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ACTHA NEWS FEB - MAR 2008

*Newsletter of the
ACT Herpetological
Association Inc.*

Diary date

The *bi-monthly* meetings of the Association are held on the *third Tuesday of the month* at 7.30pm, Western Districts Rugby Club, Catchpole Street, Macquarie.

Upcoming meeting

Tuesday, 19th February 2008

Geckos are one of the most remarkable of all lizards. They stand out because they often have striking colours, velvety soft skin, big eyes and adhesive toes pads which allow them to walk upside down on smooth surfaces. In the Australian desert, we have the largest diversity of geckos anywhere in the world.

Mitzy Pepper, School of Botany and Zoology, ANU, will give a slide show of the main groups of Australian geckos and talk about her experience in catching them in the remote Pilbara region of North Western Australia. She will also talk about her research on the evolution of geckos in the Pilbara, showing how genetics is used to discover new species and tell us about processes that drive geckos to evolve.

YOUR COMMITTEE

President	Dennis Dyer
Vice President	Ric Longmore
Secretary	Joe McAuliffe
Treasurer	Margaret Ning
Newsletter Editor	Mandy Conway
Public Officer	John Wombey
Excursion Officer	Ric Longmore
Committee Members	Christian Robertson Philip Robertson
Student Representative	Jake McAuliffe

IN THIS ISSUE

*ACTHA's AGM held in conjunction
with our Christmas party at
Questacon on 18 Dec 2007*

Gerard Dwyer from Questacon invited ACTHA to hold their AGM and Christmas party at this awesome venue, followed by a behind the scenes tour, page 2.

Snakes Alive! 2008

See from page 2 for all the events, photos etc.



Some of the hard working ACTHA members who made Snakes Alive! 2008 a huge success

Back row left to right: Christian Robertson, Geoff Robertson, Margaret Ning, Joe McAuliffe.

Centre row left to right: Dennis Dyer, Phil Robertson, Mark Robertson, Ric Longmore, Rob Jansen, Emma Robertson, Greg Cover, Mandy Conway, Jake McAuliffe, Peter Child, Mitch McGee, Lucinda Royston.

Front row left to right: Anam Haque, Millissa Gillard, Angeliqe Harrison, Lois, Noah & Connor McAuliffe, James Ross.

ACTHA AT QUESTACON FOR OUR AGM AND CHRISTMAS PARTY, DECEMBER 2007

Article by Mandy Conway

Dennis Dyer, President ACTHA, welcomed members and their families (32 in total) and started the proceedings by thanking Gerard Dwyer for inviting ACTHA to hold our Christmas party at Questacon, especially as it was in Gerard's own time.

Our **Annual General Meeting** followed, with the smell of food ensuring it would be a quick and efficient affair.

Dennis presented the **2006-2007 Annual Report** which included ACTHA's achievements during the year, namely:

- we have 48 members on the books;
- the 2007 *Snakes Alive!* Exhibition at the National Botanic Gardens was opened by cartoonist Gary Clark, talks relating to our theme of 'Climate change and it's effects on the reptiles of the Murray Darling Basin' were given by Dr Sarah Ryan, Murray Regional Co-ordinator for Health and Water CSIRO, Professor Arthur Georges, UC, and Dr Sean Doody on Water Dragons. The Exhibition attracted 4,275 people;
- 7 outstanding presentations at ACTHA meetings (*see table top right*);
- displays of suitable pythons and lizards were held at the CSIRO Biodiversity Centre in October/November 2006, at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Hawker Primary School in April 2007, and at Questacon in August 2007;
- ACTHA members visited the Corroboree Frog Breeding Facility at Tidbinbilla in November 2006. Dr Murray Evans of Environment ACT was our guide;
- an ACTHA website is being developed by My Oyster and Sigma Infotech and is nearing a launch;
- four grants were given by the Association to further work with herps (*please see Dec 07-Jan 08 newsletter*).

A Treasurer's Report was given and accepted, and Office Bearers duly elected. The Committee for 2008-2009 is listed on the front page of this Newsletter.

ACTHA MEETING PRESENTER	TOPIC
Oct 06 Erika Alacs, UC	Wildlife forensics and trade monitoring in turtles.
Dec 06 John Wombey	hosted a tour of the Australia national Wildlife Collection, CSIRO Wildlife and Ecology.
Feb 07 Jacqui Richardson & Alex Quinn, UC	Practical research of Bearded Dragons and related species, in particular, sex determination.
Apr 07 Deborah Bower, UC	Broad-shelled Turtles in the Riverland region.
June 07 Peter Child Gerard Dwyer	The Pig-nosed Turtle Herping at Questacon.
Aug 07 Geoff Kay, ANU	Herping in Madagascar.
Oct 07 Sarah Ross	Role of frogs in a NSW agricultural ecosystem.

After our AGM and Chrissie feast Gerard Dwyer enthralled members with a 'rocket' display, or, err, how to get the biggest bang using balloons, various gases, liquid nitrogen and heat. To say we were blown away is an understatement - especially those in the front row who had to cover their ears and hang onto their seats with the finale being a particularly huge explosion. Amazing what a different combination of gases and ignition styles can do.

Everyone was then invited up to Questacon's exhibition area for some behind the scenes fun before making *Snakes Alive! 2008*

arrangements.



Gerard Dwyer loves his job!



SNAKES ALIVE!

14 TO 20 JANUARY 2008

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS, CANBERRA

This article by Mandy Conway

■ **THE LAUNCH**

Dennis Dyer, President ACTHA, started proceedings by welcoming the first crowd of people through the door attending this year's Exhibition. He outlined the Exhibition's role in educating the general public on these wonderful animals, highlighting that this event was one of the largest and diverse collection of its kind in Australia, with some 100 Australian reptiles from 40 different species on display. The presence of the Corroboree Frog and Striped Legless lizard was particularly special.

Ann Duncan, (left) Director of the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG), then took the podium to welcome everyone to the gardens, pointing out that the partnership between committed and enthusiastic ACTHA members and the ANBG grows stronger every year. "This is an important event for the residents of Canberra, and indeed interstate visitors, where the support of biodiversity conservation remains a concern".

Labor Senator Kate Lundy (below) then fronted the crowd and officially launched *Snakes Alive!* 2008. She was enthralled to see so many creatures which many people would not normally see at such

close

range. "It would freak you out in other circumstances, but here you can get to understand them a little more", she said. Senator Lundy reiterated Dennis Dyer's sentiment that to have only ever read about our endangered Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*) and then be able to see and touch it at this exhibition was pretty special. The new nocturnal room containing the spiders, scorpions and geckos also added a new dimension to the event.

Senator Lundy then went on to launch the ACT Herpetological Society's new "wonderful" website. "The opportunity to learn about reptiles without having to wait for this event each year is great. Technology and ACT residents go hand-in-hand so it makes sense that Canberran's will embrace the website." Senator Lundy thanked the site's developers Arif Haque, (below) CEO, My Oyster Pty Ltd, and Tanuj Rastogi, Manager, Sigma Infotech and ACTHA for the initiative.

(Ed. More on website next issue.)

our



Greg Sattler, ANBG, made sure as many kids as possible got to pat Fluffy the Coastal Carpet Python.



Senator Kate Lundy got up close and personal with the croc after opening *Snakes Alive!* 2008.

■ INAUGURAL HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP AWARDS

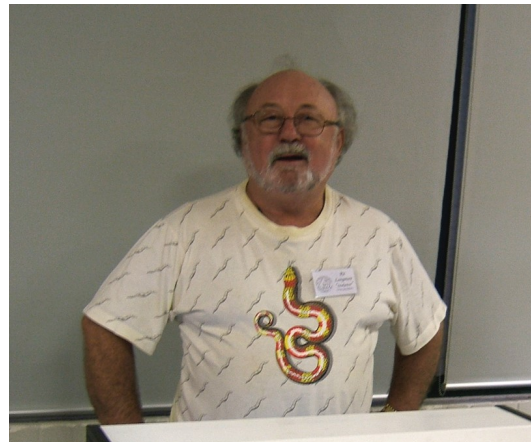
The *Snakes Alive! 2008* display was a perfect venue for the ACT Herpetological Association to confer **Honorary Life Membership** on **Richard (Ric) Longmore and John Wombey**. The former was carried out during the Wednesday evening function and the latter on the Thursday morning, both with many members and friends present.

RICHARD LONGMORE

Dennis Dyer began, "One amongst us tonight embodies all the principles for which the ACTHA Association aims. This person is an inaugural member of ACTHA and his efforts over 21 years has resulted in some sort of exhibition taking place each year to educate the public about reptiles.

He's had a great life long passion for herpetological fauna and there are records of this person handling his pet tiger snakes and other interesting organisms as a young school boy. He's shared his knowledge extensively with others of all ages and all walks of life and has mentored students and others studying herpetology.

His interest in herpetology is international and he shares his specimens by displaying such where appropriate. He is a great communicator, being a multi media personality on TV, radio



and in the press. He also has a passion for great looking interviewers and reporters, using them to "spread the message".

We know him as a selective eater, and performing entertaining, informative and illustrative talks whenever asked. He freely assists other members of the Committee, and members frequently seek advice from him. He's had a tiger snake named after him and he was also the original producer of the Elapid Atlas.

Ric, please accept this Award on behalf of us all.

Ric Longmore came up and responded, in tears, "I'm so proud and feel very humble... thank you. The friendships I've formed with herpetology people mean a lot to me too. Always remember that the next snake we see should be left to live free."



JOHN WOMBEY

On Thursday morning of the Exhibition

Dennis Dyer presented an Honorary Life Membership Award to John Wombey.

"John has been ACTHA's Public Officer for many years and has ensured the Association remains legally current.

He is admired for his logical thinking and

scientific approach, and the way he 'enthusiastically' gives informative and readily understandable illustrated talks. We are

fortunate as an Association to have access to his magnificent and extensive herpetological photographs and knowledge.

John was the Collection Manager, and remains an Honorary Fellow, of the CSIRO Australian National Wildlife Collection where he has helped build the unique collection to what it is today.

He has carried out extensive herpetological research both in the field and laboratory over many years, including the rediscovery of the Inland Taipan, the most venomous snake in the world.

John is noted for his skilful and thoughtful Scottish bagpipe playing both in Australia and overseas, but is yet to play to the Indian Cobras!

Congratulations John!"

Ed. I wasn't present at the ceremony, however John was apparently quite 'tickled' to receive the Award.

■ ON DISPLAY



Northern Corroboree Frog

Pseudophryne pengilleyi

- 25-30mm in length
- lifespan is approx 8-10 years
- mature at 4-5 years of age.

These frogs are found along the Brindabella and Bimberi Ranges in the ACT, and the Fiery Range and Bogong Mountains in NSW, at altitudes between 900 to 1800m.

During the breeding season, late December to April, they are associated with pools and seepages in sphagnum bogs, wet tussock grasslands and wet heath. Males will create nest chambers in the vegetation at the edges of pools and call to attract females, who lay around 25-30 eggs. Tadpoles develop to an advanced stage within the egg capsule and hatch during periods of heavy rainfall or snow melt during autumn and winter. Outside the breeding season they can be found amongst the leaf litter of the sub-alpine woodland adjacent to these breeding areas.

There are currently around 1400 individuals at Tidbinbilla, which have hatched from eggs gathered in the wild. Staff are close to realising their dream of producing the first captive bred individuals since the program started.

Both the Northern Corroboree Frog and closely related Southern species are **critically endangered**.

The Freshwater Croc *Crocodylus johnstoni* smiling for the camera! He shared the room with the well contained endangered Corroboree frogs and Striped Legless Lizard.



Bibron's Toadlet *Pseudophryne bibronii*

These frogs are found in dry forest, woodland, scrubland and grassland. They shelter under leaf litter in moist soaks and depressions. Breeding season is from February to July, when males will call from shallow nests under leaf litter in low areas near water that will become flooded. The nest may contain 70-200 eggs from several females and the tadpoles develop to an advanced stage within the egg capsule. They hatch from September to November. They are not considered to be threatened but data is lacking on their current distribution and numbers in the wild: their lifespan is unknown.

The frogs on display came from eggs that were accidentally taken while collecting the Northern Corroboree Frog eggs. The 2 species were utilising the same breeding habitat with nests in very close proximity. The eggs of both species are similar in size and appearance and it wasn't until the tadpoles were well developed that the mistake was noticed.



■ ENDANGERED SPECIES

GRASSLANDS EARLESS DRAGON

Tympanocryptis pinguicollis (Mitchell 1948), AGAMIDAE

By Rob Jansen

The Grasslands Earless Dragon is a small agamid growing to around 50mm snout to vent, with a tail around 75mm. Pale grey, or fawn, to reddish-brown with a broad vertebral stripe ending on the rump, and two narrower pale grey or white stripes on each side. These are interrupted by a series of four or five dark transverse bars, with another 12-20 on the tail. In the wild it is estimated that individuals live for one to two years, although a captive specimen at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve lived for seven years.

T. pinguicollis was once common throughout temperate lowland native grasslands of south-eastern Australia but has gone through a dramatic decrease in its geographical range and is now known from isolated populations in NSW, ACT, Queensland and Victoria. In the ACT populations persist in the Jerrabomberra and Majura valleys.

The species is associated with relatively undisturbed native tussock grasslands on gentle slopes, dominated by wallaby grasses (*Danthonia* spp.), spear grasses (*Stipa* spp.), Snow grass (*Poa sieberi*) and Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*). Within the grasslands it utilises a mix of predominantly shorter grasses and taller tussocks. The taller tussocks are important at perching sites during foraging for a variety of grassland invertebrates. It utilises rocks and the burrows of the wolf spider (*Lycosa* spp.) and wood cricket (*Cooraboorama canberrae*) as sheltering sites.

Limited information is available about reproduction in *T. pinguicollis*. It is oviparous (egg-laying) with gravid females having been found from September to January. Nests with clutches have been found in November and December with hatching occurring from January to March. It is believed that most females only reproduce once in their lifetime. This species has never been bred in captivity.

Currently listed nationally as **ENDANGERED** (EPBC Act Status) and a recovery plan has been developed. The major threatening process for this species is loss of habitat from development and agricultural processes.



STRIPED LEGLESS LIZARD

Delma impar (Fischer 1882), PYGOPODIDAE

Rob Jansen provided this article as well as the specimen on display. Thank you!

The Striped Legless Lizard is around 90mm snout to vent, with a tail length of around 200mm. Pale grey with a series of dark stripes along the back and sides from neck to tail. In some individuals in the ACT the stripes are not clearly defined and have a more yellowish-brown colouration.

D. impar was formerly distributed throughout the temperate lowland grasslands of the ACT, the south-

west slopes and southern tablelands of NSW, central and southern Victoria and the south-eastern corner of South Australia. The distribution of this species has declined significantly due to habitat loss and fragmentation, the remaining populations small and fragmented. Within the ACT, it is known from Gungahlin, the lower Majura Valley, the lower Jerrabomberra Valley and Yarramundi Reach.

This species was originally thought to be restricted to relatively undisturbed native grasslands, dominated by *Stipa* and *Themeda* species, however it is now known to occur in some areas dominated by introduced species and at sites with a history of grazing and pasture improvement. Within this habitat the lizards shelter in grass tussocks, thick ground cover, soil cracks, spider burrows and under debris such as timber. It is a selective arthropod feeder that preys most commonly on wolf spiders, jumping spiders, crickets, grasshoppers, cockroaches and Lepidopteran larvae.

D. impar is oviparous (egg-laying) with females laying a single clutch of two eggs in December and January, with hatching occurring in January and February after about 35 to 60 incubation. Age at first breeding is thought to be 2-3 years for males and 3-4 years for females. Lifespan is estimated to be at least 10 years. This species has been bred successfully in captivity.

Currently listed nationally as **VULNERABLE** (EPBC Act Status) and a recovery plan has been developed. The major threatening process for this species is loss of habitat from development and agricultural processes.



■ REPTILE FEEDING SESSIONS

Joe McAuliffe kicked off feeding sessions with a show involving his **Central Bearded Dragons**,



Timone (*top*) and Pumba (*bottom*), at 2pm on the opening day, Monday.

He described Timone as a typical male with a dark beard, yellow flush on the side of his face and a robust head and torso. "He's in good condition with a solid tail. These dragons live in the dry country and are good climbers. They are

insectivores and adore crickets and cockroaches but will also eat plant material. They love a green salad of leaves and flowers, especially dandelions."

Pumba, a female, has a smaller head and the body is not as robust as a male, being a lot thinner. Female dragons put a lot of effort into laying eggs, Pumba having laid nearly 350 eggs over the past 4 years!

"Husbandry wise, we can't look after them like cats or dogs. They need special enclosures with lights providing a source of basking heat and a UVB source to replicate sunlight. 35°C plus is the temperature needed for this dragon to bask under, with a cooler spot provided towards the other end of the enclosure. The UVB light provides a substitute for daylight."

"Ventilation is critical. These enclosures have a mesh top and vents (a small meshed hole in the glass towards the base of the tank) to create a thermal air flow, as opposed to draughts."

"We can't just use 'plain' crickets because we're not giving the dragons all they need. In the wild they can get a varied diet so a Mineral and Vitamin Supplement combined with a Calcium supplement is needed in captivity. Calcium especially for females because of the amount they use up when producing eggs. Females get their crickets and roaches covered in supplements every feed and males once every 2 or 3 feeds. It's important to get a good quality supplement too. Live prey is added to a container with the supplements and shaken. This dusts the insects which are then placed into the enclosure."

Joe pointed out that dragons don't grab prey with their jaws, they use their tongue to grab the insect and transfer it into their mouth.



Ric Longmore had audiences gasping when he fed his *Aspidites woma*, and the Baby Death Adder later in the week. The Woma's had to be observed patiently because they were a bit people shy.

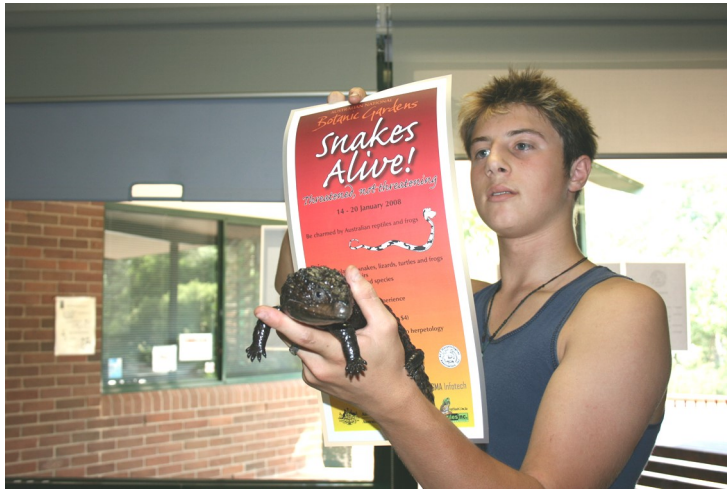
Baby Death Adder feeding



The Woma deciding if lunch was good enough

Visitors who attended the Exhibition towards closing time on the last day were treated to **Joe McAuliffe** feeding his Coastal Carpet Pythons, Mel and Po. Both snakes were really hungry after being held and patted by thousands of visitors over the 7 days.





Jake McAuliffe, newly elected Student Representative on ACTHA's Committee, makes sure everything is OK.

■ **SNAKES ALIVE! THREATENED, NOT THREATENING**

By Jake McAuliffe, Student Representative, ACTHA

Snakes Alive! is an educational experience for all ages and ACTHA's goal is to educate all members of the public. As the Student Representative of the Committee I really focus on telling children what to do when you see a reptile in the wild, that is to observe it but leave it alone. I find that children respond well to me and any advice I give because they consider me a peer not an adult.

I think the *Snakes Alive!* Exhibition is a great learning forum because you can have fun and learn at the same time. It is also a very good hands on experience and let's face it we all like to touch things.

The best part of my day is when you meet someone that absolutely hates snakes and they tell me the phrase "the only good snake is a dead snake" but after spending time at *Snake's alive!* the same people walk out of the Exhibition with a new understanding and respect for reptiles, especially snakes.



Lace Monitor SA, *Varanus varius*, 2.1 m in length, is often found in picnic grounds.



Spencer's Monitor, *Varanus spenceri*, grows to approx 1.2m and is found in the black soil plains of Queensland. These monitors are terrestrial, sheltering in the soil cracks.



A pair of stunning enclosures built by **Peter Child** from **Reptiles Inc.** Many thanks Pete, *Snakes Alive!* would simply not be possible without you!



Greg Cover with Fingers, his "really big snake mum!" Coastal Carpet Python.

■ INAUGURAL NOCTURNAL ROOM A SUCCESS

John Wombey writes...

One might be forgiven for thinking that by including a nocturnal room in this year's display for the first time that the volunteers who elected to man it might be doing so to catch up on a bit of kip or to indulge in a game or two of Sudoku. While we may be guilty as charged, let the record show that the decision to include this form of display in this year's exhibition was greatly appreciated by visitors.

The darkened room, lit only by ultra violet lamps and later by some light through the entrance doorway when the curtain was discarded, was inspected by most of the visitors and crammed full when numbers swelled outside. The display included two enclosures of Knob-tailed Geckos, one of Thick-tailed Geckos provided by the McAuliffe family and a Bird Eating Spider and Desert Scorpion supplied by Peter Child. Two Coastal Carpet Pythons, also owned by the McAuliffe's, were housed in the room for R & R when not being fed or handled by the crowd.



Smooth Knob-tailed Gecko, Nephrurus levis occidentalis

Children were especially impressed with there being two snakes in the cage, but I would have to say that the scorpion's fluorescence when exposed to ultra violet light was a bit of an attention getter. As the lamps used poorly lit the subjects, people had some difficulty seeing the other exhibits, especially the spider, so I must confess to getting out my torch when I felt the occasion needed a little more illumination. Hopefully

next year's display may have the appropriate lights for such a display. They were in the pipeline for this year but did not arrive as hoped.

Overall I must say that the nocturnal room was a resounding success and I hope we can use this form of display in subsequent years with the above improvements making it even more impressive.

One final observation that I found amusing was that as people entered the darkened room they almost all felt the need to be quiet, especially if they entered with children! Is there a lesson here for the other rooms?



■ THE CANE TOADS WERE BACK

Cane toads are heavy bodied amphibians who grow to 15cm in length. Their skin is dry and warty, and they are a brown to olive colour on top with a pale, whitish and speckled belly. The males have yellow flanks in the breeding season. A characteristic swollen, roughly triangular, parotoid gland can be seen on each shoulder and these glands contain a highly concentrated poison.

Cane toads like warm to hot, humid conditions so are found in the tropical to semi-tropical regions of QLD and the NT. They are mostly nocturnal and they have no natural



Cane Toads, Bufo marinus. Many thanks to Daryl Venables, CSIRO, who spent many hours explaining these creatures to the public.

predators in Australia. They breed prolifically and are poisonous at all stages of their lifecycle.

Goannas, quolls and fresh water crocodiles are being killed in large numbers when they attempt to eat a Cane toad, and turtles are poisoned when they eat the eggs and tadpoles.

There is a concerted effort by the NT and WA Governments and other groups to try and stop these toads from reaching WA, mainly by trapping, while organisations like the CSIRO search for naturally occurring biocontrol agents.

SNAKES ALIVE! WEDNESDAY EVENING TALK TO MEMBERS OF ACTHA, ANBG, ACT ENVIRONMENT AND THE MARK GROUP ON

AUSTRALIA'S NORTHERN TERRITORY HERPETOFAUNA: JOE MCAULIFFE'S SLIDESHOW OF HIS TRIP TO ULURU KATA TJUTA NATIONAL PARK AND KAKADU NATIONAL PARK IN DECEMBER 2007

This article by Mandy Conway, with all the stunning photos by Joe McAuliffe

Joe started the night by emphasising the truly rich variety of herpetofauna in the Northern Territory, a haven for all herpetologists. He gave some insight into the variety of reptiles with the following chart as an example.

The Northern Territory's reptiles can be summarised as:

	<u>Genera</u>	<u>Species</u>
Crocodiles	1	2
Turtles	10	16
Geckos	11	38
Flap-footed	4	11
Skinks	13	102
Dragons	9	30
Goannas	1	19
Blind snakes	1	13
File Snakes	1	2
Colubrids	8	8
Venomous land snakes	13	33
Sea snakes	11	19
Pythons	4	8



The **Children's Python**, *Antaresia childrenii* (above) was photographed just outside the bedroom of the ranger's hut in Jabiru.



One of the first beasts to be spotted was a **Kakadu Salt Water Crocodile** lying next to the Lagoon and, needless to say, it was given a wide berth.

The **Ringed Brown Snake**, *Pseudonaja modesta* (right) is venomous but not deadly and a few were seen. Most of these snakes were too quick to study at length.





Claw-snouted Blind Snake,
Ramphotyphlops unguirostris, (above).

The **Desert Banded Snake**, *Simoselaps anomalus*, (below).



Brown Tree Snake (Night Tiger), *Boiga irregularis*,

The **Thorny Devil**, *Moloch horridus* (below), is the only member of its genus. It has no other close relatives. These reptiles, Peter Child explained, are not often seen in captivity because of their need for about 1,000 ants a day. Where they are on display in NT, only one of 15 is displayed at any one time, where it can comfortably go for a week without food, whilst the others live in movable outdoor enclosures around natural ant mounds. (Rotating means the animals only need to go without food for one week in several months.) The enclosures are surrounded by moats to keep the ants in. These reptiles move slowly, and when they are approached they will lower their head so



that the bulge on top of their neck is presented to predators as a fake head. They absorb water by sitting with their rear in water which is then channeled along their skin to their mouth.



Joe McAuliffe, the passionate herpetologist, with Timone.



Delma borea (left) seems quite happy to mimick a baby Brown Snake.

A favourite find was the **Spinifex Slender Blue-tongue**, *Cyclodomorphus melanops ssp elongatus* (right) - a delicate yet solid nocturnal skink.





Burton's Snake Lizard *Lialis burtonis* (left) has quite a varied patination. This particular specimen Joe hadn't seen in Uluru before. The underbelly was a superb gold.

There are 2 sub-species of **Sand Goanna**. The one pictured below is (Tinka), *Varanus gouldii* ssp *flavirufus*, which occurs in the desert regions and was the most common goanna seen.



Joe, with Greg Sattler's help, described the rough track navigated in a brand new vehicle, with the spare tyre in use, in the middle of no-where and how they stumbled upon pretty special creatures. One such creature, the **Spiny-tailed Monitor** *Varanus acanthurus*, was gently taken from his "little hidy hole" and admired and photographed. The little dude was then placed back on the ground and promptly ran

into the vehicle's wheel and hid in the brake drum, causing a major delay in the journey, in searing heat. It was removed intact with many expletives expressed throughout the delicate operation.



Joe found a number of skinks he was unable to accurately identify and, after talking to John Wombey upon his return, he contacted Paul Horner from NT to find answers. "Yes I think the skinks are *Ctenotus coggeri*," however Paul had not seen this colour pattern in them before.

Ric described *Ctenotus* as a successful genus of egg layers who have flaps behind the eyes. These cover ear holes but their true significance is unknown. It is a widespread genus and there is one species in Canberra.

Several members pointed out that many of the lizards photographed had the ends of their tails missing: presumably due to predation.



Ctenotus coggeri

A male **Central Bearded Dragon** (*right*)
Pogona vitticeps is a lizard which varies widely in colour



Burn's Dragon *Amphibolurus burnsi*: (*left*). Note the tail length, ending near the bottom of the picture! This photo was taken close to the QLD border travelling south in NT. The animal was spotted whilst looking for endangered plant species. It was heard before being seen.



The **Northern Spiny-tailed Gecko** *Strophurus ciliaris* (*below*) is one of the most commonly encountered gecko's in the Uluru area.



The **Spade-foot Frog**, *Notaden nichollsi*, (*below*), secretes a

copious thick, white mucous when caught.

Gehyra australis, (*below*), is one of the **Dtellas** that are very common in the Kakadu area.





■ THE RESULT

“So, how do we measure the success of the Exhibition this time?” **Joe McAuliffe and Peter Child** ponder.

Well, **Margaret Ning and Mandy Conway** reply, in all 4,074 people went through the Exhibition with many visitors commenting that it was the personal experience of handling snakes and lizards that drew them back every year. This year ACTHA

members were able to encourage ‘touching’ of reptiles whilst adhering to strict hygiene guidelines and protocols, particularly the washing of hands and forearms with soap and F10 after each encounter.

The variety of reptiles, from pythons to our local lizards and turtles, to the more unusual animals from the croc to the goannas, and the chance to see 2 of our most endangered species, the Northern Corroboree Frog and the Striped Legless Lizard, were pretty strong draw cards. Not to mention seeing the pesky Cane Toad that everyone hears about.

People mentioned the nocturnal room as being an eerie experience and most people absolutely LOVED the feeding sessions, with some returning the next day to see something else being fed. This year much work went into the feeding sessions with well prepared handlers explaining every facet of feeding and caring for their critters.



These 3 young ladies (*L to R Millissa, Emma and Iris*) ensured a record number of badges and merchandise were sold over the week: a tremendous \$1,300 was raised. In fact, all of our young members in the photo on the front page either sold merchandise, raffle tickets or ensured our young visitors got to hold or touch a reptile. Thank you!

Many thanks to Lois McAuliffe (*right with son Connor*) nice tails!, for constantly shopping and making badges and key rings to keep supplies up.

Raffle tickets raised over \$1,000 and the delighted winners were contacted closing night.

So, another big thank you to everyone already mentioned in this Newsletter. And, a special thank you to:

- All of our members who volunteered over the week, and who helped set up and take-away food collect, and who helped pull down and clean. Lucinda Royston and Margaret Ning handled the crowd and their money so well!
- The Australian National Botanic Gardens for their assistance in a myriad of ways.
- Hudson’s café who generously gave volunteers a 15% discount on sustenance and a delicious lunch to celebrate afterwards.
- Environment ACT for providing 2 of our threatened species for exhibit and for making some of Rob Jansen’s time available.
- CSIRO for providing the Cane Toads and Daryl Venables.
- Arif Haque, My Oyster, and Tanuj Rastogi, Sigma Infotech, for a preview slideshow showing the ACTHA website they have developed.

Ed. Did we forget to mention anyone? Please forgive the tired Editor and please let me know so I can acknowledge you in the next issue. Missing or incorrect facts? ditto and you get a Caramello chocolate...



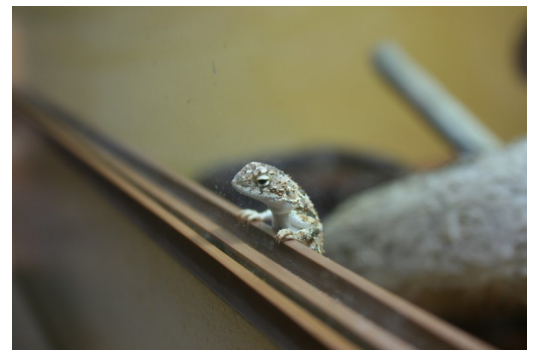


Millissa's Shingleback Freddy spent quite some time relaxing in this pose. If we were given \$1 every time someone asked if "is it real?" ...

Connor McAuliffe's Eastern Blue-tongued Lizard, called Marshmallow, gave birth to 9 babies during Snakes Alive! Fortunately she had gone home for the evening into a stress-free environment.



The male Centralian Earless Dragon (above) was on display and is about half the size of our Grassland Earless Dragon Tympanocryptus pinguicolla who is endangered.



The same Centralian Earless Is it over yet?!

CLANGERS DURING THE WEEK

- "What type of paint do you use to make the scorpion glow?"
- "I want to hold the crocodile" a 20 something man asked. He insisted it was a croc even after being assured it was in fact a Shingleback Lizard.
- Entry staff got used to "Do you take credit card?", but a "Gold card?"!
- "Three children?" a man was asked. Reply, "yes but these are twins"...
- Along the same lines "But I have six children!" a mother gasped when advised there were no family passes.
- Connor McAuliffe was asked by Margaret Ning if he was able to add the merchandise money up. "I'm the best maths person in my class!" was the reply. Silly Margaret!

Some Web sites worth looking at:

<http://frogs.org.au/>

www.aussiereptilekeeper.com

www.mark.org.au

www.canberraexotics.com.au

http://www3.environment.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/hygiene_protocol_snakes.pdf

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/animals/reptiles.htm>

http://www.tams.act.gov.au/live/environment/native_plants_and_animals/licensing_of_plants_and_animals/reptile_policy

Editor's Note

The Editor takes full responsibility for summaries of presentations by Guest Speakers at ACTHA Meetings and any editing of other contributions. The views expressed by contributors and authors are not necessarily those of ACTHA. Please feel free to contact the Editor with regard to any queries.



ACTHA News

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