ACTHA Inc. News

February-March 2022

Newsletter of the ACT Herpetological Association Inc.

In this issue:

ACTHA Committee for 2021-2022

President: Luke Dunn

Vice President: Liam Thornton

Secretary: Dennis Dyer

Treasurer: Margaret Ning

Newsletter Editor: Brian La Rance

Webmaster: Angus Kennedy

Public Officer: **John Wombey***

Committee members: Iris Carter, Roy Chamberlain, Peter Child and Jason Spurr

**denotes life member*

Annual membership fees are:

- $20 for an individual / couple / family;
- $10 for current students (including university)

Bank account details for direct deposit:

ACT Herpetological Association Inc.
Account Number: 486822880
BSB: 112-908

Be sure to record the date of payment and receipt number for your direct deposit on the membership form.

Diary date

Our next bi-monthly meeting will be **Tuesday 19 April 2022**, at the Canberra Reptile Zoo, at 7pm. Our speaker will be **Yusuke Fukuda** from the NT Govt, on crocodile research he has been doing there for many years. Yusuke received an ACTHA grant a few years back to help with part of his genetic research.

Yusuke's talk will focus on 1) saltwater crocodile population history, 2) movement patterns and geographic barriers, 3) movement between Australia and East Timor, and 4) the source of problem crocodiles in Darwin Harbour.

Needless to say, it **will be a zoom session** at the Zoo using their lovely new large screen.

ACTHA contact details:

PO Box 440 Jamison ACT 2614

E-mail: info@actha.org.au

www.actha.org.au

A Herp Trip to South Australia

Angus Cleary

All images in this article by Angus Cleary

After arriving in Melbourne to meet up with a fellow herper around midday, we soon set out for our first destination: the VIC/SA mallee. Our first stop was Lake Tyrrell, poking around the edges of the salt lake for earless dragons. Unfortunately for us, both stops here during the trip proved unfruitful and we continued to our next destination near Patchewollock in search of *Aprasia aurita,* the endangered / threatened mallee worm-lizard or eared worm-lizard. The heat unfortunately impeded our search, turning up little herp life aside from a Marbled Delma (*Delma australis*), a Nobbi Dragon and a few Southeastern Sliders (*Lerista bougainvillii*). Continuing into the night we found several more Delma as well as loads of Beaded Geckoes (*Lucasium damaeum*). Realising that *aurita* were unlikely at this point, we headed to Waikerie, SA, seeing on the way several Prong-snouted Blind Snake (*Anilios endoterus*) and too many Southern Spiny-tailed Geckoes (*Strophurus intermedius*) to count. After a super chill border crossing, we arrived at our destination at around 2 am, and set to work sleepily checking spinifex hummocks for Jewelled Geckoes (*Stophurus elderi*). After finding many of these gorgeous animals and getting a quick glimpse of a Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat we rolled out our swags and got a much needed 4 hours of sleep (a recurring sleep-deprived pattern this trip).

Marble-faced Delma (Delma australis)

The next day was largely spent commuting to the western Eyre peninsula to spotlight in some more mallee habitat and to hopefully find a Thorny Devil, but first we made some quick stops near Burra and Port Pirie to track down some more fossorial reptiles and to meet up with a local herper. While the oppressive heat and birds of prey robbed us of most reptiles, we managed to

find the Flinders Worm-lizard (*Aprasia pseudopulchella*) and a Myall Slider (*Lerista edwardsae*) as well as a few other common skinks.

Jewelled Gecko (Strophorus elderi)

Arriving at our destination on dusk, with little to show other than some flat Crested Dragons and a rather ugly juvenile, we refuelled on 2-minute noodles and began spotlighting. Cool winds unfortunately robbed us of our much-desired pygopod and snake targets for the evening. Eventually we started finding geckoes, including numerous Desert Stone Geckoes (*Diplodactylus wiru*), Starred Knob-tailed Gecko and my personal favourite, a Thorn-tailed Gecko (*Strophurus assimilis*). After searching the dunes and swale for hours with no change in what we saw, we decided to call it a night and had several nightmares about not being able to find any *Delma petersoni* (which unfortunately came true).

Driving out to the WA border became much more productive on the road, seeing bucketloads of Shingleback lizards (*Tiliqua rugosa*) and abandoned houses ripe for flipping rocks. After losing a few hot Dugite juveniles down soil cracks we kept moving to the Great Australian Bight. Unfortunately, our herping at the main lookout was restricted to the boardwalks, so we only managed to find a rather crusty looking Bight Crevice-skink (*Egernia richardi*) and a speedy Peninsula brown snake (*Pseudonaja inframacula*). On our way out we managed to road cruise a Nullarbor Earless Dragon (*Tympanocryptis houstoni*). However, I unfortunately spooked it from under the car and it disappeared into the endless expanses of shrubland. We continued onwards and focused our attention on the limestone cliff faces present towards the WA border, managing to find several shrubland Morethia skinks (*Morethia obscura*) and a Chapman's dragon / Southern

heath dragon (*Ctenophorus chapmani*), as well as the endemic Nullarbor Marbled Gecko (*Christinus alexanderi*) and an Elegant snake-eyed skink (*Cryptoblepharus pulcher clarus*). The lack of Egernid lizards was frustrating

Goldfield's Spiny-tailed Gecko (Strophurus assimilis)

and we were starting to lose faith. However, a handy piece of board near the highway produced the goods and we were staring in awe at a beaten up Nullarbor Slender Bluetongue (*Cyclodomorphus melanops siticulosus*) accompanying the dried-up husk of a Bull Skink (*Liopholis multiscutata*). The night was spent spotlighting some woodland habitat at the border for carpet pythons with little success, followed by slightly more success at the cliffs, spotting countless *Christinus* as well as Thick-tailed Gecko, Southern Spiny-tailed Gecko and a rather attractive Limestone Coast Gecko (*Diplodactylus calcicolus*).

The next morning, we resolved to find the second prettiest lizard on the Nullarbor (we made the mistake of ignoring McKenzie's Dragon this time around) - the endemic species of bearded dragon (*Pogona nullarbor*). After picking out a likely area on maps with plenty of road and tin we started cruising. We were quickly greeted with several Shinglebacks and a weirdly lost Terek Sandpiper, but minutes later we spied a large dragon drop down into a burrow from the car. It was nice to know that we were in the right territory. Further down the road, we realised the bushes were lined with basking Painted Dragons (*Ctenophorus pictus*) and Nullarbor Earless Dragon (*Tympanocryptis houstoni*).

Eventually catching and photographing a couple, we started flipping some tin, producing a few Southern Sliders (*Lerista dorsalis*) and Baynes' Slider (*Lerista baynesi*), some thickies and earless dragons, and a tailless Slender Bluetongue (*Cyclodomorphus melanops*).

Limestone Coast Gecko (Diplodactylus caliculus)

After more Painteds and some rather pretty shingles, we decided to turn around and start heading back. Spotting a Nullarbor Quail-thrush got us reinvigorated in our search efforts, and not far from the end we spotted a beardie sitting in a shrub 10m to the side of the road. We managed to get some photos of this stunning animal after a well-coordinated team approach, and soon we were back to cruising the Eyre for our second attempt at spotlighting. Driving down the highway in the oppressive heat we drove past a shape that looked way off for a Sand Goanna and slightly off for a Shingleback. Ignoring the fact that it was most likely a delusion, we pulled a 180 and set out to investigate this herp-like object. It was a very pretty Western Bluetongue (*Tiliqua occipitalis*)! Elated with our find, we moved it off the road and continued on to some coastal dunes to watch the sunset and eat dinner. After losing a Bight Slider (*Lerista arenicola*) under some litter and observing some rather large Adder tracks on the beach, we headed back to our first Eyre spot.

Upon driving in we quickly had to straddle what looked like a very stripey rock sitting in the middle of the road. It turned out to be a Common death adder, which are pretty rare in this part of the world and perhaps more so in the Mallee habitat. Stoked with our find, we kept driving only to find a second, larger example. After the obligatory photoshoots, we started spotlighting some dunes. After watching a potential Linga Dragon (*Diporiphora linga*) shoot down into a spinifex hummock from the car, we stumbled across more of the geckos from the other night as well as a cute little Southern Shovel-nosed Snake (*Brachyurophis semifasciatus*) - unfortunately Delma and Southern Sandplain Gecko (*Lucasium bungabinna*) remained elusive this time as well.

Western Blue Tongue (Tiliqua occipitalis)

Common Death Adder (Acanthophis antarcticus)

Keen to sus out some woodland habitat to the north, we drove across some overgrown tracks through dunes, dodging Knob-tails left and right until we reached a more granite-y open habitat that my companion had been wanting to investigate for geckos. Spotting a mammalian eyeshine, I snuck into some scrub only to spook whatever was there. Looking down revealed the best find of our trip though, a drop-dead gorgeous 5ft long Southwestern Carpet Python (*Morelia imbricata*). These animals are another extremely rare snake in the region, so we were stoked to come across one on a rather chilly and windy night.

Common Death Adder (Acanthophis antarcticus)

The next day involved a big drive to Pimba, but en route we detoured to the Gawler Ranges to look for rock wallabies. The weather had become much hotter and soon we were roasting under the desert sun, with only the comfort of finding a Western Bearded Dragon (*Pogona minor*), Peninsula Dragon (*Ctenophorus fionni*) and Gidgee Skink (*Egernia stokesii*).

After an elite meal at the Pimba roadhouse we got to spotlighting the nearby dunes. Immediately we were greeted by a biblical insect swarm spurred on by the hot and humid conditions, but it was worth it to find a Western Hooded Scalyfoot (*Pygopus nigriceps*) and another Prong-snouted Blind Snake (*Anilios bituberculatus*).

After 40 minutes of finding nothing more we decided to switch it up and road cruise, which started producing several more scalyfoot and a lovely Eyre Basin Beaked Gecko (*Rhynchoedura eyrensis*). Eventually we bumped into a feisty adult Ringed Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja modesta*). However, whilst photographing it, it managed to burrow into the sand and disappear with little evidence of its existence (until seeing it flat on the road half an hour later).

Southwestern Carpet Python (Morelia imbricata).

Dwarf Bearded Dragon (Pogona minor)

Western Hooded Scaly-foot (Pygopus nigriceps)

Jans Banded Snake (Simosoleps bertholdi)

Pernatty Knob-tail Gecko (Nephrurus deleani)

Disappointed, we kept cruising and found a Jan's Banded Snake (*Simoselaps bertholdi*). Stoked with this beautiful snake, we made sure not to repeat our mistake and photographed it, unfortunately copping a negligible bite in the process. We soon went back to spotlighting, producing several beaded geckos, Southern Sand Slider (*Lerista labialis*) and the attractive endemic gecko, the Pernatty Knob-tailed Gecko (*Nephrurus deleani*). Finishing up at 3am, we soon awoke to the calls of Little Buttonquail and Thick-billed Grasswrens and set off to the north of Coober Pedy.

Switching shinglebacks for Central Beardies and a Netted Dragon, we headed to a location where two cryptic dragon species occurred, Ochre Dragons (*Ctenophorus tjantjalka*) and *Tympanocryptis fictilis*. The heat proved to be too much and after a quick nap and lunch spot we decided to spend the afternoon and evening cruising the uncharacteristically wet Moon Plain for Inland Taipan. After nothing but Sand Swimmer (*Eremiascincus richardsonii*), Tessellated Gecko (*Diplodactylus tesselatus*) and Eyrean Earless Dragons, we changed scene and targeted Mesa Gecko (*Diplodactylus galeatus*) and Gibber Gecko (*Lucasium byrnei*). Striking out on the latter, we found a few Mesa Gecko as well as a rather angry Eastern Hooded Scalyfoot (*Pygopus schraderi*), pictured below, and called it a night.

The next morning was taipan time, but alas our only quarry was the chunky Gibber Dragon (*Ctenophorus gibba*). After an afternoon nap we decided to pull an all-nighter and road cruised halfway to the NT border and back to Glendambo to camp. We managed to finally find our Gibber Gecko, as well as a cute and tiny Orange-naped Snake (*Furina ornata*) and several other

species found previously.

Eastern Hooded Scaly-foot (Pygopus schraderi)

We managed to make it to a locality that had Bronzebacks (*Ophidiocephalus taeniatus*), my main target for the Coober portion of the trip. However, the previous short sleeps and distant lightning took their mental and physical toll and an unnamed person lost a Bronzeback before another individual could glimpse it! After no further success apart from a Timid Slider and a funky looking Mesa Gecko, we cut our losses and headed back to Glendambo and collapsed in our car seats.

We continued the drive back to civilisation, stopping for a brief attempt at photographing a Saltbush Slender Bluetongue (*Cyclodomorphus venustus*). However, once again it eluded one member of the party. Soon we were back in Vic., itching to see our target, the most southerly population of De Vis' Banded Snakes (*Denisonia devisi*). Thankfully this spot produced the goods and we observed several hunting in soil cracks. We continued on to search for Eastern Beaked Gecko (*Rhynchoedura ormsbyi*) but we were at our energy limit and the cool weather led to little success. The next morning, we took a quick pit stop at Hattah to see Mallee Emu Wren, Striated Grasswren, Spinifex Delma (*Delma butleri*) and Desert Skink (*Liopholis inornata*) but we were unsuccessful on all except the grasswren, though we did find a feisty Strap-snouted Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja aspidorhyncha*). After reattempting to find *petersi* at Tyrrell we called it a trip and headed home to Melbourne. After such an exhausting trip I decided to take a quick overnight stop along the Murray River, which happened to be nearby, seeing the only Victorian population of Booroolong Frogs (*Litoria booroolongensis*), which was a nice change from the few common frog species we saw on this trip.

Unfortunately, the next day saw me back in miserable old Canberra, but I am itching to clean up what was missed in the future. Ticking off 1 new frog and 43 new reptiles was a pretty successful trip though.

Turtle Recovered after High-speed Interstate Police Pursuit

By Bill Ormonde ABC Broken Hill, 24 January 2022

The long-necked turtle was found by police after a pursuit. (Supplied: RRANA)

A turtle found after a high-speed interstate pursuit from South Australia to New South Wales has been returned safely to the wild.

The female long-neck was discovered after Broken Hill police arrested a 26-year-old man who allegedly led officers in Peterborough on a chase on Friday night along the Barrier Highway.

The chase was abandoned due to safety concerns until about 10pm, when NSW officers spotted the driver allegedly travelling at high speed.

He allegedly failed to stop when directed and another chase was initiated.

Police said the pursuit continued for approximately 25 kilometres before road spikes were deployed.

Turtle in 'good condition'

Police handed the animal, believed to be about three years old, over to the Rescue and Rehabilitation of Australian Native Animals (RRANA) group.

"She was in very good condition, no injuries," RRANA secretary Helen Semmens said.

"I believe the gentlemen who had her, found her crossing the road and picked her up for her safety."

After receiving the all-clear, volunteers let the young turtle go at the nearby Menindee Lakes.

The turtle was released in the Menindee Lakes area. (ABC Broken Hill: Bill Ormonde)

Ms Semmens says turtles are spotted crossing outback highways fairly often.

"It's common to find turtles wandering our streets and out on country roads," she said.

"Invariably what would happen, after quite good rains, is the turtle will start to come out and they're looking for a mate.

"You can often find them quite a distance from water, which is really unexpected.

"People get a bit confused.

"Often they can be left — they will find their way back to water."

The 26-year-old driver has been charged with drive recklessly on police pursuit, receiving stolen property, taking the car without the consent of the owner, as well as a prior offence of driving without a licence.

He will face Broken Hill Local Court in February.

Turtle Rescue at Lake George - February 2022

By Geoff Robertson. Photos: Andrew Zelnik

Following a recent Friends of Grassland visit to a property south of Braidwood, a handful of us decided to visit Lake George, and it was near full - we were not disappointed. Andrew took many great landscape photos, but we have included just one taken from one of the many small grassland remnants on the lake's edge, with the wind farm on the opposite shore. At one roadside spot we saw many long-neck turtles. Most were dead, but we "rescued" one - not sure if it was heading to the water or away? Such a pity that motorists do not seem to care, and turtles are living shorter lives as evidenced by the fact we saw no full-size turtles.

Lake George was almost full in February 2022

One lucky rescued Eastern Longneck turtle (Chelodina longicollis)

Study Finds a Barrier to NT Crocs Returning to Capture Sites

6 September 2019

Image: Flickr

Saltwater crocodiles have incredible homing instincts - with some able to find their way back to 'capture sites' up to 300km away.

However, the crocodiles in this study were unable or unwilling to swim around Cobourg Peninsula, preventing them from returning to their capture sites.

Lead researcher Yusuke Fukuda, a PhD scholar at The Australian National University (ANU) Research School of Biology, said the findings provide new insights into the navigation and movement of these crocodiles, and could help stop clashes between crocs and humans.

"Relocated salties often return to their original capture sites, which complicates management interventions aimed at reducing human-crocodile conflict," said Mr Fukuda.

"Cobourg Peninsula could create a navigational conflict, because salties would need to detour by swimming north in parts, away from the direction of their capture location. This is in contrast to what happens in Queensland, where Cape York is not an effective barrier to crocodile movement - at least, not for larger salties.

"But exactly how Cobourg Penisula interferes with the crocodiles' movements still remains a mystery."

Mr Fukuda said the study's findings supported the management of "problem salties" that no crocodile is allowed to be relocated once captured.

"Not only are they likely to return to their capture site, unless moved from one side of a movement barrier to another, but crocodiles' active movements in new areas may create the risk of crocodile attacks within other communities," said Mr Fukuda, who is also a wildlife scientist at the NT Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The research team used satellite tracking devices on eight saltwater crocodiles of different ages and sizes to see how the peninsula interfered with their homing abilities

Five males, ranging from three to four metres long, were shifted and released 100-300 kilometres from their capture sites, while three others of similar sizes were released at their site of capture as controls.

"The salties that were moved away were highly mobile compared to the controls, and moved in the direction of their original capture site," Mr Fukuda said.

"Genetic analysis of tissue samples from nests across the NT coast also demonstrated significant genetic diversity across the coast, and confirmed that Cobourg Peninsula is a barrier separating genetic stocks across the coast.

"This suggests that more than 250 crocodiles the NT Government removes each year from the Darwin Harbour for public safety come from the western side of the Peninsula."

The study was supported by ANU, the Northern Territory Government, Australian Government, Charles Darwin University, Wildlife Management International Pty Ltd, National Geographic Society, Holsworth Wildlife Research Endowment, IUCN-SSC Crocodile Specialist Group Student Research Assistance Scheme, ACT Herpetological Association and the Northern Territory Crocodile Farmers Association.

The study findings are published in *PLOS ONE*.

Why Have the Revered Crocodiles of this Island Nation Suddenly Started Killing People?

Source: Today on-line, *Published* 9 June 2019, Lospalos (East Timor). All photos: The New York Times

A crocodile reacts after it was speared with a needle on a biopsy pole to take a DNA sample in Lospalos, East Timor, 8 Feb 2019.

The two scientists, crammed in the back of a sweltering car, had come a long way hoping to encounter what most people try to avoid: man-eating crocodiles. Mr Yusuke Fukuda and Mr Sam Banks, biologists from Australia, traveled in March (2019) to East Timor, one of the world's least developed countries, to investigate what has become a deadly national mystery: Why are so many Timorese being killed by crocodiles?

Crocodile attacks in East Timor have increased twentyfold in the past decade, numbering at least one death a month in a country of 1.2 million people.

"We became concerned after many people were taken by crocodiles in East Timor," said Mr Fukuda, a PhD candidate at the Australian National University in Darwin, adding that it had taken years of bureaucratic wrangling between the researchers and the governments in both Australia and East Timor to be permitted to conduct research.

The people of East Timor, also known as Timor-Leste, have for centuries revered and even worshipped crocodiles.

A police officer encourages a young boy to shake the foot of a captive crocodile in Dili, East Timor.

The country's origin myth is about the crocodile Lafaek Diak, who out of friendship for a human boy sacrificed itself to become the child's home — the island of Timor, with each scaly bump on its back turning into a mountain. Timorese call crocodiles "abo," the Tetum-language word for grandparent, and killing them is culturally taboo as well as illegal.

The animals are so admired here that victims of attacks are often too ashamed to report them, which is why many believe the actual number of attacks is higher than the official statistics suggests.

The Timorese most at risk from crocodiles are those living on the banks of the countless riverways of this island, or along its coast. Using the rivers — whether to collect water, fish for food, bathe or do laundry — is a part of their daily life.

Researchers have found that nearly 83 per cent of those attacked in East Timor in the past 11 years were subsistence fishing, using small canoes or wading in the water.

Many locals do not believe that native crocodiles are behind the increase in attacks; they blame migrants, or murderous "troublemakers," who they say play by a different set of rules from those of the local "grandfathers."

Mr Demetrio Carvalho, East Timor's Secretary of State, summed up the theory. "The people believe that these crocs are our ancestors, and ancestors don't go attacking people," he said. "Our grandparents don't kill us."

A bus in Lospalos depicts East Timor's national creation myth about a crocodile who befriends a human boy.

Enter the Australian researchers. After a bumpy eight-hour journey along the roads of East Timor's northern coast, the men arrived in the isolated town of Lospalos, home to some of the biggest and most dangerous crocodiles in the country.

Their goal was to test the locals' theory by trying to determine whether the killer crocs were saltwater crocodiles from Australia, one of that country's most feared and dangerous animals.

After poaching was banned in Australia in the 1970s, saltwater crocodile populations exploded. The animals have recently been found in areas that were previously considered unsuitable or too remote.

East Timor is about 280 miles from the animals' regular range in northern Australia; a lengthy but manageable swim for a powerful animal that can grow up to 20 feet long (6.07 m) and weigh more than 2,000 pounds (907 kg).

“After several days swimming, these crocs would be very hungry and dangerous to come across,” said Mr Fukuda, the researcher.

To test the migration theory, Mr Fukuda and Mr Banks planned to collect DNA samples from a number of crocodiles.

Researcher Yusuke Fukuda, centre, inspects a DNA sample taken by Mr Victorino De Araujo, far right, in Lospalos, East Timor.

But taking a DNA sample from a crocodile is a far riskier proposition than your typical home heredity kit.

For obvious reasons, swabbing the inside of a crocodile’s cheek is not an option. Instead, the scientists must penetrate a croc’s leathery hide using a needle attached to a 12-foot long aluminum rod, which is known as a biopsy pole.

To do that successfully often requires wading into the water — at night.

To help find and stick the crocodiles, the researchers enlisted the help of several locals, including Mr Victorino De Araujo.

Mr De Araujo, 37, works as a firefighter, but is known in town as the person to call when there has been a crocodile attack or if a member of the community has disappeared near the water. He will enter the swamp and retrieve what is left of a body.

He is seen as a spiritual leader in the community with an almost supernatural relationship to the animals: a crocodile whisperer.

As the sun set on the first night the scientists arrived in Lospalos, the team headed into the swamp. Through the darkness, they spotted two glistening dots reflecting the light of their headlamps and floating just above the surface of the water — crocodile eyes.

Based on the distance between the croc's eyes, Banks estimated its total length: 12 feet, a big one.

Mr Victorino De Araujo approaches a large crocodile just beneath the surface to take a DNA sample on the outskirts of Lospalos, East Timor.

Mr De Araujo grabbed the biopsy pole and took off, bare foot, into the dark swamp. After several minutes of silence, he lunged at something and let out a shriek. He had landed his first jab.

Moments later, he waded out of the water to show the group his result. The needle was bent, but contained a tiny, 3 mm sample.

For the next six days, the team searched for animals to test. They lanced wild crocodiles, but also retrieved samples from crocs that were being held as pets, mascots or lucky charms. They ended up with 17 good samples.

Mr Fukuda planned to take the samples back to Australia for testing, but he first had to get back on Timor's ragged coastal roads and head to Dili, the capital.

He was halfway there when his driver stopped for a crowd gathered by the edge of the ocean.

A police officer beckoned the scientist to show him a set of items that had washed up on the beach — goggles, a spear gun and a torn pair of swim trunks.

They belonged to Agostinu da Cunya, a 17-year-old who went spearfishing the evening before with his brother while their father waited for them on the shore.

The boy, his family said, had been attacked by a crocodile. He was never seen again.

Mr Yusuke Fukuda, right, reaches to congratulate Mr Victorino De Araujo after his attempt to take a DNA sample from a crocodile on the outskirts of Lospalos, East Timor. Photo: The New York Times

A police officer inspects the belongings of 17-year-old Agostinu da Cunya in Manatuto, East Timor.

Snake Bite Victim might buy a Lotto Ticket after Third Strike

ABC Pilbara, by Verity Gorman and Laura Birch, 20 Jan 2022

When Nigel Dow was bitten by a highly venomous Gwardar snake, he knew exactly what to do. The station worker has some experience dealing with reptiles.

"I've been bitten three times so I knew to stay calm and try not to move around too much," he said.

The 41-year-old's latest snake bite occurred while he was pulling out an old fence on Warroora Station in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia.

Nigel Dow was flown to Port Hedland for treatment after his most recent snake bite. (Photo: Nigel Dow)

"I dropped my pliers [in a bush] and reached in to get them and bang, straight on my wrist," he said.

"It just felt like a whack of a little stick."

Nigel Dow was bitten by a western brown snake, or Gwardar, similar to this one. (Photo: Darren Darch)

Mr Dow tried calling his partner Laura Pearse as well as his boss.

"I couldn't get a hold of anybody so I flew back to the house, as I was only working five minutes from the house," he said.

Mr Dow said he was confident he was going to be OK, given his previous experience with snake bites.

"The first couple of times I was in a bit of a panic. This time I wasn't because the last couple I made it through alright so I thought surely I must be alright this time."

Mr Dow said he began experiencing pain under his arm and swelling.

"Laura got on the phone to the ambulance and we then travelled out about 40 kilometres I suppose, out along the track and towards the road towards Coral Bay where we met the ambulance."

He was taken to a medical post at Coral Bay before being flown by the Royal Flying Doctors Service to Port Hedland.

Asked whether he considered himself unlucky, Mr Dow chuckled.

"Yeah, I don't know, I put myself in bad situations," he said."The others have been pretty similar where I opened the car door and stood right on one and the other time, I moved a shipping container with a crane and I stepped on one. So I've just got to be more vigilant, keep my eyes peeled."

Mr Dow hopes there won't be a fourth time.

"I actually walked out of the house yesterday and I nearly stood on one," he said.

"I better buy a Lotto ticket."

Mr Dow said his partner has a different theory about his snake bite history.

"She thinks I'm trying to get out of a wedding. I've stressed her out enough for a while, probably owe her a few calm months I think."

Diary reminder

We are honoured to have Mr Yusuke Fukuda as a speaker at our next bi-monthly meeting on **Tuesday 19 April 2022**, at the Canberra Reptile Zoo, at 7pm.

Mr Yusuke Fukuda works for the Northern Territory Government, and has been researching crocodiles there for many years.

He was awarded an ACTHA grant a few years back to help with part of his genetic research into crocodiles.

Yusuke's talk will focus on:

1) saltwater crocodile population history,

2) movement patterns and geographic barriers,

3) movement between Australia and East Timor, and

4) the source of problem crocodiles in Darwin Harbour.

It will be a zoom session at the Zoo using their lovely new large screen.

And finally, an expression on a snake we just loved: