

ACT HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOC.

NEW S L E T T E R



AUGUST, 1987

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Picture: RICHARD BRIGGS

ACT Parks and Conservation Service ranger Mr Ross Bennett with a tiger snake yesterday.

Most yard snakes just 'passing through'

The ACT Parks and Conservation Service put on a brave face yesterday to do a public relations job for Canberra's snakes.

The officer in charge of the wildlife and environment unit, Dr Mike Braysher, said most snakes in backyards were just "passing through" and were not as dangerous as people thought.

And ranger Mr Ross Bennett proved a point by having his picture taken while stroking his favourite tiger snake. "They're just not into biting people," he said.

Both men, however, were quick to point out that handling

snakes was for experts only and that most people who had been bitten in Canberra had been bitten while trying to either kill or touch snakes.

Dr Braysher said snakes preferred to avoid people and that most Canberra yards which backed on to grassland or hills had probably had snakes visit. "Our advice is to leave them alone; don't try to kill them," he said.

"What people should do is make their backyards unattractive to snakes by keeping grass down and by not storing wood against fences. Snakes will almost

always move off; if you try to kill them then you are at threat."

If a particularly persistent snake was pestering a household or was holed up in a garage or shed, the conservation service could be contacted on 462308. Snakes were protected in the ACT but a threat to personal safety could be defence against prosecution.

Most snakes in the suburban area were brown snakes which were extremely venomous and very aggressive if cornered. If someone was bitten, they should apply a pressure bandage above the bite, relax, and take the shortest route to hospital.

EDITOR'S REPORT

NEXT MEETING :

The next meeting of the A.C.T. Herpetological Association will be on :

THURSDAY, 27 AUGUST, 1987 AT 7:30 PM

There will be a short business meeting starting at 7.30 and the general meeting will commence at 8.00 pm.

TOPICS FOR THE BUSINESS MEETING INCLUDE :-

1. We need a volunteer to organise someone to give a talk each month.
2. A field trip to be arranged - spring is nearly here, a possible venue - Braidwood, on a private property with a barbecue included.

REPORT OF LAST MEETING :

Our last meeting held on 22nd July, 1987 was attended by 15 members. Many thanks to Ross Bennett for his excellent and exciting slide show and talk about his adventures on Chappell Island with the black Tiger Snakes. Very well presented, Ross.

I would also like to thank Paul Hardiman, our Treasurer, for putting out last month's newsletter for me at such short notice. Well done, Paul.

MEMBERSHIP FEES :

Subscriptions are now due and may be paid at our monthly meetings or forwarded to the Treasurer at the following address :-

Mr. P. Hardiman
Treasurer
A.C.T. Herpetological Assoc.,
115 Fullagar Crescent
HIGGINS ACT 2615

A membership form is included in this newsletter to be forwarded with payment of fees.

TALK FOR NEXT MEETING :

The talk this month will be given by Mark Schuster on "Rain Forest Reptiles". Don't miss Mark's interesting account of the five years he spent in the rain forests of tropical North Queensland.

Taken from The
Canberra Times, July 14

Reptile man Worrell dead at 62

SYDNEY: Reptile expert Mr Eric Worrell, 62, has died at his Gosford home on the NSW Central Coast.

Mr Worrell, who founded the Australian Reptile Park at Ocean Beach in 1946, suffered a massive heart attack early yesterday.

He helped develop anti-venene serums for Australia's dangerous spiders and snakes — antidotes which were later to save his life when he was bitten by a cobra in 1985.

He spent many years milking the poisonous species of their venom, which he sent to the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, enabling scientists to develop anti-venene.

Mr Worrell was made an MBE for his services to herpetology (work with reptiles and amphibians) and in 1980 received the National Bank Humanitarian Award for his work on the funnel-web spider.

Australian Reptile Park managing director Mr Ed Manners said last night Mr Worrell had been unwell for some time. He was a diabetic as well as having a heart complaint, he said.

Mr Manners said Mr Worrell was survived by his sons Mark and Brook and daughter Kim. Mr Worrell's former wife, Robyn, still worked as operations director at the Reptile Park, now at North Gosford.

Mr Manners said Mr Worrell would be cremated on Friday.

PROGRAM FOR THE YEAR :

We have decided to hold our meetings on alternate 4th Wednesday and Thursday nights to allow as many members as possible to attend. To avoid confusion I have prepared the following program for the rest of the year :-

AUGUST	-	THURSDAY	27TH
SEPTEMBER	-	WEDNESDAY	23RD
OCTOBER	-	THURSDAY	22ND
NOVEMBER	-	WEDNESDAY	25TH
DECEMBER	-	3RD THURSDAY	17TH



(SUE TUDOR)
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A 12-year-old boy has amazed naturalists and made Australian wildlife history by creating a new breed of lizard.

The boy, Paul Copeland, of Tyabb, 70km south of Melbourne on the Mornington Peninsula, has successfully crossed a blue tongue lizard with a stumpy tail lizard (above).

As a result, Paul, the lizard wizard, is now the owner of seven, 10-day-old lizards with the body of a blue tongue and large red heads like the stumpy tail breed.

Mr Garry Backhouse from Victoria's Fisheries and Wildlife Department said: "It's extraordinary. I've never heard of anything like this before."

Mr Chris Banks, curator of reptiles at Melbourne Zoo, said:

Paul the lizard wizard creates a new breed

"This is most unusual as they are different genus."

And, Mr John Coventry, curator of reptiles at the National Museum: "I'm intrigued. I'll just have to see them."

Young Paul's march into wildlife history began last year when he decided to breed blue tongued lizards as a schoolboy hobby: "I got a plastic swimming pool and put logs and rocks in it to create a habitat for them. Then I was given a stumpy tail as a present."

The surprise came last week when the blue tongue lizard gave birth to seven young ones. (Blue tongue lizards have live births and do not lay eggs).

Paul said: "The babies aren't really blue tongues and they aren't stumpy tails either. They have characteristics of both."

"They have been really savage, right from birth. One actually chased me a few minutes after it was born. I hope they become more docile as they get older."