

ACT HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOC.

N E W S L E T T E R



MAY, 1987

TABLE OF CONTENTS :

Editor's Report

Birth of Rare Anacondas

"Snakes Aggressive only if Provoked"

"All Reptiles in NSW are Protected But!"

Membership Form

EDITOR'S REPORT

NEXT MEETING :

The next meeting of the A.C.T. Herpetological Association will be on :

WEDNESDAY, 27TH MAY, 1987 AT 7:30 PM

There will be a short business meeting starting at 7.30 and the general meeting will commence at 8.00 pm.

REPORT OF LAST MEETING :

1. Election of Committee -

At the last meeting held on 23rd April, 1987 a committee was formed and the following positions elected :

Secretary/Editor	-	Sue Tudor
Treasurer	-	Paul Hardiman

2. Membership fees -

It was decided that the \$5.00 membership fee originally proposed was insufficient to cover costs and a revised amount of \$10.00 for adult members was agreed upon. The concession rate for junior members, full-time students and pensioners will be \$5.00 per year.

These membership fees will become due on July 1st, 1987 and may be paid at our monthly meetings or forwarded to the Treasurer at the following address :

Mr. P. Hardiman,
Treasurer,
A.C.T. Herpetological Assoc.,
115 Fullagar Crescent,
HIGGINS. A.C.T. 2615

A membership form is included in this newsletter and it would be appreciated if it could be forwarded with payment of fees.

3. Attendance -

The last meeting was well attended by 20 members.

4. Talk -

A very interesting talk was given by Dr. Arthur Georges on "The Warradjan - Australia's Most Unusual Turtle". Thank you very much, Arthur.

TALK FOR NEXT MEETING :

The talk for our next meeting will be given by John Wombey, who will give an interesting slide show on his trip to Kakadu National Park.

PROGRAM FOR THE YEAR :

We have decided to hold our meetings on alternate 4th Wednesday and Thursday nights to allow as many members as possible to attend. To avoid confusion I have prepared the following program for the rest of the year :-

MAY	-	WEDNESDAY	27TH
JUNE	-	THURSDAY	25TH
JULY	-	WEDNESDAY	22ND
AUGUST	-	THURSDAY	27TH
SEPTEMBER	-	WEDNESDAY	23RD
OCTOBER	-	THURSDAY	22ND
NOVEMBER	-	WEDNESDAY	25TH
DECEMBER	-	3RD THURSDAY	17TH

Suzanne Tudor

(SUE TUDOR)
Secretary/Editor

35 Elrington Street,
BRAIDWOOD, NSW 2622
PHONE : (work) 801617
(home) 048-422438



Rare anaconda gives birth — to nine

This article has been reprinted from a South Australian newspaper and features Joe Bredle and his Reptile Park which is situated in Renmark, S.A. on the River Murray, about three hours north-east of Adelaide.



Joe Bredl holds the newest mother at Bredl's Reptile Park, a seven-foot yellow anaconda which gave birth last week to nine babies.

By Mark Waite

The population at Bredl's Reptile Farm grew a little larger last weekend with the birth of nine rare yellow anacondas.

Mr Joe Bredl, owner of the farm, said it was a pleasant surprise after the mother almost died last year.

"The old girl made headlines because at one stage she was suffocating and I gave her the kiss of life, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and after a half hour battle we saved her life," Mr Bredl recalled.

"I was very worried after she was revived she became spastic, she couldn't move her neck or her body; I gave her massages."

"This year she gave us nine little babies," Mr Bredl said noting that the parents are the only yel-

low anacondas in Australia.

The nine were born sometime Saturday night and measured about two feet at birth, he said.

Mr Bredl said the non-poisonous anacondas are born live, unlike other snakes which are hatched from eggs, and are aggressive right from the start as he showed a couple of small bites he has already received from one aggressive youngster.

Mr Bredl said he received the yellow anacondas three years ago from the Australian Reptile Park in Gosford in exchange for three pythons, and since then the pair have grown to be two metres long — just less than half their full size.

"Normally the first batch (of babies) is no good but they are all healthy babies," Mr Bredl said.

He estimated the pregnancy period for the yellow anacondas, or *unetichis noteaus* at about four months, at which

time the youngsters emerged from a spot right near the snake's tail.

"At this stage they can eat a fully grown mouse; when they're fully grown they can eat an animal as big as a wild pig or a deer," he said.

Mr Bredl, who has been raising reptiles for 27 years, said during his stay in Renmark his reptile population had grown to nearly 400 making it the second largest reptile park in the country including such specimens as American alligators, African crocodiles and the world's deadliest snake, the fierce snake.

Just last week Mr Bredl said 20 indian pythons were hatched at the farm along with 20 tortoises and 11 corn snakes.

Mr Bredl said some of the anacondas will be offered to zoos but he will keep on hand three or four of the youngsters in case anything happens to the parents.

Snakes aggressive only if provoked

Australia has several of the world's deadliest snakes; the taipan, death adder and coral sea snake to name a few. But only 12 of the 140 species of snake found in Australia are likely to inflict a fatal wound.

For this reason one should keep out of the way of these wriggling reptiles but not endeavour to kill every snake that is seen.

Besides being exquisitely adapted to the Australian environment, snakes play an important role in the natural world

by cleaning up carrion and eating small animals (e.g. mice) that can become pests.

Eating habits

To detect its prey a snake will "listen" for movement by receiving vibrations detected from the ground through the head and belly scales and transferring them to the inner ear. Snakes do not

possess an external ear. Its flicking tongue, which detects the scene to the prey via the Jacobson's organ in the snake's upper

both injected when the poisons flow down the grooves or hollows in the fangs into the puncture wounds.

To eat its meal the snake dislocates its upper and lower jaws and separates the two halves of the lower jaw.

An animal of larger size than the snake's mouth can be swallowed painlessly. Digestion occurs in the stomach with the aid of very strong digestive juices.

Snakes are cold-blooded (ectothermic) animals and have developed special behavioural patterns to raise their body temperature on cold mornings and lower it on very hot summer days. The warmer the day the more active they are.

Reproduction

Most venomous snakes bear live young (ovoviviparous), while

lip, will also allow it to home in on its potential dinner.

Different snakes skill their prey in different ways. Venomous snakes grab their prey by striking suddenly and injecting venom while biting their victim.

Blotchy poisons (haemotoxins) and nerve poisons (neurotoxins) are

Pythons have no venom and use their strong muscular bodies to suffocate their victims.

Other non-venomous snakes grab their prey with their teeth and start swallowing it live.

Some venomous snakes use a combination of poison and constriction to kill and hold their prey.



★ An Australian tiger snake.

most non-venomous snakes lay elongated white eggs (oviparous). The eggs are often laid in warm rotting vegetation so that the natural heat aids the 10-14 week incubation.

However, pythons "incubate" and protect their eggs by coiling their bodies around the eggs almost continuously until they hatch.

Young snakes fend for themselves from birth. Predation from birds,

lizards, other snakes and other predators means that relatively few of their 10-100 born reach maturity.

Protection

Snakes, like all reptiles, are protected throughout New South Wales. The reason for this protection is to discourage collecting them from the wild for keeping in captivity and illegally exporting them to overseas zoos.

If snakes definitely pose a threat to your pets, stock or family they may be killed without fear of prosecution.

Generally snakes will not attack humans and are only aggressive if provoked, threatened or if you accidentally block their path of retreat.

Treat all snakes with caution and let them retreat back into the bush or detour widely around them when bushwalking.

WILDLIFE NOTES

By G L Siepen



REPRINTED FROM NSW NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE PAMPHLET TITLED "REPTILES ARE PROTECTED, BUT. . . ."

(Please note - this applies only to NSW and does not include the A.C.T.)

ALL REPTILES IN N.S.W. ARE PROTECTED - - - BUT!

Reptiles and most other native animals are protected by law in N.S.W. This means that reptiles cannot be killed, harmed or disturbed in any way unless they are a direct threat to life or property. It also means that reptiles cannot be sold, or kept in cages without the permission of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

However, there are some reptiles that do not suffer unduly when kept as pets and properly cared for. These are :

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1. Cunningham's Skink | (<i>Egernia cunninghami</i>) |
| 2. Common Blue-Tongue Lizard | (<i>Tiliqua scincoides</i>) |
| 3. The Shingleback Lizard | (<i>Trachydosaurus rugosus</i>) |
| 4. The Eastern Water Dragon | (<i>Physignathus lesueurii</i>) |
| 5. The Eastern Water Skink | (<i>Sphenomorphus quoyii</i>) |
| 6. The Swamp Snake | (<i>Hemiaspis signata</i>) VENOMOUS |
| 7. Long-necked Tortoise | (<i>Chelodina longicollis</i>) |
| 8. Short-necked Tortoise | (<i>Emydura macquarii</i>) |

The Service has therefore relaxed the regulations to allow two individual reptiles selected from the above list to be kept as pets. However, they must not be collected from parks or reserves.

Each of these reptiles has its own preference for food and living conditions and you should be aware of these before deciding to keep one. Information on reptiles is contained in the books listed below. Such books may be available from local libraries.

WATCH THEIR HEALTH

Distress, sickness or starvation in mammals or birds is usually obvious, but not in reptiles.

- | | |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| Watch for : | * refusal to eat |
| | * lethargy |
| | * infections of the mouth |
| | * parasites |
| | * lumps |
| | * sores or fungi |

If you are at all in doubt, don't hesitate to ask a veterinarian.

If you allow a reptile to roam in the garden remember dogs, cats and insecticides on the plants will be its enemies and may kill it.

KEEPING REPTILES

The Service does not encourage the caging of native animals. Wherever practical, reptiles should have the run of a yard, verandah or large enclosure. However, if a cage is necessary, it should provide conditions as near to the natural habitat of the species as possible.

A cage could be :-

1. a large walled pit with good drainage;
2. a reinforced packing case (or similar) with :
 - (a) a glass viewing panel
 - (b) a ventilation strip of fine meshed wire. But a word of caution! Reptiles get bored and may rub and damage their faces on the wire if attracted to it by light.
 - (c) a durable waterproof floor covered with leaves, bark, pebbles etc. These must be replaced when dirty.
 - (d) water in a spill-proof container. Renew the water regularly.
 - (e) rocks, logs or bark where the animals can hide.
 - (f) adequate hinges and locks on the door, the door should be large enough to allow you to see into the cage and to reach deep into it.
 - (g) adequate insulation. Each reptile has a preferred temperature - find out what this is.
 - (h) a smooth lining to prevent injury.

Above all the cage should be kept clean and the animal should not be handled too often.

ANY OFFSPRING?

Your reptile may give birth to young. Remember that you may legally keep only two reptiles at a time. The young are to be released after seven days into their natural environment within 40 km of the area where the parents were found.

Also remember that an animal kept in captivity for most of its life loses the ability to live under natural conditions.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION -

- Bustard, R. (1970) "Australian Lizards"
(Collins : Sydney and London)
- Cogger, H.G. (1975) "Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia"
(A.H. & A.W. Reed)
- Goode, J. (1967) "Freshwater Tortoises of Australia and
New Guinea"
(Landsdowne Press : Melbourne)
- Goode, J. & Cann J. (1974) "Practical Nature Study"
(Sun Books : Melbourne)
- Gow, G. (1975) "Snakes of Australia"
(Angus & Robertson)
- McPhee, D.R. (1963) "Snakes and Lizards of Australia"
(Jacaranda Press)
- Swanson, S. (1975) "Lizards of Australia"
(Angus & Robertson)
- Worrell, E. (1967) "Australian Snakes: crocodiles, tortoises,
turtles and lizards"
(Angus & Robertson)

Or write to -

The Australian Herpetological Society,
Box R79, Royal Exchange P.O.,
SYDNEY. NSW. 2000

or

The National Parks and Wildlife Service of N.S.W.,
Box N189, Grosvenor Street, Post Office,
SYDNEY. NSW. 2000



A.C.T. HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOC.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME :

ADDRESS :
.....

PHONE NUMBER :

I ENCLOSE \$..... (DO NOT SEND COINS OR BANKNOTES
BY POST PLEASE) AS MEMBERSHIP FEE.

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP (PLEASE TICK)

.....ADULT (\$10.00)

.....JUNIOR/STUDENT/PENSIONER (\$5.00)

