



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

NEWSLETTER

30 September, 1995
(5)

INAUGURAL WASAH MEETING

A good number of members turned up at the 'Herp Dungeon' for our first general meeting on 11 August '95. As we gain experience with this type of thing we will iron out the kinks.

Included in this issue is the agenda for our general meetings. These formalities are a bit of a pain but will be followed. Anyway, apart from the damp facility and the 'long-winded' chairperson, it was a good night.

David Knowles kept everyone interested with a terrific slide presentation and talk on photography. The film manufacturers will experience

an increase in sales as we all get out there trying to get the perfect shot. Thank you David, well done!

A questionnaire was handed out to members attending the meeting and is included in this newsletter for those unable to attend. Please fill it in and return it so the society can service your particular needs.

Agenda for general meetings:

1. CONVENE MEETING (record time & date)
2. ATTENDANCE (count members and visitors present & record)
3. APOLOGIES (call for apologies & record)
4. CORRESPONDENCE to be tabled

5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT
6. VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT
7. TREASURER'S REPORT
8. GENERAL BUSINESS
9. EDITOR'S REPORT
10. CALL for any FURTHER BUSINESS including guest speakers
11. ADJOURN MEETING (record time)

Media Coverage

Dr Judy Edwards in her support for WASAH and its objects issued a media release and organised a media conference to publicise the uniquely WA problems for private

herpetologists. This initiated the standard response from CALM's wildlife licensing section. This response must be implanted in the spokesperson under hypnosis or in a microchip during new employee indoctrination. If this is not the case then it suggests that section only employs clones, not individuals that exercise *free thought*. We have heard it word for word before from several different mouths over numerous years.

Response to "Where's the logic"

This is a response to a letter sent in by a recently joined member (see WASAH Newsletter #4 of 30 June 1995).

This member's situation with the Rosen's Snake (*Denisonia fasciata*) reminded me of one a few years ago when I found a Burton's Legless Lizard (*Lialis burtonis*) on the Brookton Highway. I did not hold much hope for the animal if liberated so I applied to CALM for a permit to keep it. As this lizard only feeds on other small reptiles I would also require permission to collect skinks to feed it. The Wildlife Conservation Act does not have provision for such a licence and CALM Policy at the time was against the keeping of lizard-feeding reptiles. I was told to release it regardless of its poor condition.

This highlighted to me the problem CALM has with people keeping lizard-feeding reptiles. They have a 'thing'

about lizard-feeders, except when they are our urban feline friends. The difficulty involved in getting approval to keep rodent (non-native) feeding reptiles is complicated enough, let alone small elapid snakes and other such lizard-feeders. It has been pointed out to CALM's Wildlife Licensing Section that over control of reptile keeping results in no control ie, people go 'underground' rather than hang up their equipment or move interstate. I think part of the problem lies in CALM's attitude to amateur herps.

We cannot be placed in the same 'bag' as law-breakers who are morally wrong. We love what we do with a passion and it is ridiculous to control us as if we had criminal motives. I have felt the frustration caused by the current policy (legislation?) as, no doubt, every other member interested in keeping has. Personally, I cannot blame those who remain 'underground'. It must seem like the only way to fulfil ones interest in keeping herp in WA. However, the only way we can change the draconian system is to crawl out from under the proverbial rock and make a stand. This is a major, if not the main reason WASAH came to be and why the future of herpetology in the west really needs you. We all, as WASAH members, have an important roll: supporting and defending our interest/hobby which is important, both to obtaining knowledge and adding quality to our way of life. It is *important*, and those opposing us are knowingly or

unknowingly perpetuating ignorance and discrimination.

Together, WASAH will make a difference and change government policy which will benefit all concerned in the long run.

RBC

May the force be with us!

The major impediment to herpetology in this state is CALM. Without being too critical of them I will summarise where we are with the 'dark side'.

WA has the highest number of threatened species of herpetofauna. This could be directly related to this state's size or our so-called wildlife protection legislation. Legislation which places too much emphasis on individual animals and all but outlaws a person's positive involvement with these. Hypothetically, let's say I found a couple of South-western Womas crossing the Brand Highway, rescued them from being impregnated into the bitumen and bred them. The last thing I would feel obliged to do is notify CALM. Why? Because they would attempt to turn around my positive move to something sinister and criminal. They can do this because the Wildlife Conservation Act is a *criminal Act* so poorly written it

makes it an offence to be a human in this state. CALM's enforcement mentality will do nothing for conservation, only promote ignorance.

In 1992 CALM revised their policy (Policy Statement 22) on taking, keeping and display of reptiles as a response to pressure by WASAH. To date, as far as I am aware, only 3 amateur licences have been issued since then. The revised policy still retains all the original protectionists' views held by CALM, as well as numerous statements that have no factual basis. Saying that, the changes to the policy were a huge achievement for herpetology in WA.

So, where are we now? To be involved in the keeping aspects of herpetology in WA you have to be dedicated, 'thick-skinned' and very determined. Our cause is a positive one and the benefits far outweigh the negatives postulated by CALM. Our negotiations with that department will be ongoing and, forever optimistic, we aim for a 'amateur friendly' system in the future. The rewards of an interest in herpetology, by way of an increase in a person's self esteem, quality of life and direction, make what we are attempting to achieve worth fighting for. Don't give up!

If a member would like a copy of Policy Statement 22 contact me on (09) 444 6412.

BM

WRITE IT DOWN

If you keep herp in any size, shape or manner or observe it in the wild, if you feed, breed or see anything write it down! Few of us can rely on memory alone (politicians especially) It is important to keep captivity and field notes. The option is yours and it does justify your activities and add a sense of accomplishment when you record something previously unknown.

The articles in *Herpetofauna* would not be available if the authors did not write it down when it happens. Nothing should be omitted. Information on sloughs, feeding frequency, behavioural patterns, unusual behaviour, feeding frequency, medications, treatment for parasitism, etc should be recorded. If you wish to publish your information at a later date you can always do it anonymously. Go to it, put pen to paper and good luck.

BM

Raymond Hoser (member) sent a large letter to us. It was much too large to include here in its entirety. The following are excerpts:

I forward you advance information about my new book, *The Hoser Files*. It will be of interest to WASAH

members. Be mindful of the fact that the book was embargoed until June 5 this year and that there will almost certainly be further attempts to ban or suppress it.

Who am I? I am the author of the controversial best-seller, *Smuggled - The Underground Trade in Australia's Wildlife*, a book that was initially banned in NSW.

On another matter, I strongly urge you all to get the magazine, *The Reptilian*. The latest issues (Vol. 3, No. 4 & 5) have a huge article on death adders - the biggest ever seen. Volume 3 (4) has a WA red death adder on the cover - it is #@\$%&*^? gorgeous!!! To subscribe to this magazine address correspondence to:

Tom Burgess
The Reptilian
22 Firs Close
Hazlemere
High Wycombe
Bucks, HP15-7TF
ENGLAND

or 'phone 01494-812109.

It costs about \$60/year for 12 issues. Also the Sept. '95 issue of the USA magazine, *Reptiles* has a huge article on Pygmy Pythons. This magazine can be ordered through newsagents.

Finally, the Victorian wildlife department decided to do a study on the platypus. They set nets in their study area, went away for about a week and then returned. They had killed by drowning the entire local population. I will not tell

you about the endangered Leadbeater's Possums they also wiped out - that's another story.



Plight of the south-western WOMA

Aspidites ramsayi

It is well documented by several authors that the south-western population of the Woma or Sand Python (*Aspidites ramsayi*) is probably close to extinction. This population may be geographically isolated from other populations and taxonomically distinct. It is critical that we determine its status in the wild and obtain data on its reproductive biology and ecology now.

Very few specimens have turned up during the past 10 years. Therefore the first major hurdle will be locating individuals in the wild. Most specimens found should be retained, while a couple of males can be fitted with transmitters and liberated during the mating period. This can only be determined by observing captive animals and comparing their behaviour with

previous observations of the southern SA Womas. Hopefully, once fitted with transmitters, the males will lead us to other females. Releasing more than a couple back into the wild could be catastrophic if they were chomped on by foxes or similar. We should first find it, breed it and then consider relocation. This approach has been adopted for the Numbat, Chuditch and Western Swamp Turtle.

Proposal: David Pearson has already set the ball rolling by circulating a 'python survey kit' in the areas where the South-western Woma has been sighted. This can be complimented with a systematic search of the wheatbelt areas where the most recent sightings (not many) have occurred. As is the case with all Australian pythons, we expect it to be active at night. Therefore, spotlighting tracks and roads through suitable habitat is probably the best way to go initially.

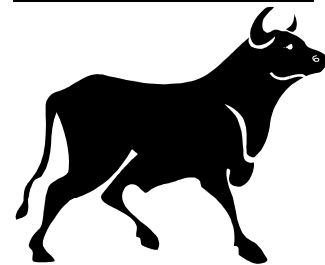
Prior to this we need to have a meeting of the interested people to determine the best areas to target. We will do this by examining the most recent regional vegetation maps that include tracks and roads. Then, for example, if we decide to say concentrate our search in the Badgingarra, Marchagee, Watheroo area, (the most recent records are from here) then a minimum of one team (2 people) can spend nights spotlighting this area. Extra teams reduce the kilometres/team and increase the odds for success.

In the short term we need to initiate discussion on this and find out who is interested in getting involved. **If you are!**

Telephone
Brad Maryan on
444 6412
or after October

Brian Bush on
295 3007

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.

In *WASAH Newsletter* No. 3, I promised an Identification Key on roadkilled herps. Well I didn't forget, here it is!

Don't forget your hammer and chisel. *Snakes are great but pancakes are better.*

WARNING!
Do not read the following if you have a weak stomach.

Beerbottle's Key to Squashed Reptile Families

(applicable to 18-wheelers only)

1. Entrails protrude from all orifices; if close enough at time of impact makes *popping* sound (like small explosive); skin usually bloody and moist; all limbs broken and mangled.....FROG

Entrails hardly protrude; makes *squishing*, not popping sound; skin maybe bloody, but usually dry; limbs not mangled.....2
2. Separation (when fresh) from bitumen difficult, chisel usually required.....3

Separation (when fresh) from bitumen easy, chisel rarely required.....5
3. Hard to spot because of small, short body; bitumen sample always comes away with animal.....GECKO

Not as hard to spot due to more elongate form; bitumen sample may or may not come away with animal.....4
4. Comes away from bitumen in several pieces (supa glue does not work); tail continues to wriggle all over road; entrails short; at moment of impact animal either in line or across; no noticeable odour present.....LEGLESS LIZARD

Comes away from bitumen in one piece; tail does not continue to wriggle after impact; entrails long; at moment of impact animal always in line (they don't see it coming); tremendously disgusting odour present, reminiscent of Brad's feet in thongs, at site of impact.....BLIND SNAKE

5. Although dead, looks almost alive (as if asleep) due to toughness of skin; entrails rarely obvious.....6

Although dead, looks dead; well and truly flattened, bludgeoned and entrails everywhere.....7

6. Hemipenes always absent; entrails rarely protrude from mouth; rarely make good mounts.....DRAGON

Hemipenes always present, even in females entrails protrude from cloacal region resembling hemipenes; entrails always protrude from mouth; usually make good mounts after a cut, tuck and compressed air hose up cloaca.....MONITOR

7. Fangs present (*Caution:* always do as I do. With large jigger upon dead animal's neck, take extremely long, long-nosed pliers and remove fangs. If head mangled avoid contact with bitumen in bare feet).....VENOMOUS SNAKE

Fangs absent (*Caution:* always do as I do. Jigger the bloody thing anyway. It is good practise, and dead beasts are the only ones I jigger).....SKINK

8. Yet to see one dead or alive; no data available.....PYTHON

MEMBERSHIP!

\$15 each year. \$20 if you wish to have a copy of the Constitution and Rules posted to you. The \$15 membership includes annual subscription to *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

The NEWSLETTER

For the benefit of all *WASAH* readers we ask you to send in anything you would like included. Articles sent in must be readable. That is in a reasonable hand or typewritten. Your suggestions would also be appreciated, so don't be shy, put pen to paper.



AGM Meeting

The *WASAH* annual general meeting will be at 12 noon on Sunday 5th November at Lake Leschenaultia.
(see over)

The day will be a '*meet the authors*' meeting. The book, *Reptiles and Frogs of the Perth Area*, published by UWA Press, is a state of the art work that will no doubt win several book awards. Members will have the opportunity to purchase autographed copies. All four authors will be present to answer any of your questions.

It will be a "bring your own drink & meat". If you want one, BBQ facilities are available.

The formalities will be kept to a minimum (less than our inaugural meeting), as is the nature of the executive committee.

WASAH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President/Editor: Brian Bush
(09) 295 3007
Vice-President: Brad Maryan
(09) 444 6412
Secretary: Robert Browne-Cooper
(09) 445 2409
Treasurer: Dave Robinson

Address all correspondence related to this newsletter to:

The Editor
9 Birch Place
STONEVILLE 6081

Journals & Bulletins

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

HERPETOFAUNA

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

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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 \$25 for two issues/year to:

The Secretary
VHS Inc
16 Suspension St
ARDEER, VIC 3022

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Hawkesbury Herpetological Society

The Secretary
PO Box 2
WHALAN, NSW 2770

Cape York Herpetological Society

The Secretary
PO Box 114
PALMCOVE, QLD 4879

*

Orana Herpetological Society

841 Ridge Road, COOKS
GAP (via MUDGE) NSW
2850

*

Victorian Association of Amateur Herpetologists

222 Flinders Avenue, LARA
VICTORIA 3212
Membership: \$20 per year.

We wish the above societies good luck! They have been included on our mailing list so their members can keep abreast of what is going on in the west.

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 1994.

REPTILES & FROGS of DRYANDRA STATE FOREST

Dryandra State Forest is a terrific place located about 160km south-east of Perth near Narrogin. A combination of open woodlands (consisting of mainly Wandoo and Powderbark), granite and laterite outcrops, Mallett plantations and heathlands make the area a rich haven for wildlife. This area is well known for its Numbats and Brush-tailed Bettongs or Woylies as well as the richness of its bird life. WASAH supports wholeheartedly the fox baiting program called Operation Foxglove which has allowed an increase in the local Carpet Python and Death Adder populations. The area is a popular destination for naturalists and accommodation is available.

This list has been compiled from the following sources: **Western Australian Naturalists' Club**, members have visited the area over many years; **Dr Tony Friend**, WA Wildlife Research Centre, Woodvale worked extensively on Numbat research in the area; and **Ken Youngson & Jan Henry**, Ninnox Wildlife Consulting after surveying the area in October, 1990.

Frogs

Crinia pseudinsignifera **Granite Froglet**

Found under granite rocks on outcrops and at dam near settlement area during winter.

Heleioporus albopunctatus **Spotted Burrowing Frog**

Common on tracks at night in all woodland areas with sandy soils. Also at dam as above.

Heleioporus barycragus **Yellow-flanked Burrowing Frog**

Patchily distributed throughout the area.

Limnodynastes dorsalis **Pobblebonk or Banjo Frog**

Common in areas of sandy soils, seen on tracks at night as well as at dam.

Pseudophryne guentheri **Guenther's Toadlet**

Found at dam and occasionally found beneath rocks during the day.

Litoria moorei **Western Green Tree Frog**

Found at dam in peripheral vegetation.

Geckos

Crenadactylus o. ocellatus **Clawless Gecko**

Common beneath rocks and logs throughout the area.

Diplodactylus g. granariensis **Wheatbelt Ground Gecko**

As above.

Oedura reticulata **Reticulated Velvet Gecko**

Mainly found on Wandoo and Powderbark trees and occasionally inside cottages at settlement.

Phyllodactylus marmoratus **Marbled Gecko**

Found at settlement, under bark on trees and sometimes beneath granite rocks.

Underwoodisaurus milii **Barking Gecko**

Common beneath rocks and logs throughout the area.

Legless Lizards

Aprasia pulchella **Granite Worm Lizard**

Found beneath granite rocks on outcrops.

Delma f. fraseri **Fraser's Legless Lizard**

Found beneath rocks and dead vegetation in woodland areas.

Lialis burtonis **Burton's Legless Lizard**

Seen active during the day amongst low vegetation and occasionally beneath cover.

Pygopus lepidopodus **Southern Scalyfoot**

Recorded from closed heath areas with emergent mallee trees.

Dragons

Ctenophorus ornatus **Ornate Crevice Dragon**

On granite outcrops throughout the area.

Moloch horridus **Thorny Devil**

Occasionally seen on tracks in sandy areas. Reaches its southern limit of range in this area.

Pogona m. minor **Western Bearded Dragon**

Common on dead timber and tracks throughout the area.

Skinks

Cryptoblepharus plagiocephalus **Fence or Sun Skink**

Common on dead and living trees and logs throughout the area.

Ctenotus labillardieri **Reg-legged Skink**

Found beneath granite rocks on outcrops.

Ctenotus schomburgkii **Barred Wedge-snouted Ctenotus**

Recorded from Mallett plantation with Powderbark saplings. Reaches its southern limit of range in this area.

Egernia kingii **King's Skink**

Found beneath granite rocks on outcrops and in pile of corrugated iron near dam.

Egernia multiscutata bos **Southern Sand Skink**

Recorded from closed heath with emergent mallee on sandy laterite gravel.

Egernia napoleonis **South-western Crevice Skink**

Found beneath granite on outcrops and inside dead blackboys and timber.

Eremiascincus richardsoni **Banded Skink**

Patchily distributed throughout the area.

Lerista distinguenda **Darling Range Burrowing Skink**

Common beneath logs, leaf litter and dead vegetation throughout the area.

Menetia greyii **Common Dwarf Skink**

Commonly seen active in leaf litter and low vegetation throughout the area.

Tiliqua r. rugosa **Bobtail**

Commonly seen on tracks throughout the area.

Monitor Lizards

Varanus flavirufus **Common Sand Monitor**

Seen on tracks during warmer months.

Snakes

Ramphotyphlops australis **Southern Blind Snake**

Found beneath rocks and logs throughout the area.

Ramphotyphlops pinguis **Fat Blind Snake**

A single specimen found inside ant nest beneath large rock.

Morelia spilota imbricata **Southern Carpet Python**

On tracks during day and night and occasionally beneath cover. One beneath piece of corrugated iron near dam.

Acanthophis antarcticus **Southern Death Adder**

Patchily distributed throughout the area. Most sightings have been on laterite outcrops with substantial leaf litter. One found by WA Nats' member when he accidentally urinated on it at the base of a tree.

Pseudonaja a. affinis **Dugite**

Seen on tracks during the day and occasionally beneath cover.

Rhinoplocephalus gouldii **Gould's Hooded Snake**

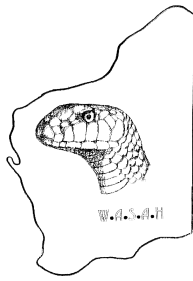
Common under rocks, logs and inside dead blackboy stumps throughout the area.

Rhinoplocephalus nigriceps **Black-backed Snake**

As with previous species.

Any fauna list is by no means complete. If you record any additional species please notify us. It all adds to the knowledge base and our understanding of an area - plus it is good fun.

BM



169 Egina Street, Mount Hawthorn WA 6016

WASAH Questionnaire

To allow the direction WASAH needs to follow to be anticipated, the executive requests your input and comments by filling out this Questionnaire. Any information you divulge will be kept confidential - the 'Dark Side' will not get their hands on it. Thanks for your assistance.

Newsletter - How frequent do you think it should be published? Circle one of the following

1/yr 2/yr 3/yr 4/yr more/yr =

Meetings - How frequent do you want them?

1/yr 2/yr 3/yr 4/yr more/yr =

Interests -What are your herpetological interests?

field work	keeping	taxonomy	photography	frogs	
LIZARDS	geckos	pygopods	dragons	monitors	skinks
SNAKES	blind snakes	colubrids	pythons	elapids	sea snakes

OTHER (please state).....

That is about it. Less painful (for everyone except BM) than a bite from a Master's Snake.

Comments/ideas -

Name.....**Date**.....