



[www.actha.org.au](http://www.actha.org.au)

**ACTHA contact details**

PO Box 440

Jamison ACT 2614

E-mail: [info@actha.org.au](mailto:info@actha.org.au)

**ACTHA Inc. News**

**June - July '19**

*Newsletter of the  
ACT Herpetological  
Association Inc.*

*The dates are set for Snakes Alive! 2020  
Monday 13<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January*

**In this issue**

**ACTHA's Reptile Keepers Club**, page 2.

**Operation Blizzard - an anti-wildlife smuggling campaign to disrupt illicit reptile trade**, from page 3.

ACTHA took part in Canberra's Operation Blizzard media event held at the ANBG, and several other media releases and articles follow.

**The Australian & International Scene**

**Amazing pictures show python regurgitating bigger python**, page 8.

**Taxidermist jailed after being caught with more than 600 animals and parts listed on eBay**, p8.

**Invasive Red-eared Slider Turtle found in Bundaberg backyard**, page 9.

**Three-eyed snake found near Darwin**, page 10.

**Missing frog rediscovered on the New England Tablelands of NSW after more than 40 years**, page 11.

**Diary date**

The *bi-monthly* meetings of the Association are usually held on the **third Tuesday of the month** at **7.30pm**. Our usual venue is:

**Belconnen Soccer Club, Hawker**  
(cnr Belconnen Way & Springvale Drive)

**Upcoming meeting:**

**Tuesday, 18 June 2019**

**Our Guest Speaker:**

**Sarah Whiteley** will be our Guest Speaker at this meeting and her topic is:

**Sex in Dragons: the unusual effects of temperature on sex in two Australian dragon lizards.**

"Temperature can influence the sex of the growing embryos of many reptile species, including two well known Australian natives; the central bearded dragon, and our local Jacky dragon. I use these two species as models to understand how temperature influences sex, and to identify the genetic mechanisms by which this occurs."

*Please note: "Sarah's presentation is on the topic of sex, and contains images of deceased reptile embryos, so may not be suitable for young audiences."*

**Your Committee for 2018 - 2019**

President	Jason Spurr
Vice President	<b>Ric Longmore*</b>
Secretary	Dennis Dyer
Treasurer	Margaret Ning
Newsletter Editor	Mandy Conway
Webmaster	Angus Kennedy
Public Officer	<b>John Wombey *</b>
Excursion Officer	
Conservation Officer	Joe McAuliffe
Committee Members	Scott Keogh
	Iris Carter
	Greg Flowers
	Roy Chamberlain
	Peter Child
Youth Representative	Liam Thornton
	<i>* Denotes Life Members</i>

**ACTHA 2019 - 2020 Membership Renewal  
Now Due**

**\$20** family/individual m'ship, **\$10** university student m'ship  
[ **\$15** 'Herpetofauna' ]

Membership year runs from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.  
Payment can be made at our next meeting,

**OR**, preferably, a direct debit to:

ACTHA BSB 112-908, A/c 486822880

**OR** by cheque to ACTHA, **PO BOX 440**, Jamison Centre, ACT 2614.

*Most importantly, please don't forget to note your name so we can identify you on the bank statement.*

## **ACTHA Reptile Keepers Club:** ACTHA members initiative

To my fellow ACTHA members,

For a while now I've been wanting to have a go at husbandry talks in the form of a club within the ACTHA umbrella, to try and get the younger generation of reptile lovers into a group.

Well it has finally happened! Inside ACTHA we have formed the ACTHA Reptile Keepers Club, which will meet in the off month to ACTHA's more formal meetings and which I'm sure after a little while we will think of as more of a family.

Meetings of the new club will be held at the **Canberra Reptile Zoo**, O'Hanlon Pl, Nicholls (aka Gold Creek).

**[ Two meetings have been held so far, why not come along to our next one scheduled for 16 July 2019. ]**

We will be doing talks on keeping different species of reptiles and amphibians, eg. blueys, bearded dragons, pythons, frogs, etc. As well as that, we will have guest speakers.

All this great new news, and there's even more!!! We will be going out on walks to see these beautiful animals in their natural habitat, as well as contributing photos to Canberra Nature Map (<https://canberra.naturemapr.org>). We will add some new and interesting species from the local area.

Member signup will be at the start of the meeting. All new members will get a free years membership, with a \$10 member fee for student and \$20 member fee for standard members after that first year

This email will be sent to all members of ACTHA, after this email only members of the Keepers Club will be emailed.

Hope to see you all there!

Kind regards, Jake McAuliffe

## Operation Blizzard - an anti-wildlife smuggling media event

By Margaret Ning



On Tuesday , 28 May 2019, ACTHA had the privilege of participating in an anti-wildlife smuggling media event at the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

The event was promoted by the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy, and ACTHA was invited to contribute some appropriate animals for the media to see first hand the species that are most commonly trafficked. In addition, ACTHA life member, Ric Longmore, was invited to contribute a specialist talk on the reptiles known to be targeted by smugglers. Approximately 40 people attended the event, coincidentally held outside the Crosbie Morrison Building, the venue for *Snakes Alive!* The head of the Department of the Environment and Energy's Office of Compliance, Monica Collins, spoke about the results and outcomes of Operation BLIZZARD, a three-week, international campaign to disrupt illicit reptile trade in Australia, and



globally. Her department led the Australian arm of an international operation aimed at disrupting the illicit trade of reptiles. The ACT Government's Licensing and Compliance area was also involved in the operation. Iain Bruce, a senior representative from



the Victorian Department of Environment, Land and Wildlife Protection talked about his Department's involvement in the operation and some results, including the seizure of shinglebacks and blue-tongue lizards concealed in luggage by a 27-year-old female at Melbourne Airport a few weeks ago.

Finally, Ric Longmore explained why certain species are targeted, the methods poachers and smugglers use, the impact the trafficking has on their welfare, and how cruel the smuggling methods can be.

Appropriately for its name, but not for the participating animals' welfare, the Operation Blizzard media event was scheduled for a 12 degree day, and it was an outside event! The utmost care was taken for them not to get cold, and they still played their part beautifully.

Many thanks to Ric for taking 'Precious' his woma python to the event, to Liam for taking his albino carpet python and a couple others, to Dennis for taking his bredli pythons and to Jake for providing us with an eastern blue-tongue lizard and a shingleback.



Above: Ric Longmore



*Following on from the previous article, here are a few more Operation Blizzard news stories.*

## **International reptile smugglers have been targeted in a coordinated operation across states and territories**

*By Peter Brewer, The Canberra Times, 29 May 2019*



*Above: Wildlife compliance officer Iain Bruce with a shingleback lizard, one of the many reptiles targeted by international smuggling rings.*

*Picture: Karleen Minney.*

Wrapped in plastic, bound in masking tape, stuffed in a sock, and then sealed into the bottom of a gutted rice cooker destined for China. It's a cruel and miserable way for an animal to die.

"Some of them have taken their last breath as we've unpacked them," Iain Bruce said.

He has seen some awful examples of human cruelty to animals in his years as a wildlife enforcement officer but some of the recent seizures under Operation Blizzard, a multi-jurisdiction operation targeting the illegal trade of reptiles, has been particularly sickening.

In attempts by smugglers to beat the X-ray machines officers found shinglebacks jammed inside sealed cylindrical potato chip tubes, and appliances with internal electrics removed and taped-up animals stuffed deep inside.

"The key items used [by the smuggling ring] have been rice cookers and deep fryers sent in larger boxes," he said.

"We've found the mechanisms removed from those items, the animals stuffed inside, and the thing screwed back together.

"To see them unpacked is devastating; to see them stuffed in a sock, taped up and jammed inside these appliances.

"Some of the animals have come out paralysed, others have suffocated. "It's just extremely cruel."

The enforcement officer said that animal smugglers have a total disregard for the animals' wellbeing; he described it as a commodity trade for this organised crime ring with a sizeable cash reward waiting in China or Hong Kong for those shipments which make it past the screening.

He said that the seizures from the 40 postal consignments bound for Hong Kong and China reflected the popularity of these animals as exotic pets, or for breeding, in those countries.

The national focus of the Operation Blizzard, using the resources of intelligence-gathering, police and enforcement, Border Force and the coordination of the federal compliance office, has generated results in every jurisdiction.

In the ACT, an ongoing investigation is underway after 27 native pythons and three pygmy bearded dragons were seized from a residence.

The animals are currently in the care of ACT Parks and Conservation.

At Melbourne airport, Border Force officers arrested a 27-year-old Japanese woman with 17 shinglebacks and two blue-tongued lizards concealed in her check-in luggage. The woman is suspected to be part of an international wildlife trafficking syndicate.

In Western Australia, two live pythons and a bearded dragon were seized by police with a search warrant and successfully released back into the wild with the perpetrators fined \$5000.

The operation ran from April 22 to May 12 and involved investigating officers in 13 other Interpol-member countries. Warrants were served, 51 compliance inspections made, and Illegal wildlife traders raided.

Wildlife trafficking is a serious crime, with breaches of national environment laws carrying penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and \$210,000 fine for individuals.

"If anyone has information about this cruel and inhumane trade, we urge them to come forward and contact their local environment office," Mr Bruce said.

## **Department of the Environment and Energy Media Release, 28 May 2019**

The Australian arm of a three-week, international operation targeting the illegal trade of reptiles, involving surprise raids, compliance inspections and random airport checks, resulted in the seizure of 69 reptiles. Australia and 13 other INTERPOL-member countries participated in Operation Blizzard, an INTERPOL-coordinated campaign to increase enforcement and surveillance activities around suspicious reptile trading. The operation ran from 22 April to 12 May 2019.

Wildlife authorities executed seven search warrants against suspected illegal traders across Australia, and conducted 51 wildlife compliance inspections, resulting in 17 detections of non-compliance.

Operation Blizzard was coordinated by the Department of the Environment and Energy's Office of Compliance. The operation involved the Australian Border Force, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, and environmental agencies from every state and territory in Australia joining forces to combat wildlife trafficking at a national level.

The Department of the Environment and Energy's Chief Compliance Officer, Monica Collins, said, "Operation Blizzard shows what can be achieved when our federal, state and territory agencies work collaboratively to disrupt wildlife crime. Officers from all agencies are working tirelessly to thwart this illicit trade."

In **Tasmania**, wildlife rangers from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment executed two search warrants, seizing 25 live and dead animals, including a large carpet python.

The **Queensland** Police Major and Organised Crime Squad (Rural) worked closely with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to jointly tackle reptile crime throughout the state. Queensland authorities executed five search warrants resulting in the seizure of 13 animals.

"This operation has sent a clear message that the Queensland Government has a zero tolerance approach to the illegal trade of wildlife. We take this type of crime very seriously and we will continue to work in conjunction with federal authorities beyond the conclusion of this operation", said a Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service spokesperson.

In **South Australia**, wildlife officers from the Department for Environment and Water undertook inspections of commercial licence holders. Australian Border Force officers in South Australia engaged with local community groups to raise awareness and encourage reporting of suspicious behaviour.

**Victoria's** Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) are committed to tackling the illegal wildlife trade head on. This involves swift action on identified illegal exports or proactive inspections of licenced collections. As part of Operation Blizzard, DELWP focused on inspections of commercial and private licence holders to ensure the legal trade in Victoria is monitored appropriately.

DELWP continue their investigations, working collaboratively with other agencies, into five unsolved cases, where 12 live lizards were posted to China late last year. The suspects have been captured on CCTV, but to date have not been identified.

At **Melbourne** airport, Australian Border Force (ABF) officers arrested a 27-year-old Japanese national with 17 shinglebacks and two blue-tongued lizards concealed in her checked-in luggage. The woman is suspected of being involved in an international wildlife trafficking syndicate. The animals were seized and are currently being cared for by DELWP.

ABF Superintendent Operations Andrew Dawson said the ABF will continue to work closely with our partner agencies to share intelligence to identify and prevent attempts to illegally export native Australian wildlife.

"This is an incredibly cruel trade and the ABF will continue to do whatever we can to stop it," said Superintendent Dawson. "Operation Blizzard was an excellent example of what can be achieved when state and federal agencies come together to protect our native Australian wildlife."

In **Western Australia**, wildlife officers conducted thirteen inspections and attended a WA Police warrant. Officers from the Western Australia Parks and Wildlife Service seized two live pythons and a bearded dragon that was successfully returned to the wild. Officers issued two infringement notices totalling \$5000.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources is investigating the detection of nine live turtles in an international mail parcel imported from Hong Kong.

"Illegal reptile imports pose a significant biosecurity risk, as they could introduce pests and diseases that can impact on human and animal health, as well as the environment," said Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer at the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Ian Thompson.

"The Department works closely with other agencies to manage these risks at our international airports and mail centres."

In the **Northern Territory**, wildlife officers from the Parks, Wildlife & Heritage Division are looking into a number of allegations, including a case involving the alleged interference of threatened pythons.

Investigators from the **New South Wales** Department of Planning and Environment conducted compliance inspections of private wildlife collections. Meanwhile, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service are busy with ongoing investigations, including caring for 27 native pythons and three pygmy bearded dragons seized from a residence.

"We're pleased to be invited to take part in Operation Blizzard. Throughout the operation we conducted multiple inspections on both private and commercial reptile licence holders.

"We welcome any opportunity to educate licence holders and the wider community on the importance of reporting animals being taken from the wild or the keeping of unlicensed

reptiles so that we can help combat the illegal wildlife trade and protect the biodiversity of the ACT," said an ACT Parks and Conservation Service spokesperson.

Wildlife trafficking is a serious crime and is driving the decline of many species around the world.

The maximum penalty for wildlife trade offences under Australian law is 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to \$210,000 for individuals, or up to \$1,050,000 for corporations.

Australia is a signatory to **CITES** and implements the Convention under its national environment law.

It is an offence to import a CITES specimen without the appropriate documentation, and to be in possession of an illegally imported specimen. Any information about trade in illegal wildlife or wildlife products should contact 02 6274 1900 or at:

wildlifetrade.compliance@environment.gov.au

#### *Australia's participation*

Eleven Commonwealth, state and territory wildlife enforcement agencies across Australia participated in the operation:

Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy

Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

Australian Border Force

Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

South Australian Department of Environment and Water

Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment

New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment

Western Australia Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service

Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory.

## **Operation Blizzard reveals information about illegal reptile trade**

Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai, New Zealand, Media Release 4 June 2019

Globally the operation, code named Operation Blizzard, has seen thousands of seizures and almost 200 suspects in illegal trade identified through coordinated sharing of information between participating countries.

Targeting the criminals and networks behind the illegal global trade in reptiles, Operation Blizzard (12 April to 22 May 2019) involved agencies from 22 countries and resulted in seizures ranging from live animals to high-end fashion products.

Within New Zealand, DOC staff inspected legally permitted reptile holders and traders, audited shipments of reptile leather products crossing the border, and assisted Customs and Ministry for Primary Industries staff in identifying and seizing reptile products at airports and the International Mail Centre.

The intelligence generated and shared with other countries has resulting in the launch of investigations into the illegal holding, selling, and import and export of reptiles – including endangered native New Zealand geckos.

"Our geckos can be quite popular pets overseas, because they are such a unique and rare species," says DOC Principal Compliance Officer Dylan Swain.

"True animal lovers would never take part in this black market. As well as damaging wild populations, the conditions in which these lizards are transported for illegal trade can be appalling. Very few of them survive in the process.

"Sharing information with key agencies overseas and getting information from local holders of exotic and native reptiles has been instrumental in opening a number of new investigations into the illegal trade in reptiles and reptile products.

"Operation Blizzard is just the start of a renewed international focus on the illegal reptile trade," Dylan Swain adds.

Operation Blizzard was jointly coordinated by INTERPOL and Europol to enhance international efforts in tackling the illegal trade in reptiles. Member countries of the INTERPOL

Wildlife Crime Working Group developed the operation based on the growing need to share and collaborate on organized crime groups trading in live reptiles and reptile products.

Internationally, the operation has so far led to over 4,500 of seizures and the identification of important suspects, triggering arrests and investigations worldwide. Further arrests and prosecutions are anticipated as investigations continue.

"The illegal trade in reptiles has close associations with organised crime – Operation Blizzard sends a clear message to criminals that the law enforcement community is homing in on them," added Daoming Zhang, INTERPOL's Assistant Director in charge of Environmental Security.

"Operation Blizzard clearly demonstrates that by pooling our enforcement and intelligence resources, the global enforcement community firmly contributes to disrupting this destructive trade in reptiles. This operation is testimony to what can be achieved if we all work together."

The results of the operation will continue to be analysed globally to generate further intelligence for use in future national, regional and international law enforcement efforts. DOC staff are currently following leads, interviewing suspects, and sharing intelligence with foreign authorities which may result in the prosecution of individuals and companies in New Zealand.

### **Intelligence gathering**

Intelligence was gathered and shared ahead of the operation through Europol and the INTERPOL National Central Bureaus to identify criminal networks involved in the illegal reptile trade. This information was used to build profiles, which form the basis of on-going operational activity, and to track offenders and their associates.

Aircraft passengers, commercial cargo, pet shops, and legally permitted reptile holders were also targeted with searches and inspections carried out by officers to detect alleged offending and to help build information sources.

### **Background information**

Worldwide seizures reported to date include:

- 4,419 live animals, including 2,703 turtles and tortoises, 1,059 snakes, 512 lizards and geckos and 20 crocodiles and alligators



- 152 products derived from reptiles, including handbags, wallets, watchstraps, medicines and taxidermy products
- Boas, turtles, tortoises and geckos from a pet shop and private residence in Israel
- Two pythons seized during the execution of a search warrant in western Australia
- Six Kenyan sand boas seized from air cargo in the United States
- Almost 1,500 live snakes, lizards and geckos seized from right across Europe
- A number of non-reptiles were also seized as a result of enforcement action, including parrots, owls, falcons, swans, elephant ivory and bush meat.

#### Participating countries

Countries which took part in Operation Blizzard include: Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United States of America.

### Amazing pictures show python regurgitating bigger python

By Kathleen Donaghey, *The New Daily*, 22 May 2019

A hungry python with eyes too big for its stomach has been photographed regurgitating another python – bigger than itself.

The snake was found in a garage of a caravan park in Western Australia's East Kimberley, with its normally streamlined sides bulging from a recent feed.

When Kurt Jongedyk, the manager at Parry Creek Farm Tourist Resort and Caravan Park, caught the reptile and relocated it away from his house and chooks, it began bringing up its meal.

But instead of throwing up an unlucky marsupial or goanna, the unhappy 3.5-4 metre python spewed forth an even fatter python of about the same length.

"There is a chook pen next to the house and for many seasons we've had large snakes polish off the chooks," Mr Jongedyk told *The New Daily*.

"We heard the dog barking like mad and we found this python with a full belly in the garage.

"We usually relocate them to Marlgu Billabong down the road where there is a lot of birdlife and it's safer for them away from the cars.

"When I took him there I noticed he was twisting and thought he had a goanna in him.

*Right: Once the python was relocated to a nearby billabong, it started to*

*regurgitate its lunch. Images supplied.*

"He had it out in about a minute. He spat the last of it out real fast. I don't know how he managed to wrangle that one."

Mr Jongedyk identified both snakes as olive pythons. He said it was the most amazing snake encounter he had witnessed.

One theory suggests the python brought up its dinner after being stressed from the relocation.

"Sadly he lost his lunch but we hope he grabs something else and the birds get his leftovers."



### Taxidermist jailed after being caught with more than 600 animals and parts listed on eBay

By Nick Hose and Neda Vanovac, *ABC News*, 24 May 2019

**An illegal poacher caught with Australia's largest-ever haul of animal skulls and bones will spend more than a year in jail for his "morbid obsession".**

Indian national Keerthi Eswaran, 35, was sentenced in Darwin's Supreme Court on Friday after pleading guilty to eight fresh charges.





*Above: A collection of skulls and skeletons seized in a raid on the poacher's house.*

*Image: Supplied, NT Parks and Wildlife*

He had reoffended just shy of five months into a suspended sentence for possessing the animal parts, after pleading guilty in March 2017 to an Australian record of more than 350 charges relating to the sale and possession of animals, some threatened and endangered.

Then, he had been handed a 10-month sentence, fully suspended, which crown prosecutor Ian Rowbottom argued did nothing to deter him.

He sold crocodile and wombat skulls, baboons, chipmunk tails, a king colobus monkey skull, even an ocelot, and had more than 600 listings on eBay valued at almost \$70,000 when his Palmerston home was raided by police, finding animal parts in freezers and rotting away in buckets.

He was caught while trying to post a baboon skull to the US as well as trying to post wedge-tailed eagle feet, and magpie goose and ibis skulls.

His collection was "a morbid obsession," Mr Rowbottom told the court.

On Friday, Eswaran pleaded guilty to charges related to removing protected wildlife, such as the skull of an orange-footed scrub fowl from the Northern Territory, and possessing Chinese freshwater turtle skulls.

Mr Rowbottom argued the previous sentence was "certainly very merciful" but was imposed wrongly under the belief that Eswaran was a wildlife lover who volunteered at animal shelters and wanted to work for Parks NT.

He said Eswaran was running a commercial enterprise, earning \$2,500 per month as a taxidermist.

He had previously told the court Eswaran was catering to a decorative skull market where people liked to display the skulls in their homes.

The former crocodile-park taxidermist maintained most of his work had been in stuffing cats, dogs and cane toads that people had become attached to.

In his sentencing remarks, Justice Peter Barr said any conservationist would take offence at the accused's behaviour towards animals.

Mr Eswaran was sentenced to 23 months in prison — his prior full suspended sentence plus 13 months for the fresh charges — and he will be eligible for parole in June 2020.

The maximum sentence was 10 years' imprisonment.

Eswaran plans to return to India to be with his wife and children once he has served his sentence.

"This sentence sends a strong message to people who involve themselves in illegal wildlife trade and trafficking, and reflects the value Territorians place on our unique protected species, that people cannot simply take as they please for commercial gain," said acting director of wildlife Peter Ross.

## **Invasive alien red-eared slider turtle found in Bundaberg backyard**

*By Sarah Jane Bell, ABC News, 3 May 2019*

**An invasive species of turtle known to be aggressive and to carry diseases that threaten Australia's native turtles has been found in a backyard in Bundaberg in southern Queensland.**

The red-eared slider turtle, which is native to the USA, is a freshwater turtle about 30 centimetres in size, with a distinctive red strip behind each ear.

One of the turtles was found last month in an Avoca garden, prompting Biosecurity Queensland to launch an investigation.

Biosecurity Queensland said the International Union for Conservation of Nature lists the red-eared slider turtle as one of the world's 100 worst invasive alien species.

The Bundaberg Regional Council is subsequently undertaking a wide-scale surveillance operation in the region.



*Above: The small red-eared slider turtle is native to the USA. Image: Bundaberg Regional Council.*

Bundaberg Regional Councillor Wayne Honor said the turtle was listed as a restricted invasive animal under the Biosecurity Act.

"Fortunately, the resident who found the turtle, which had made its way into their backyard, reported it immediately to Council and the Department of Fisheries and Agriculture," Councillor Honor said.

Land Protection Officers were called to the home to collect the turtle, which the Bundaberg Regional Council said had the ability to have a disastrous effect on native turtle populations.

The turtle has since been euthanased.

Biosecurity Queensland is undertaking a DNA analysis to determine if the turtle was related to a known population in Burpengary, north of Brisbane.

Bundaberg Regional Council natural resource management officer Greg O'Neill said surveillance of Bundaberg's waterways was underway.

"We have also doorknocked in the area of the sighting in an attempt to find out where the turtle may have come from," he said.

The last confirmed sighting of a red-eared slider turtle in Bundaberg was in 2005 in Baldwin Swamp.

Platforms that simulate logs and rocks that turtles like to bask on have been placed in Baldwin Swamp with motion sensor cameras that capture photos of the turtles.

Mr O'Neill said residents who discover a suspected alien turtle species should take reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risk of these turtles escaping.

### **Three-eyed snake found near Darwin**

*By Zach Hope, The Canberra Times, 2 May 2019*

A three-eyed snake nicknamed Monty Python - or Munty Python, depending on who you ask - has sent the internet into a tizz since its image was posted on Wednesday by the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission.

The 40-centimetre carpet python, a juvenile, was found recently by rangers on the side of the Arnhem Highway near Humpty Doo, about 40 kilometres from downtown Darwin.

The photos show Monty, or Munty, with two eyes in relatively normal positions, but with a third eye protruding from the middle of its head. Snake experts in the NT believe the third eye was functional.

"The snake is peculiar as an x-ray revealed it was not two separate heads forged together, rather it appeared to be one skull with an additional eye socket and three functioning eyes," NT Parks and Wildlife posted to Facebook.

"It was generally agreed that the eye likely developed very early during the embryonic stage of development.

"It is extremely unlikely that this is from environmental factors and is almost certainly a natural occurrence, as malformed reptiles are relatively common."

Unfortunately for Monty, and snake lovers, it died last week because its misshapen head made it too difficult for it to feed.



*Above: The three-eyed snake found near Darwin. Image: NT Parks and Wildlife*



## Missing frog rediscovered on the New England Tablelands of NSW after more than 40 Years

*The Australian Museum Blog, c15 January 2019*

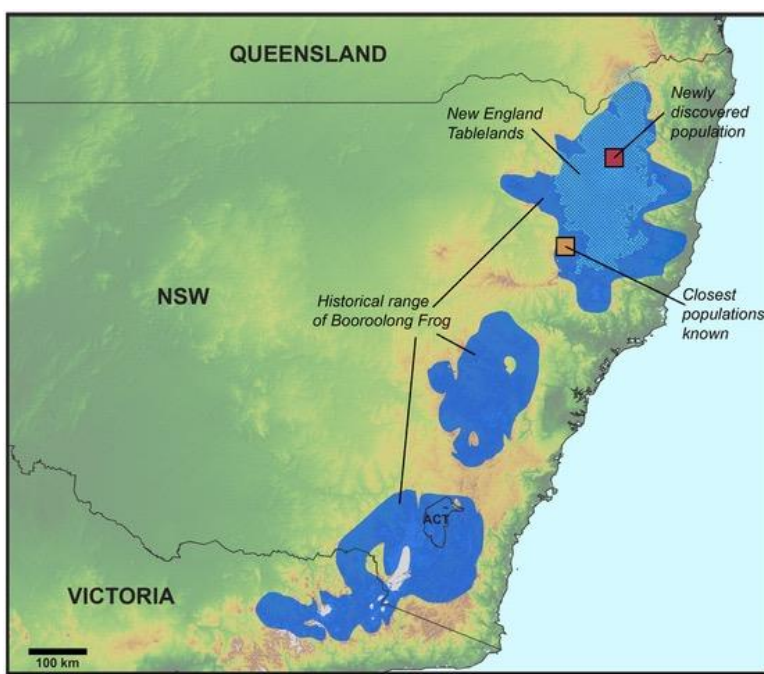
Surveying for the Peppered Tree Frog, we rediscovered the Endangered Booroolong Frog on the Northern Tablelands of NSW.



Above: Booroolong Frog (*Litoria booroolongensis*) from the newly discovered population on the New England Tablelands of New South Wales, Australia  
Image: Jodi Rowley, Australian Museum

Once common and widespread, The Booroolong Frog (*Litoria booroolongensis*) has disappeared from much of its range across eastern Australia and is now listed as Endangered. The last time the species was reported from the New England Tablelands of northern NSW was over 40 years ago. However, during surveys in search of another missing frog, the Peppered Tree Frog (*Litoria piperata*), we have now rediscovered Booroolong Frogs on the New England Tablelands! Our discovery is great news for the Booroolong Frog and provides hope for rediscovering other missing frog species.

Historically, the Booroolong Frog, a medium-sized, stream-breeding frog species, occurred from around 200 to 1300 m elevation along the Great Dividing Range from extreme northern NSW to northern Victoria. The species declined considerably in the 1980s, probably a result of infection by the amphibian chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*), habitat modification, stream flow alteration, and predation by introduced fish.



Above: Map showing the newly discovered population of Booroolong Frogs (*Litoria booroolongensis*). Blue patches represent the historical range of the Booroolong Frog, the red square the newly discovered extant population of *L. booroolongensis* on the New England Tablelands of New South Wales and the orange square the location of other known extant populations in the northern part of the range of *L. booroolongensis*. The boundary of the New England Tablelands according to the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA) Version 5.1 (Environment Australia, 2000) is shown in pale blue.

Image: Environment Australia

The Booroolong Frog was once one of the most common frogs seen along streams on the New England Tablelands, but the last record of the species from the Tablelands was in 1975. Since then, no Booroolong Frogs have been reported from this vast area, despite many surveys. That is, until recently.

Below: Female Booroolong Frog (*Litoria booroolongensis*) from the newly discovered population on the New England Tablelands of New South Wales, Australia.

Image: Jodi Rowley, Australian Museum



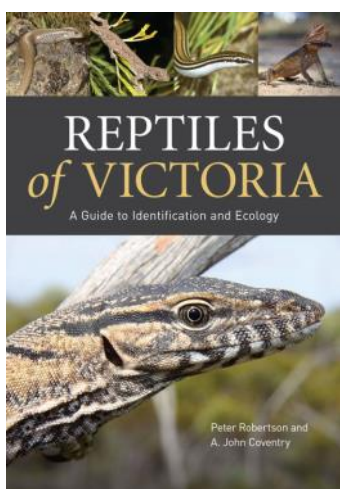
In October 2017, we were surveying streams in the New England Tablelands in search of another missing frog species- the Peppered Tree Frog (*Litoria piperata*). The Peppered Tree Frog was only known from the New England Tablelands and hasn't been seen at all since the 1970s. Surveying along a stream at night, documenting all the frog species we saw or heard, we came across a handful of brown frogs sitting on rocks in the middle of a stream. It was a species of frog that neither of us had ever seen on the Tablelands, but it was unmistakable. With large eyes, a rounded snout and skin with tiny bumps, we had discovered a population of Booroolong Frogs- the first sighting of the species on the New England Tablelands in 42 years. The newly discovered population is over 130 km north of the nearest known populations of the species near Tamworth. Frogs are in a lot of trouble globally, so it's important to highlight the good news- and this is certainly good news for the Booroolong Frog. It's also great news for the New England Tablelands community- they've not lost a frog species that was once extremely common, hopping around almost every stream. This finding also gives hope for rediscovering other missing frog species including the Peppered Tree Frog and Yellow-spotted Bell Frog (*Litoria castenea*).

Dr Jodi Rowley, Curator, Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Biology, AMRI & UNSW & Timothy Cutajar, Honours student & Research Assistant, AMRI & UNSW.

**More information:**

Rowley, J.J.L. & Cutajar, T.P. (2018) Rediscovery of the Booroolong Frog *Litoria booroolongensis* on the Australian New England Tablelands after more than 40 years. *Herpetological Review*. 49: 620-621.

**Acknowledgements:** We thank the New England Tablelands community for their support of our search for the Peppered Tree Frog, and to Northern Tablelands (Glen Innes) NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service office all the landholders for allowing us to survey their properties. We thank David Coote and David Hunter from the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage, and all at the Northern Tablelands (Glen Innes) NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service office. The rediscovery of the Booroolong Frog on the New England Tablelands was made possible by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust.



**[Stock ID:27519] Field guide to reptiles of Victoria.** Robertson, Peter and A. John Coventry. **AU\$50.00**  
Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2019. Octavo, paperback, 332 pp., colour photographs, other illustrations, maps.

We are pleased to offer copies SIGNED by the senior author, plus a free bookmark by William T. Cooper. Illustrated descriptions of the 123 native, introduced and vagrant reptile species in the state. 'Reptiles of Victoria' is the first regional guide to all reptiles known to occur in Victoria. It contains keys and illustrated descriptions to allow identification of the 123 native, introduced and vagrant reptile species and describes their biology, ecology, distributions and the habitats in which they live. It also indicates the level of risk that the venomous snakes pose to humans and includes a brief section on first aid for snake bites. Natural history enthusiasts and professional and amateur herpetologists will find this an essential guide. This book is also a fitting tribute to the late John Coventry, curator of reptiles at the Museum of Victoria.

To purchase go to: <https://www.andrewisles.com/details.php?record=27519&jump=1>