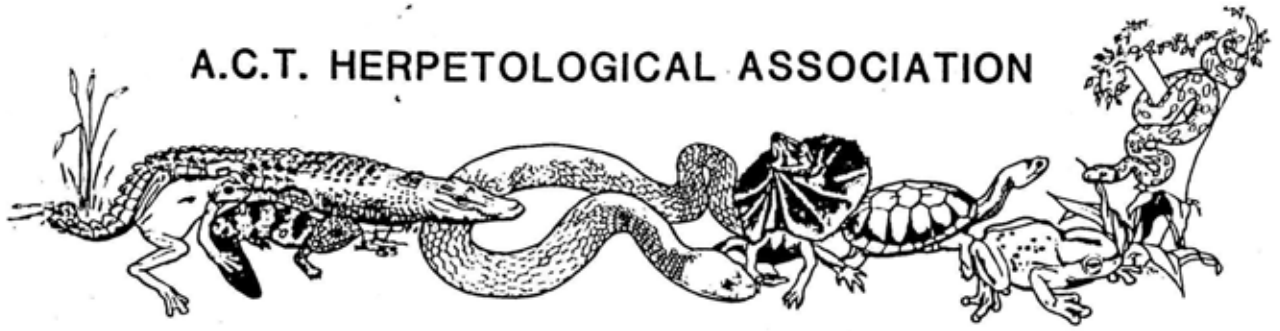


A.C.T. HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



APRIL 1988 NEWSLETTER

In This Issue:

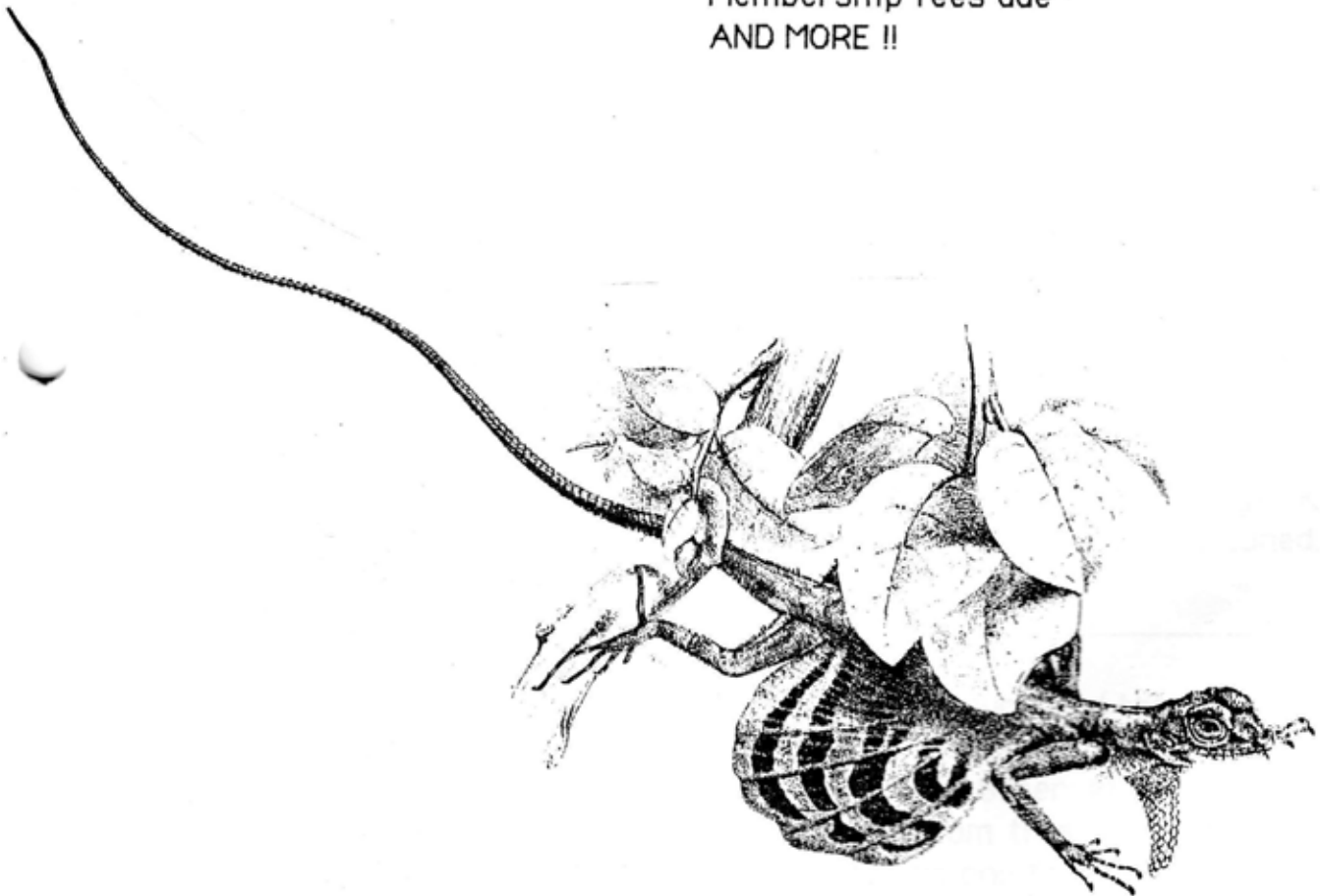
More on Tympanocryptis

Spotlight on Draco

Book Review 'Living Snakes of the World'

Membership fees due

AND MORE !!



The meeting schedule for the next few months is as follows;

**APRIL** Thursday 28th

**MAY** Wednesday 25th

**JUNE** Thursday 23rd

**JULY** Wednesday 27th

As usual, the meetings begin at 7.30pm, Zoology Department Tearoom, Australian National University.

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The speaker for the next meeting is **Dr Paul Cooper**, of the Zoology Department, who will be telling us about his work on desert-dwelling lizards of the Namib Desert. Paul has some nice slides, so be sure to come along.

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Both Klaus Henle and Dean Ward have given their final seminars on their PhD and Honours research respectively. All that remains now is for the writing up to be completed.

Another Honours student has began her work on a herpetological project at ANU this year. Karen Gray is studying the role of gonadal steroids in the metamorphosis of Xenopus laevis, the African Clawed Toad. From what I understand, these steroids seem to 'protect' tissues such as the tail from being reabsorbed, and it is only when this steroid stops being produced that a tadpole can turn into a frog. That's what they think happens - Karen is going to find out ! Sometime later in the year I may be able to get Karen to give us a talk on the biology of this interesting species. Stay tuned.

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As we all remember, inclement weather stopped our field trip in search of Tympanocryptis lineata, but it is not forgotten. I wrote on the Associations behalf to Ross Sadlier and Allen Greer at the Australian Museum for any data they had on the species from this region. They sent us records of two individuals from Canberra and one from Cooma. Further, we have found another prospective site where the species may live. Everybody is invited to have a look through their field notes for any unusual dragons they may have seen in the past, perhaps it was T. lineata.

SPOTLIGHT ON The Asian Flying Lizards, Draco spp.

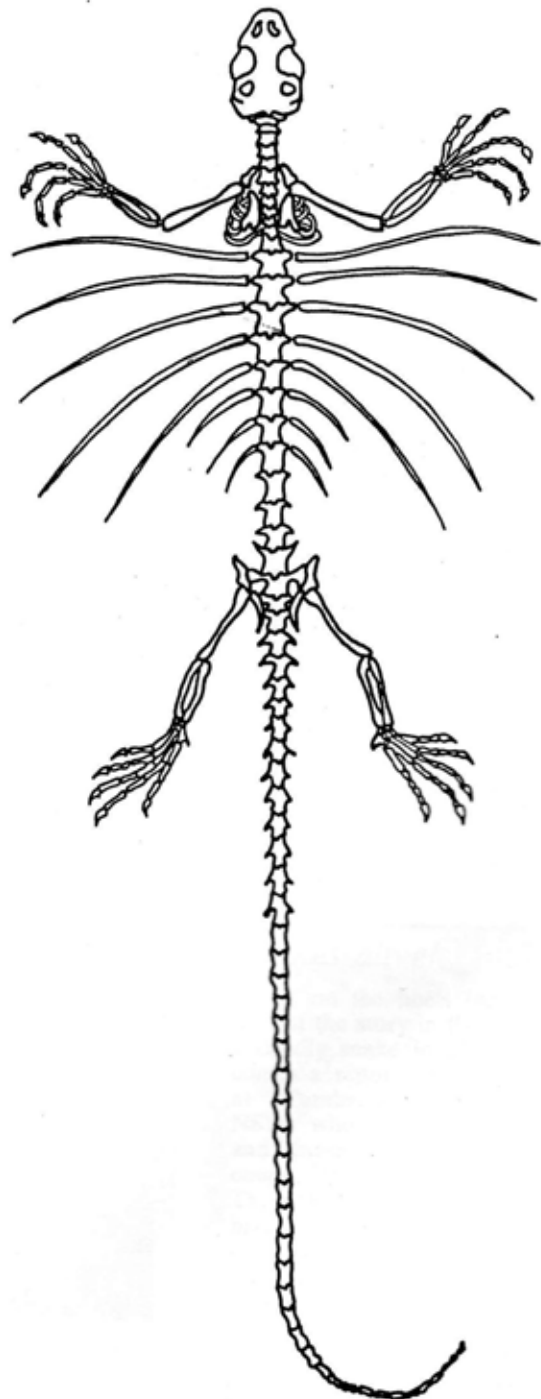
One of the most highly specialized lizards must be the Asian Flying Lizards of the genus Draco. These lizards (illustrated on this months cover) do not fly as such, but use a flap of skin that is supported by elongated ribs to glide. The ribs can be seen in the diagram at the right.

These lizards are in the family Agamidae, so are related to the Jacky Lizard, Amphibolurus muricatus, that is common in this region.

The males have large dewlaps (flaps of skin under the throat), which they use in courtship and male/male ritualized combat displays.

They are distributed from India, through SE Asia to the Phillipines.

At the April meeting, there will be some preserved specimens available to show people.



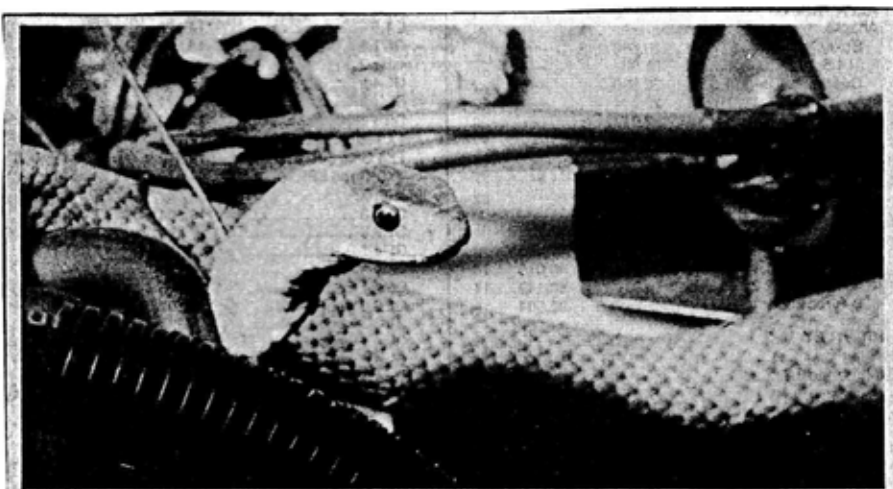
BOOK REVIEW

Mehrtens, J.M. (1987) Living Snakes of the World in color. Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. New York 480pp

PRICE: \$75.00 rrp

This is an excellent collection of photographs, and the claim that this book is a 'pictorial masterwork on the snakes of the world' is hardly an exaggeration. With over 540 photographs, all in colour, the best are hard to choose, although those of the rearing cobras are hard to beat. There are also photos of some bizarre snakes in this book - many of which I did not know existed. I think I fell in love with the Rough-scaled Tree Viper on page 302. The author has over twenty-five years in zoos, so the emphasis of the book is those species most likely to be seen in collections, and explains the presence of the rather superficial notes on care for each species. Because only a small amount of space could be set aside for this aspect, I believe it would have been better left out so more emphasis could have been placed in natural history notes.

This book should have been left as a picture book, because the author does not have the depth of taxonomic knowledge claimed. Australian Rhamphotyphlops are placed in the same genus as African Typhlops, and he spells the specific name of the Diamond Python, Morelia spilota, incorrectly. Don't get me wrong however, buy this book if only for the pictures - they're great!



**Snaky Coil**

The problem coil in the car that Graham Foan had to work on was alive, well and hissing; it was a 1.5-metre king brown snake, one of Australia's deadliest reptiles! Graham, workshop supervisor of the NRMA district depot at Tenterfield in the

State's far north, used a piece of wire to snare the snake and remove it from the vehicle. But just before he did so, Geoff Hovey of the Tenterfield Star took this close-up - before being told what kind of snake it was. "I'll be a bit more careful about photographing wildlife now," says Geoff.

**Snakes alive!**

Hot on the heels (or should we say tail) of the story in the June issue about a deadly snake in a car at Tenterfield comes a report about a Holden dealer at Tumarumba (in south-western NSW) who sold a Commodore wagon and drove the trade-in, a Mazda 929 coupe, to another dealer in Sydney. There he found he had had a hitchhiker for the 500 km trip - a 1.2-metre copperhead snake was quietly coiled near his feet. But that wasn't all: a snake expert called in to remove the copperhead found additional passengers - three more copperheads and five fat blue-tongue lizards, reports Holden's newsletter, *Up Front*.

# A.C.T. HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOC.

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