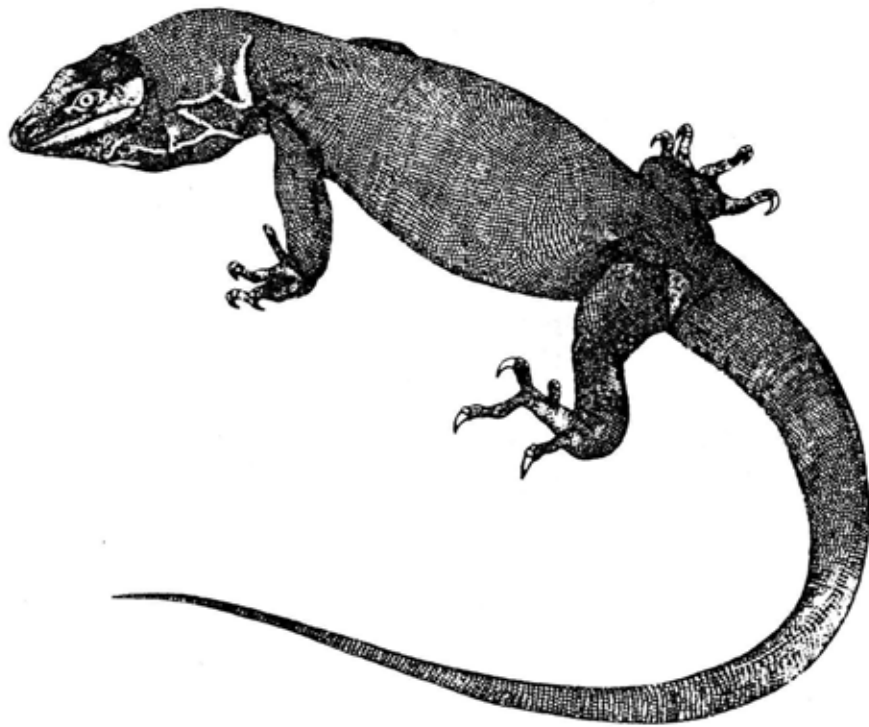
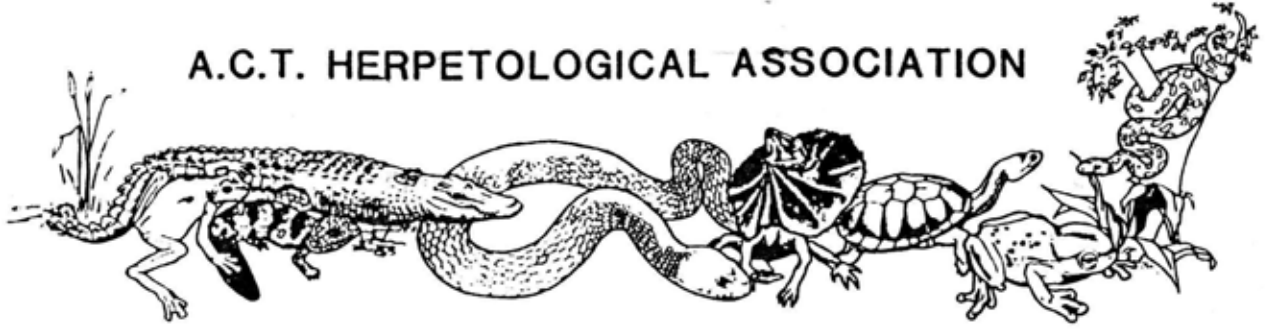


A.C.T. HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



MARCH NEWSLETTER

NEXT MEETINGMONDAY MARCH 20

Downstairs in the Zoology Building, ANU 7.30 to 8 pm members herping news over a cup of tea or coffee. 8 pm speaker.

SPEAKERDAVE CARTER"WHAT IS IT GOANNAS DO WITH TERMITE MOUNDS"

- .Where do goannas lay their eggs?
- .How long is the period of incubation?
- .Is there evidence of parental care?
- .Where do goannas go in their first two years of life.

These are some of the questions Dave will attempt to answer in his report on the first two years of his three year research programme on that marvellous magnificent reptile, the Lace Monitor or Tree Goanna, Varanus varius. Dave's research site is in the beautiful Deua valley in the Deua National Park. His talk will, of course, be illustrated with slides, and followed up with a

FIELD EXCURSION TO THE DEUA VALLEYSATURDAY APRIL 8 - SUNDAY APRIL 9

This will be an opportunity to visit Dave's research site, inspect some of the termite mounds, see some of the goannas he has been tracking with radio transmitters, and learn first-hand how he conducts his research.



Nor are the herpetological attractions limited to goannas. There are also dapper water dragons, serene red-bellied black snakes, languid long-necked tortoises, innumerable scuttling small skinks and some fascinating frogs, including the rather rare and particularly pretty Litoria citropa which has been described as the most beautiful tree frog in Australia (Barker & Grigg) so frogging will definitely be on the programme Saturday night.



ARRANGEMENTS:

MEET at the Araluen Pub
(far end of village
from Canberra)
AT ONE PM
SATURDAY APRIL 8

BRING camping gear and
food for Sat-Sun lunch

REMEMBER spotlights, cameras,
raincoats, sunhats and
swimming costumes

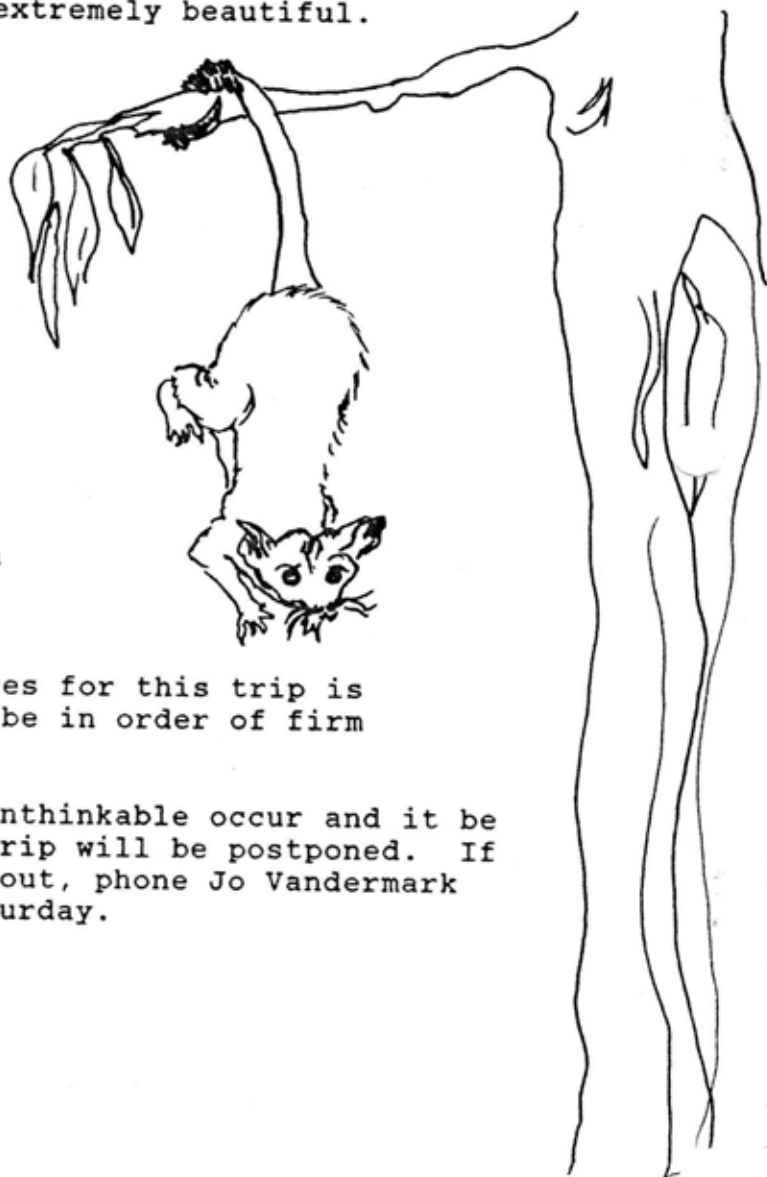
Araluen - 2 hours from Canberra
Campsite - another ½ hour
(4WD not necessary)

PLEASE NOTE: The number of places for this trip is
LIMITED. Priority will be in order of firm
booking.

INCLEMENT WEATHER: Should the unthinkable occur and it be
pouring with rain, the trip will be postponed. If
in doubt whether to set out, phone Jo Vandermark
on 477963 about 9 am Saturday.

BRING YOUR SPOTLIGHT!

For those whose horizons extend beyond herpetology the Deua is also host to three species of gliders, the Greater Glider, the Sugar Glider and the Feather-tailed Glider, as well as the ubiquitous Brushtail Possum. In fact it promises to be a veritable feast of wildlife while the country itself is extremely beautiful.



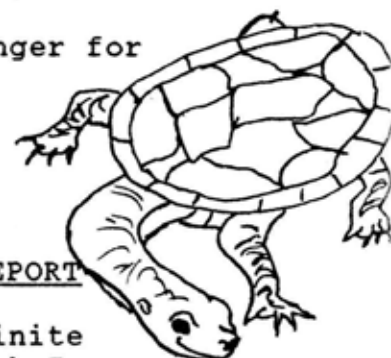
Canberra's fourth specimen of the Small-eyed Snake, Cryptophis nigrescens, turned up last week. A sub-adult specimen of 22 cms was found under a rock in Orroral Valley. Having just shed its skin, it was resplendent in shining gun-metal grey, with a slightly darker head. The specimen was a uniform whitish underneath, although I have examined individuals with a bright lipstick-pink colour ventrally, often leading to misidentifications as red-bellied black snakes.

This specimen is predominantly saxicoline, cryptic and nocturnal, feeding exclusively on lizards. It is common along coastal eastern Australia, extending down into Victoria. Occurrences on the Southern Highlands are, however, rare.

Examination of records from the Atlas of Elapid Snakes of Australia reveals three earlier records from the ACT, as follows:- 1. Gungahlin, 2. Boboyan Road, south of Orroral Valley, 3. Birrigai. In addition, there are three records from neighbouring NSW:- 1. Tarago, 2. Charleyong, 3. Ooranook Homestead.

The venom of Cryptophis is quite potent, with a powerful muscle-destroying myotoxin present. There has been one fatality from a bite from a Small-eyed Snake recorded in the literature, however, it should not be regarded as a truly dangerous snake. This species is quiet, inoffensive and disinclined to bite, its secretive habits reducing the opportunities for people to confront the snake. People engaged in rock-collecting should be cautious when turning over or picking up samples. I received a bite from a 35 cm specimen in 1967 when I accidentally prodded it whilst moving material in its cage. There were no obvious distressful symptoms recorded, only a mild tingling in the affected finger for about one hour.

Richard Longmore
Australian Biological Resources Study



HERPETOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES COURSE - PROGRESS REPORT

The offering of this course is still far from definite but negotiations are encouraging. In the last week I have had conversations with both the Acting Principal of Queanbeyan TAFE, Iris Hooper and the leader of the course in Sydney, Harry Ehmann, and it is hoped that the course can be offered under the NSW Outreach Programme. Harry envisages it as a spring intensive over four alternate weekends, with a heavy fieldwork component. Fifteen members of the Association have expressed interest in participating in the course. JV

The CONSTITUTIONAL SUB COMMITTEE held its first meeting on Monday March 6 at 248 Dryandra Street. The Constitutions of Victoria, South Australia and Australian Herpetological Societies were scrutinised, along with the Australian Affiliation of Herpetological Societies constitution and the Incorporation Procedures published

by the ACT Corporate Affairs Commission. The challenge is to come up with a simple, flexible constitution which meets the incorporation requirements.

Once constituted, the ACT Herpetological Association will be eligible to join the Australian Association of Herpetological Associations. The main advantage of Incorporation is the limiting of liability. As long as the Association is not incorporated, individual members may be sued for up to two million dollars in case of accident or injury.

If there are any members who feel they could contribute to the work of this sub-committee, they would be very welcome. Meanwhile particular thanks to Jerry Hill for his major contribution to the first meeting.

APRIL MEETING

Following our very successful introductory workshop in December "Getting to know your ACT Herpetofauna," a second workshop is planned for the April meeting. Entitled "TURTLES & TORTOISES," it will be led by Dr ARTHUR GEORGES, and will be held at the CCAE instead of our usual meeting place in Zoology at ANU. Full details April Newsletter.

* Don't forget, the newsletter is only as good as your contributions. There are a number of recent herp publications which need reviewing, and please send in your own herpetological sightings and news, interesting articles, cartoons etc.

