

# ACT HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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## **EDITOR'S REPORT**

Hopefully, you will notice, and appreciate the new format and content of this month's newsletter. What each member must be aware of is that the level of commitment necessary for a couple of people to put out a newsletter is too great and just will not continue without some input from others. We all share a common interest, so its important we share a common purpose in producing a worthwhile newsletter. All it takes is an hour or so to write a short article on any subject vaguely to do with herpetology. If you have trouble jumping off the deep end, just write an article like we all did at school - What I did in the summer holidays, and tell us about any herpetological observations made over the Christmas break. Sue and I look forward to receiving your contributions !

Another innovation being introduced with this issue is those attending the meeting will receive the newsletter by hand - it saves on the postage. If you live near somebody who is not attending the meeting, feel free to pick up their copy too, and deliver it to them ... every cent counts.

### **TALK FOR NEXT MEETING:**

The December talk is by ROSS BENNETT on;  
THE HERPETOFAUNA OF QUEENSLAND

After Ross's slides of somebody gradually succumbing to a snake bite last time he gave a talk, it will be interesting to see what he has for us this time. Come along, and bring a friend too.

### **MEMBERSHIP FEES:**

It is pretty pointless mentioning this, because as of this issue, if you are not financial, you won't be receiving the newsletter. Tell anybody whom wants the newsletter to send dues to;

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

**PROGRAM FOR THE YEAR:**

We have decided to hold our meetings on alternate fourth Wednesday and Thursday nights to allow as many members as possible to attend. To avoid confusion, we have prepared this program for the following year;

JANUARY - WEDNESDAY - 27th

FEBRUARY - THURSDAY - 25th

MARCH - WEDNESDAY - 23rd

**P.S:** Remember to send in articles for the next newsletter, its important !

DEAN WARD  
ph 49 4450 bh  
or 49 3323 ah

**N.B:** All correspondence should be sent to;  
DEAN WARD  
DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY  
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
GPO BOX 4  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

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**MEMBERS CLASSIFIEDS**

*The attention of members is drawn to the various acts of both State and Commonwealth governments regulating the possession and the sale of reptiles and amphibians. Advertisements are accepted on the understanding that animals are legally obtained and offered for sale.*

FOR SALE: Live mice. Great snake tucker ! See Sue Tudor at any meeting.

WANTED: Contributions for the newsletter.

TO SWAP: Stamps of reptiles and amphibians. Please see Dean Ward at any meeting.

## THE EARLESS DRAGON, EXTINCT IN THE ACT ?



The Lined Earless Dragon, *Tympanocryptis lineata* (Peters 1863), has not been recorded from the ACT by the CSIRO Australian Wildlife Collection in the past twenty years. It is a widespread species, inhabiting diverse environments; desert, grasslands, low shrubland and even open woodland. Canberra is on the eastern most point of its distribution and represents a marginal habitat at best. With the increased competition of humans, *T. lineata* has appeared to have retreated westward. I am going to float an idea for the association to mount a survey to see if *T. lineata* has in fact become extinct in the ACT.

There are four major reasons that I see the Association should take on a project like the one I am proposing. Firstly, the animal itself deserves conserving, and before any management plans can be drawn up, the status of the animal must be established. Our effort is worthwhile simply on the premise that we may be aiding the survival of this lizard. However there are other reasons. This Association is lucky enough to have in its membership many experienced scientists able to teach other members methodologies used in field experiments. Their professionalism, through a project of this type, is easily taught to other members. Thirdly, it is quite likely we could get some coverage in the local media. The repercussions of this would be increased membership - a goal we should be striving for if we want a dynamic Association. Lastly, but not least,

this project could lend legitimacy to our group in the eyes of the Wildlife authorities, and many otherwise closed doors may be opened. Please think about the project, more importantly think about the Earless Dragon, and let me, Dean Ward, hear your views.

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## **BOOK REVIEW**

**WILDLIFE MANGEMENT: CROCODILES AND ALLIGATORS** (Webb, G., Manolis, S. and Whitehead, P. eds) SURREY BEATTY & SONS, Chipping North. r.r.p. \$74

The contents of this book do not quite match the startling white cover that they are bound in. As with many of these compendiums, the quality of the papers vary considerably, from the excellent to the outright bad. The topics covered, some 51 articles, are considerable; everything from crocodilian ancestry to egg development to crocodile farming, and in this sense it is a book worth owning because it must be considered THE authoritative work on crocodile conservation. For anybody working on these ancient reptiles this book is a must, but for those of us with a passing interest in the topic, the price may be a little difficult to justify.

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## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

*A new regular item for our newsletter, send in any questions and we'll find somebody that knows the answer - I hope!*

QUESTION: What sort of exotic herps are available to the hobbyist in Australia, and just how likely are we to see them in our local store ?

ANSWER: Australia has strict quarantine rules that forbid the import of exotic flora and fauna, and rightly so. Just look at the rabbit, fox or sparrow as examples of imports gone wild. Herptiles can be a problem too - the Cane toad is quickly extending its range over much of tropic Australia. I know of four species readily available that are not native, although they are all amphibians. They are;

the Cane toad, *Bufo marinus*

the Axolotl, *Ambystomma spp*

the Smooth Newt, *Triturus vulgaris*

and the Japanese Newt, *Cynops pyrrhogaster*

I've also seen three other species, although these are much rarer.

the African-clawed toad, *Xenopus spp.*

the Box Turtle, *Terrepenne spp.*

and the Red-eared Slider, *Pseudomys scripta*

The price ranges from about \$5 for a Cane toad, \$15 for an axolotl, \$25 for a smooth newt and about \$50 for a Japanese newt. The other species are too rare to quote accurate prices. Just a comparison though. A breeding pair of shinglebacks sold for about US\$1800 in American in 1984! As with all animals kept in captivity, it is important to check with the local wildlife authorities on the legalities of keeping these exotic herps in captivity.

