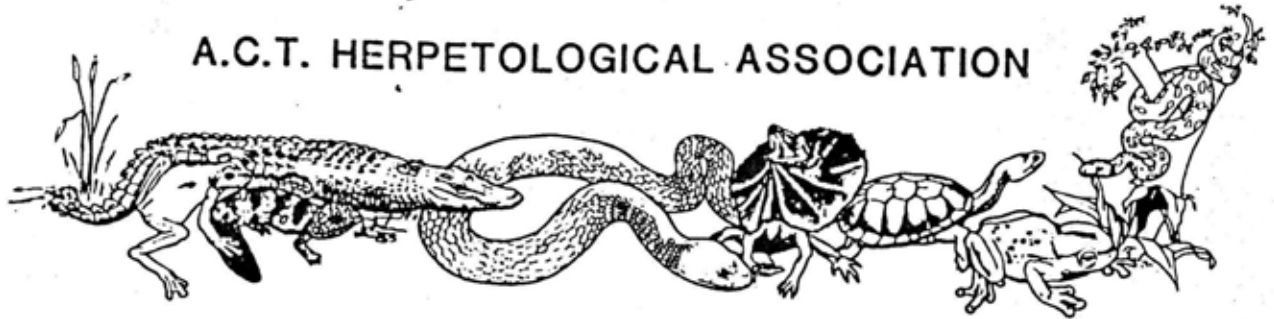


# A.C.T. HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



JULY 1988      NEWSLETTER

Who would have believed that such a tiny frog could be so complicated? The talk by Will Osborne at the last meeting (30-6-88) on the life-history and habitat use by the Corroboree Frog Pseudophryne cooroboree showed that life for herps in alpine areas is more or less easy - if you go about it the right way. Will's talk was backed up by superb slides covering aspects of the ecology of this particularly brilliant little beast. Thank you Will.

## Results of Annual General Meeting

After considerable discussion to define the positions of chairperson, Newsletter Editor/Talks organiser and Treasurer, a vote was taken on each of these positions. Jo Vandermark, in her absence but with her agreement, was voted in unopposed as chairperson. Will Osborne and Ross Bennett found themselves co-editing the newsletter and arranging speakers for the meeting, and, after a small amount of persuasion, Dom Pook became the keeper of the coin with Paul Hardiman agreeing to show him how book-juggling produces profit. Dean Ward must have the travel bug as he has taken on a new role as the person to generate field trips and outings.

Thankyou to the outgoing committee: Dean Ward, Paul Hardiman and Ross Bennett.

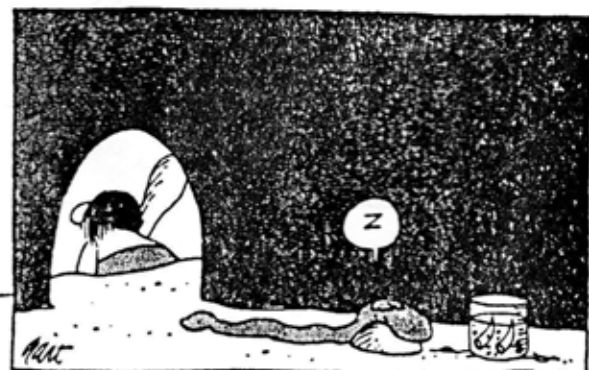
A number of possible activities for the months ahead were discussed including visits to the CSIRO museum at Gungahlin and the Australian Museum in Sydney, a look at the herpetofauna along the Shoalhaven River, tiger hunting (without elephants) near Goulburn, pythons on the south coast, reptiles in small remnant woodland patches north of Hall..... We'll keep you posted.

In the meantime don't be backward about coming forward if you see or hear a herp happening, feel free to take up space in the newsletter.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday 28th July, 1988. 7.30pm.

RB

TALK BY ROSS BENNETT: "Colour confusion - variation within some species of reptiles."



## Wildlife Prosecutions in Oceania Region

compiled by Frank Antram, TRAFFIC(Oceania)

### AUSTRALIA

#### Federal:

On 10-11 November 1987, at Perth District Court, Western Australia, Peter and Rosaleen Robson of Fremantle, Western Australia, were convicted on three counts of attempting to export Australian native reptiles without a permit, contrary to Section 21(b) of the Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports & Imports) Act 1982 through Section 7 of the Crimes Act 1914. The couple had pleaded guilty to charges that they had mailed packages containing live reptiles at Bentley Post Office on 16 January 1986, 9 September 1986 and 15 September 1986 to dealers in Denmark and F.R. Germany. A total of 57 reptiles, comprising 41 Shinglebacks *Trachydosaurus rugosus*, two Western Bearded Dragons *Amphibolurus minimus*, one Western Blue-tongued Lizard *Tiliqua occipitalis* eight skinks *Scincidae* spp. and five geckoes *Gekkonidae* spp., and estimated to be worth approximately A\$20 000 (US\$14 000) on the European market, were found in the packages before they left the country. Peter Robson was sentenced to nine months imprisonment to be suspended upon entry into a recognisance in the sum of A\$10 000 to be of good behaviour for three years. He was also fined A\$2000. Rosaleen Robson was also sentenced to nine months imprisonment to be suspended upon entry into a recognisance in the sum of A\$5000 to be of good behaviour for two years.



H. Elmann/NPIAM

Western Blue-tongued Lizard  
*Tiliqua occipitalis*

## Glass in the snake

A METRE-LONG snake landed upon the operating table at the University of Florida's veterinary school last month after swallowing two 15-watt light bulbs. Vets there surmise that the snake mistook the bulbs for a tasty meal of hen's eggs while searching for light lunch. It clearly took to the first and happily guzzled down the second.

Surgery to remove the bulbs was carried out by Elliot Jacobson, pictured here with an X-ray that located the bulbs after the snake was brought in for diagnosis.

Jacobson hopes that the snake will soon recover, and that it can be returned to the wild before long. □



The following account is condensed from an article in the 'Daily Mirror' of May 16, 1988. The author is Kerry Wakefield. The article dramatically illustrates how easily things can go wrong - even for experts. This is the second recorded bite from an Inland Taipan...

April had brought heavy rains to the sandhills and stony plains around Clifton Hills station, in South Australia, far to the north-east of Lake Eyre, on the edge of the Simpson Desert.

For Hungarian-born Joe Bredl, 65, and his friend, Albert Fischer, 70, of Adelaide, this was perfect reptile-hunting time.

Bredl wanted three western taipans for breeding.

He had worked with snakes for 30 years, and in 1961 had set up Bredl's Reptile Park and Zoo at Renmark.

Bredl and Fischer had set up camp about 20km from the station and laid their traps.

At 9am on Sunday, May 1, they went collecting and had bagged their first western taipan when Bredl spotted another snake.

"I saw this snake, only part of its tail, hanging out of a bush," Bredl recalls. "It was disappearing. I quickly grabbed it to pull it out."

"That's when I realised I had a giant of an inland taipan, over two metres."

"The snake swung back in a split second. I felt the penetration of one fang in my body."

"I swung the snake away from me and tried to stop its second fang from penetrating. I knew I was in trouble."

What Bredl would later call a reflex action, he tried again to catch the snake. As it readied for a second strike, Bredl came to his senses.

He left the snake, ripped off his shirt and asked his friend Fischer to try to suck the bite.

Then Bredl got Fischer to cut the bite and suck more poison out.

The pair were about 2km from their four-wheel drive vehicle. Fischer told Bredl to stay put while he got the truck, but Bredl refused, and started to walk very slowly back to the track, pressing down on the bite to slow the venom's circulation.

By the time Bredl got to the track he was in a bad way - the walk had propelled the venom through his system.

When Fischer drove off wildly down the dirt track, Bredl vomited and lapsed into unconsciousness.

They reached Clifton Hills station at about 9.45am, where the owner rang the Royal Flying Doctor Service at Port Augusta.

The closest help lay at Santos's Moomba oilfield, about 170km away. The paramedics had a helicopter, but it wasn't big enough to transport Bredl.

It was despatched to Clifton Hills to give Bredl immediate aid, but the RFDS also flew in and ferried Bredl to Moomba, where he was met by a team from the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

At 11.30am the Moomba helicopter arrived at Clifton Hills. RAH doctors Griggs and

Gilligan had radioed ahead that Bredl was to be given antivenene only as a last resort.

The paramedics administered a drug that stopped the vomiting, and put in a dextrose drip.

Ten minutes later the Royal Flying Doctor Service's Chieftain put down. Bredl was loaded on the plane for Moomba, where he arrived at 1.45pm.

There to meet him were the RAH team: Dr Gilligan, a nurse, a St John Ambulance attendant and Dr Julian White, one of Australia's leading snake-bite experts and a consultant to the RAH.

Dr White would disagree with Bredl's management of the bite. Cutting and sucking snakebites was an old-fashioned treatment which had probably hastened the spread of the venom. The recommended procedure is to apply a pressure bandage firmly and keep still.

A decision was made to get Bredl to Adelaide as fast as possible.

At 2.15pm the RAH's King Air helicopter took off, with Bredl hooked up to machines measuring his heart action, his breathing capacity and the oxygen in his blood.

At 4.30pm they arrived in Adelaide, but Bredl's condition was deteriorating: his speech had started to slur, his grip had grown weak and he was suffering double vision.

In the plane Dr White found Bredl's blood would no longer clot. If he haemorrhaged, his bleeding could be unstoppable.

By 5pm Bredl was in the hospital's intensive care unit. With him were Doctors Griggs, Gilligan, White, the registrar, Dr Archer, and three critical care nurses. The doctors felt Bredl had a less than even chance.

By 5.30pm Bredl's breathing was down to one quarter the normal rate. The doctors decided to start using antivenene. They gave Bredl more drugs to suppress allergic reaction.

At 5.32pm the feared allergic reaction took hold: Bredl's blood pressure plunged to an unsupportable level of 40-50. A lumpy rash erupted over his body and he started wheezing.

"We're in serious trouble," Dr Griggs announced.

Adrenalin was pumped in; it jolted the blood pressure back to 150. More steroids were used, to try to suppress the production of antibodies and the allergic reaction. Death seemed imminent.

A theoretical but untried solution existed: a massive dose of antivenene might overwhelm the antibodies and knock out the venom. But would Bredl survive?

The unit had only two doses of taipan-specific antivenene, not enough for the proposed strategy. Normally, a snake bite can be cured with one dose. Before the night was out, Bredl

would have used six.

Dr Griggs rang a Commonwealth Serum Laboratory official at home, and he agreed to open up the lab to get the antivenene.

At 6pm Bredl was given a big dose of a stronger steroid, again to dampen his allergic response and to try to stop the production of antibodies.

A little after six, the second antivenene dose was given. Over three hours, the doctors juggled the antivenene dose, slowing it down when Bredl's allergic response became life-threatening.

Dr Griggs used Bredl's rash as an indicator; when it grew angry he slowed the antivenom.

By 9pm Bredl had been given four doses of antivenene and the rash had vanished. The urine began flowing more freely through Bredl's kidneys. By 10.30pm a blood test showed signs of improvement in Bredl's blood coagulation.

A fifth dose of antivenene was given at 11pm and a sixth at 1.30am.

By 2am the last of the original team still at Bredl's bedside, Dr Griggs, felt able to go home.

Bredl was discharged from Royal Adelaide Hospital a week later. He is now more allergic to antivenene than ever before, and his kidneys are seriously damaged.

Would he continue catching snakes?

"Oh, yes, but this thing taught me a very great lesson," Bredl muses. "Don't take any risks."

