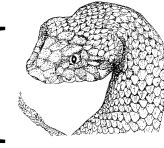


# WASA



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY of AMATEUR HERPETOLOGISTS (Inc)  
(Member of the Australasian Affiliation of Herpetological Societies)

## NEWSLETTER

20 November, 1994  
(2)

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### **WARNING!!** (MITES)

On Sunday 25th September a carpet python (*Morelia spilota imbricata*) was removed from a tree in a house yard at Roleystone. This snake was in poor condition. It was emaciated, dehydrated and had rough, lifting scales. Its poor condition was a result of a massive infestation of mites!

The snake mite is an exotic parasite which has never been too much of a problem in WA. In other states they are common. At worse, they can destroy a snake collection rapidly and at least, they are a persistent nuisance.

Where did the mites on this "hills morph" carpet python come from? Maybe it had been kept in captivity and had been exposed to mites then. This would suggest the keeper had an infestation of mites at the time. The massive number of mites on this single snake suggest this is the case. One

would expect, if it was infected in the wild, that the infestation would not be quite so large - the mite dropping off as the snake moved about would be left behind. In a cage the mites' life cycle is uninterrupted as the host is always available. This leads to a massive infestation as observed in this Perth hills' carpet snake.

To date I am only aware of two outbreaks of mite in WA. In both cases the origin of the mites was the eastern states. They had been brought over inadvertently. In cages in one case and on pet snakes in the other.

Maybe this is an argument for a more lenient CALM policy on the import into WA of reptiles. Refusing people an import licence to bring in legally licensed pet snakes, turtles and lizards allows them no option, if they wish to keep their pet, but to bring it in illegally. This removes any chance of a quarantine period to allow the destruction of external parasitic nasties.

### **Precautions**

For all those people involved in the catch and release of nuisance snakes, or those keeping snakes, I suggest they treat all snakes handled as if they were infected with mites. The following should be carried out at least once on snakes maintained permanently and on all catch and release individuals prior to relocation:-

- a) keep isolated;
- b) house in aquarium-type terrarium with pegboard cover, paper substrate and no water;
- c) hang from the pegboard, with paperclip or similar, a shelltox mini pest strip for two hours each day for three consecutive days;
- d) using a surface spray insecticide, spray the immediate area surrounding the aquarium;
- e) submerge beneath water for several days bag used to transport infected snake. This will drown mites that may have dropped off; and
- f) prior to release allow the snake access to water.

The above treatment should effectively kill all mites and ticks as well as any other external parasites.

## Caution!

Over exposure to the chemicals given off by the pest strip will kill a snake. Early symptoms of poisoning are:-

- i) an inability of the snake to lift its head - moves with head on the substrate as if head is being pushed by body;
- ii) no coordination in body;
- iii) tongue movement erratic; and
- iiii) respiratory problems.

All these symptoms will vanish very quickly if the snake is moved to another aquarium which has not been exposed to the pest strip.

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## STOP PRESS

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### Lancelin Island Skink found on mainland!!!

On Monday 3 October '94, the long weekend notable also for the thrashing the Eagles gave Geelong, an individual of *Ctenotus lancelini* was found not far from the pub in Lancelin. This is exciting stuff as it was believed to be restricted to the island. Robert Browne-Cooper, an amateur herp, was the collector. WASAH representatives, Brad Maryan, Robert Browne-Cooper, Bruce George and Brian Bush along with David Pearson from CALM's Wildlife Research Centre are involved in a survey for this species on the mainland.

This trip was only the second. Its purpose was to establish trap lines and pits. The previous visit was purely to check for potential camp sites, sample sites etc.

We moved from our camp into town to check a site on the mainland immediately adjacent to the island. Brad, Dave and myself were racking - there was a cloud of dust hanging over Lancelin that morning from our efforts. Bruce and Robert were lifting the tussock grass and spinifex clumps and casually kicking through the litter - they were quite laid-back actually, no dust from them. I was so dehydrated from my efforts that I was about to suggest we stop for a beer. It was 8.45am! I looked up and observed Robert examining something and conversing with Dave. They appeared very casual. Too casual! Bruce and I started moving towards them. Brad was approaching from the far side. Suddenly we were rushing towards Robert and Dave. We knew! You ripper!

### Congratulations Robert!

### Good on you Fellows!

Anyone interested in becoming involved in the survey can contact one of the committee members listed at the end of this Newsletter

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## MEMBERSHIP!

We are now taking memberships. \$15 each year. \$20 if you wish to have a copy of the Constitution and Rules posted to you. The \$15 membership includes two

copies of *Herpetofauna* each year plus the WASAH Newsletter. Please complete the attached membership form and forward to the Secretary, 169 Egina Street, Mount Hawthorn WA 6016

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## A new era in WA Herpetology?

With the revised *CALM Policy Statement 22* in which WASAH and amateur herpetology is formally recognised, and now the approval of two reptile orientated wildlife parks, we appear to have reached a milestone concerning amateur herpetology in WA.

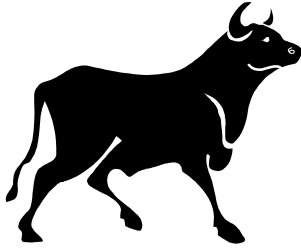
Gayne Doyle of Henley Brook has had approval for his park and is working towards that end.

Anyone travelling the South-west Highway between Armadale and Byford will have noticed the new "Reptile Centre" sign on the western side of the road. It looks good! This is Klaas Gaikhorst's dream coming to fruition. Many hours of work are going into fitting out the place ready for the opening shortly. Congratulations to all involved.

### Good Luck Klaas & Gayne



# HERPTALES



In this section we propose to include all the information about particular people and goings on that most of us would prefer no one knew. Also, if you wish to submit anything to be included here go ahead. It's "tongue in cheek" and all in good fun.

The story goes that a couple of rangers employed by a shire in the "Arrowtimber" area did a course on the removal and relocation of snakes. The objectives of the course were definitely not met. The first snake they were called out to catch caused them considerable concern. Rather than catch it they decided to kill it instead.

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The following poem was authored by someone with the initials DK, I think, and concerns the "Bobtail".

There WASAH young fellow  
called Brad  
Who insisted that CALM was  
bad  
He fought and he fought until  
there was nought  
And that was the end of the fad

There WASAH a young fellow  
called Brad  
Who wanted to kick CALM in  
the guts a tad  
He kicked and he kicked  
until they were licked  
And still there was fun to be  
had

There WASAH a young fellow  
called Brad  
Whose herp-keeping days were  
sad  
CALM hated his guts  
They thought him a clutz  
as well as thinking him mad

There WASAH young fellow  
called Brad  
Only reptiles made him glad  
He wanted a permit  
to keep the odd kermit  
But CALM said no and told  
him to go  
And now the poor boy is a  
hermit

If these limericks are poor  
And tending to bore  
Turn away and look to the west  
unfortunately you'll be staring  
at Bradly  
Still glaring at CALM  
Is the sight with which you'll  
be blessed.

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Two organisations are involved  
with faunal surveys of remnant  
urban bushland.

One is the WAM and the other  
is a private enterprise called  
Crypto. Anyone going for a  
walk in Perth pockets of bush  
need to be careful. There are  
pit-traps in the ground  
everywhere. The kids that  
locate these appear to have a  
predilection for urinating and  
defecating in them. Imagine the  
horrible sight, first thing in the  
morning after a night on the  
"amber antivenom", of a big  
smelly turd in place of a  
delicate *Crenadactylus*. Yuk! It  
could almost put you off herps!  
I believe at one site near  
Dianella the WAM has pit-  
trapped several "new" species:  
snakes that appear very stiff  
and rubber-like and a lizard-  
like beast that could be a  
primitive relic from a previous  
era - a pygmy dinosaur!

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It is a sad day when we have  
lost our sense of humour. It  
does happen though. I recall  
being pulled over by two  
members of the local  
constabulary in Karratha for a  
random breath test. Jokingly I  
remarked "you put your hand  
in my bag and I will blow in  
yours." Do you know! There

facial expression didn't  
change. It was obvious they  
didn't see the funny side, so  
obligingly, I blew in their bag.

I also remember being pulled  
over 200 kilometres south of  
Newman for not wearing a  
seatbelt. I was travelling at 50  
or 60 kph identifying dead and  
live reptiles on the road 200  
kilometres from anywhere  
(Kumerina might just as well  
be a ghost town: you rarely can  
find a sign of life there),  
travelling at 50 or 60 kph  
below the speed limit and these  
two hotdogs, straight out of  
Maylands I reckon, had the  
hide to tell me most people up  
that way die during accidents  
for not wearing seatbelts. There  
are no seatbelts in the back of  
utilities! I might add that after I  
complained to the assistant  
superintendent of traffic some  
discretion was exercised in this  
matter.

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## ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

We hope this Newsletter will  
eventually evolve into  
something much more  
presentable than it is currently.  
We anticipate it as a means to  
let members know what is  
happening out there. We will  
also include a letters section (if  
we ever get a letter) and ask  
you to send in anything you  
would like included. Anything  
that is sent in must be readable.  
That is in a reasonable hand or  
typewritten. Your suggestions  
would also be appreciated

# Journals & Bulletins

## ***HERPETOFAUNA***

For those on the mailing list who do not wish to join WASAH

A worthwhile publication recommended by us for all the readers of this Newsletter. Send a cheque for \$15/one year or \$40/three years to:

The Editor  
PO Box R307  
Royal Exchange  
SYDNEY 2000

## ***MONITOR***

The journal/newsletter and bulletin of the Victorian Herpetological Society. The VHS is the largest herp society in Australia and *Monitor* reflects that. Send \$20 for two issues/year to:

The Secretary  
VHS Inc  
16 Suspension St  
ARDEER, VIC 3022

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## **WASAH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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STONEVILLE 6081**

WASAH is an informal group of people with similar interests - all wishing to keep for private study and "love", frogs, turtles, lizards or snakes!

WASAH joined the Affiliation of Australasian Herpetological Societies in 1984.