LITERATURE

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A Simple and Effective Treatment for 'Scale Rot'; B. Howard. The Herpetile, 1985, Vol. 10 (3): 99-100.

In the winter of 1984 the author bought seven *Python regius*, which were all severely affected with scale rot. In all seven cases the entire venter was necrotic and covered with decomposing brown material. In some areas the extent of the damage was so severe as to expose bone. The affected areas were swabbed with hydrogen peroxide (10 vols), dried and then swabbed with a solution of gentian violet. This was repeated daily until the condition had cleared. One snake was healed after the first slough. By the following slough all but one of the snakes had recovered. The remaining specimen was healed thirty five days after the third slough.

Natural history of Prairie Rattlesnakes (*Crotalus viridis viridis*); B.M. Graves, M.B. King & D. Duvall. The Herpetile, 1986, Vol. 11 (1): 5-10.

The geographic distribution of prairie rattlesnakes ranges from southern Canada to northern Mexico, and from the Pacific coast to western Nebraska. The authors made a study of this species in Wyoming. Emergence of snakes from hibernation in spring is triggered by increasing ground temperature. Upon emergence, males and non-pregnant females (rattlesnakes are viviparous) begin migration towards summer foraging areas, which can be up to 17 km from the place of hibernation. Pregnant females usually do not embark on long foraging migrations, but instead move much shorter distances to areas called birthing rookeries. There, several pregnant females congregate, often sharing the same hole beneath large rocks. How do pregnant females locate these same rocks year after year? The authors hypothesize that odours from females and neonates of the previous year are detected by newly arriving females. If such odours are present, then that site must have previously provided a suitable microenvironment for embryonic development and parturition. Hence, it is probably a good choice for such activities in any current year. Also the chance that neonates of a given litter will be killed by predators decrease proportionately by the number of other litters available for predation. The rookeries are also relatively nearby the hibernation places. The rookeries will probably also offer enough suitable prey for the youngsters.

The Night Adders of Southern Africa Genus *Causus*; Roger K. Pewtress. The Herptile, 1986, Vol. 11 (1): 17-21.

The author gives a summary of the differences between the two species *Causus rhombeatus* and *Causus defilippii*. Both species usually eat toads and they prefer one large toad to a number of small toads. The venom of these snakes is cytotoxic and causes local swelling. It is not considered to be of danger to healthy humans.

Experiences with King Cobras in captivity; John Foden. The Herpetile, 1986, Vol. 11 (1): 24-28.

The author describes how he takes care of his King Cobras, *Ophiophagus hannah*. He bought his first King Cobra in 1968. At that time the author lived in a small five by three metre wooden hut, which contained a bed, cooker, stereo, television and about thirty of the most venomous snakes known to science. In this maniac's paradise also lived a Blue and Yellow Macaw, a Siamese cat and several small crocodilians. Because the King Cobra is specialised in eating snakes, several species were offered. The King Cobra however refused to eat. A grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) even lived a pretty comfortable life in the King Cobra's terrarium. Every time the author tried to remove the grass snake it hid in the coils of the cobra. It lived in the terrarium for about six months! When the author offered
a gecko, this prey was accepted. From that moment on the author offered dead geckos stuffed with raw meat and dead mice.

Captive breeding of the Mozambique Spitting Cobra (*Naja mossambica*) at the Poole Serpentarium; J.G. Lilly. The Herpetile, 1986, Vol. 11 (3): 112-113.

The two snakes measure 1.20 m and are fed on mice and chicks. Feeding occurs every ten days and the snakes will eat as much as they can. During the summer the temperature is about 35°C by day and 26°C at night. During the winter the temperature is respectively 26°C and 20°C. In April 1983 the female became very aggressive. On 1 May she laid eight large eggs (4x2 cm) under a piece of cork bark. Six eggs were fertile and were incubated in cotton wool that was sprayed (on a daily basis) with tepid water, at a temperature of 26°C. Four eggs hatched on 19 July. The youngsters were very aggressive and sprayed venom with great vigour but little accuracy. The two other eggs hatched the day after. Two days after their first slough they were fed pink mice.

Some notes based on observations of the Ottoman viper (*Vipera xanthina xanthina*, Gray, 1949) in the Greek islands of Leros, Dodecanes (south-east Aegean) and Chios (east Aegean); Achilles Dimitropoulos. The Herptile, 1987, Vol. 12 (2): 72-81.

The author gives a detailed account of his experiences with *Vipera xanthina xanthina* on Leros and Chios. He describes the biotopes and behaviour of this viper. Some of his observations are described very minuscully, mentioning the exact time and weather conditions.

Breeding the *Boa constrictor*; Jack Ridell, The herptile, 1987, Vol. 12 (3): 9192.

A pair of *Boa constrictor* are housed in a terrarium of 3x2.5x2.3 m.The floor is lined with newspaper and it is heated with two low wattage wall mounted heaters to provide a thermostatically controlled temperature of 26-30°C. The photoperiod is set to 14 hrs day and 10 hrs night. Mating took place from February until mid March. The female refused to feed after mid March and the temperature was raised to 32°C. On 25 May 1986 the female aborted 20 young and three unfertilised ova. All of the young had skin pigment markings and were fairly well developed but none of them survived. On 5 November 1986 mating was again observed and on 10 April 1987 29 healthy young were born. The sloughed seven days after birth and started feeding almost immediately. They accepted medium and adult mice. An effective way to induce feeding was to place the mouse on a branch lower than the young snake and about 15 cm away.