websites provided in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of ACTHA.

LIVING ON 'BURROWED' TIME

Dr Beth Mantle

ACT & Region Frogwatch Coordinator

This article by Mandy Conway

Beth Mantle addressed ACTHA at its' August 08 meeting to talk about her favourite subject, the Burrowing frog, and also her new role with Frogwatch since moving to Canberra in April of this year.

Beth started her talk with some general facts.

LIFE HISTORY OF BURROWING FROGS

Australia has a fairly diverse frog fauna with approx 213 recognised species (developments in genetics are making it difficult to keep track of actual evaporative water

Large bodies animals iguanas. In galapagus large, fairly unusaully amongst lizards are herbivorous. Ig distribution interesting live sth of us central america central am, skuth caribbean, galapag fiji

40 species 8 genera and 1 genus in fiji described in 1700 brachylophus. 1980 fij crest ig described. 400 population island made a nature reserve 1st ne, to protect igs. 1990 and early 2000 survey doen on west side of fiji. Banded ig east, crested on east. On different islands. 2nd survey population declining 20 down to 5. few and scattered pops declining except on 1st islan d discovered. Goats on islands, burning to catch goats, intrlduced cats, mongoose and rats challenge. Critically endangered now. 2 main islands in fiji Yadua, large one 100x 2000 species on yadua tapa, 95% of worlds pop. Village is home, 200 people traditional village, substistance living make own houses of natural materials, one school.

Fish around reef and collect coconuts. Ranger caers for island, host famkily. Cane grass and wood from forest so skills not llost. Tops of houses are tree ferns imported from mainland

Most of food from sea or land. Dry island on western side so no rain most of year. Staples of fish, women line and men spear. And cocnut baka loco with coco. Money spent on flfour, make sweet fried bread, on occasion catch turtle, permit required but not regulated. Green and

hawks bill for weddings etc. Kava roots of pepper bush. Drunk at welcoming and farewells. Need to drink for anything done.

Fiji brighth place, pandana . herself and 1 or 2 assistants. Village on weekends for socialising.

Field work from Monday, 3 months at a time. Western side accessiable and calmer 9sheltered from wind) dry forest. Deciduous trees in dry season. Dry forest in pacific used for living burning etc. casurina trees 70 hectares, 100x500metres. High tide to get in, vok ai warriors tempt fluctuates betwee 25 and 32 degrees. All fresh water carried onto island.a couple of days and you have a leaf flush.

All the birds start breeding, 2 species of fruit bats, insects hit on head at night, lots of crabs, hermit crabs, land crabs,

No of amoya trochola water skinks, a concolour green tree skink, lots of geckos nactus lagicus, pacific sledndor toes, pacific boas 1m long. Villagers think ikg and boas poisonous. White lipped sea

15,000 water dragon sizedcrested igs with longer tails, live up in trees so difficult

Mark and recapture study can see well at night, spotlights and long fishing poles with taped wood on end where ig grabs and they bring down. Weighed, measure and mark each individual. Change from green to black when angry within 3 mins. Small teeth small but sharp.

Mark by pit tagginmg goes in under skin (like dogs) set area for mark and recapture study and a number of transacts. Nos per area worked out with habitat and animals.

Distribution work onky thing being dine so far in wild. Repro mate in wet season with lots of fighting, females lay eggs in nest in hole ingroun, beginning of year 3 layed and stay there 9months to transverse dry season. 6 in cpativty...

Late breaking news, dan edwards, peter harlow banded ig

now split into 2 species. Genetic work done and now living in central islands.

Closest ancestors in central americas so slowly
vegetation rafted across water. Some theory
from mongolia.

Other islands not like old land forms of fiji.
Other examples of reptiles rafting as don't need
to eat etc and just cling. Cyclones and tree
floating around. 10s of millions of years
females bredding every 2nd year, regeneration
veryy slw. Looking at other islands to examine
translocation sites, better idea of viable islands.
Natural predaors fiji goss hawkes, harriers.

Are all 3 species critically endangered.

Bulla Blla new ig.

Ones in tonga can be traced to distinct isldand
in fifj genetically distinct. female movement
identified.

FROGWATCH

Following her main talk, Beth gave a small presentation on the upcoming Frogwatch Census.

Every year, during National Water Week, approximately 250 volunteers go out and monitor

THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

THE CANE TOAD CAN'T STAND THE COLD

ScienceDaily (Aug 27, 2008)

Cane toads weren't allowed to compete in the Olympics, but scientists have raced Cane Toads in the laboratory and calculated that they would not be able to invade Melbourne, Adelaide or Hobart and are unlikely to do well in Perth or Sydney, even with climate change.

According to research by Dr Michael Kearney, from the Department of Zoology at the University of Melbourne, and collaborators from Australia and the USA, the Cane Toad's march will grind to a halt once it is physically too cold for the toads to hop.

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THE FEMALE BIBRON'S TOADLET PARTNERS UP TO 8 MALES!

ScienceDaily (Sep. 26, 2008)

A groundbreaking new study into the mating and nesting practices of a common Australian frog has found they partner up to eight males sequentially – the highest recorded of any vertebrate.

Dr Phillip Byrne, from Monash University's School of Biological Sciences, has researched the frog species Bibron's Toadlet (*Pseudophryne bibronii*) for six

SOME WEB SITES WORTH LOOKING AT

<http://frogs.org.au/> www.aussiereptilekeeper.com www.mark.org.au

http://www3.environment.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/hygiene_protocol_snakes.pdf

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/animals/reptiles.htm>

http://www.tams.act.gov.au/live/environment/native_plants_and_animals/licensing_of_plants_and_animals/reptile_policy

Members might like to check this site from time to time to read about

recent research into reptiles and amphibians:

http://www.sciencedaily.com/news/plants_animals/frogs_and_reptiles/

Snakes Alive! 2008 promotional video, available on YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMqurvsslvc>

NB These web sites have been provided by members. The views expressed by contributors and authors, and any links to Websites provided in this Newsletter, are not necessarily those of ACTHA.



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