snake breeder

The International Newsletter for Snake Enthusiasts

BUMPER 16 PAGE ISSUE

* **A TRULY NATIONAL HERPETOLOGICAL MAGAZINE**

  Paul Hobson suggests a new publication produced jointly by UK herpetological societies

* **EXPERIENCES WITH BURMESE PYTHONS, PART III**

  The final part of Mark Hatcher's article sees the arrival of eighteen healthy hatchlings

* **STARTING WITH A CORN SNAKE**

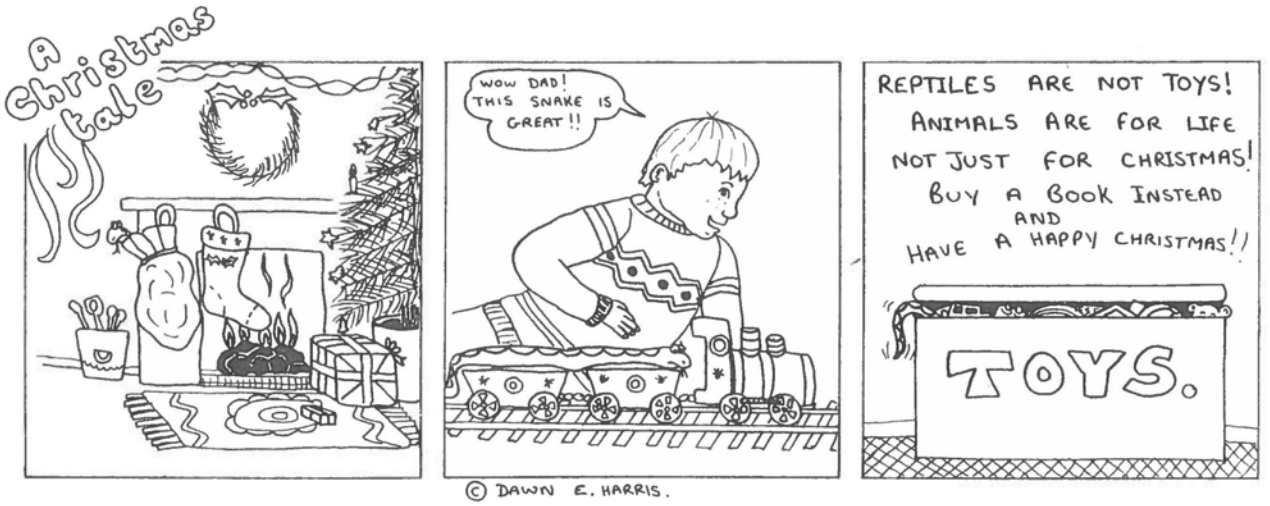
  Jon Nicholls wisely chose a Corn Snake as a suitable animal to start with but found his snake preferred to live under the floor rather than in its vivarium

* **Plus INFO, MAILBOX AND BOOK REVIEW**

JERRY COLE

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Snake Breeder

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We always need articles and news items for Snake Breeder. The number of people keeping reptiles is growing rapidly and many newcomers to the hobby may benefit from your advice, experience or tips. Don't worry about minor points such as speeling or . punctuation - we'll sort that out. In return for your contribution we'll send you five free copies of the newsletter containing your article. Your favourite aunt or uncle will view you in a new light when you present them with a copy of Snake Breeder containing your work. We look forward to hearing from you - soon!

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NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS & RENEWALS

Welcome to the following readers who have recently subscribed to Snake Breeder or renewed their subscriptions:

M Ward, R O'Brien, A Bickerton, J Bryant, K Loader, L Evans, J Nicholls, G Clarke, S Bristow & E Cole.

Snake Keeper Back Issues

We can still supply back issues of our previous publication, Snake Keeper. If you would like a list of contents and prices telephone (0494) 722769 or write to Snake Keeper Publishing (Back Issues), 159 Stanley Hill, Amersham, Bucks HP7 9EY.

A Truly National Herpetological Magazine

by Paul Hobson

Introduction

The present situation regarding herpetological publications (magazines, newsletters etc) is a very sad one indeed. Dotted across the country are a number of small informal publications from various groups/societies with a few more formal group or magazine type productions. A large majority of these are struggling for articles and the content is often sporadic and weak. This is not a good situation for many herpetologists. Not only are these often very disappointing but it can become expensive to subscribe to a number of them together.

What better than to collectively bring together the best practice and information contained in all these to one high quality, informative magazine. There is no need for local groups to lose their identity and get swallowed up; they can maintain themselves as before but get the additional benefits that this publication will bring.

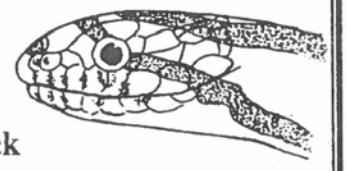
I have set out overleaf a list of suggestions; these are in no way prescriptive or in order but are designed to bring about serious discussion in an attempt to get the whole idea off the ground.



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1. The editorial team is composed of representatives from the various groups that have come together.

2. The magazine could replace local newsletters and publications by including all the essential information of all groups involved.

3. In a similar manner the magazine could be sent free to members of each group (thus determining a set level of production), the subscription of each society being adjusted by that society to cover the costs.

4. Because of a much larger readership and thus potential writers, the magazine will be much more substantial, informed, open to advertising, and thus should generate an increased readership and, therefore, much higher quality, etc.

5. The magazine will reflect all the best practice of all groups plus a range of standard features, colour photographs and should be appealing to <u>all</u> herpetologists from beginner through experienced keeper to professional.

6. Each group could submit for each copy a range of material, eg. local news/ events, one article, breeding news, zoo news, conservation news, thus guaranteeing a 'local' flavour for <u>each</u> group plus a substantial volume of information.

7. To get over the problem of herpetologists finding it difficult to contribute articles a series of questionnaires could be used to generate vital information, for example a standard form for breeding. This can be distributed by each group to its members, filled in, collected and sent in. If this can be done on a national level the magazine would be a world leader in breeding news and constantly reflect changing ideas and successes.

8. The magazine can be distributed to members by each group, thus reducing postage costs.

9. All profit after production costs can either be used to pay for future articles, distributed to local groups taking part or donated to conservation efforts for reptiles.

A possible layout and content could be:-
Colour cover
Editorial (done by each group on a rotation basis)
A number of feature articles
Local news for each member group
Breeding news - information collated from completed questionnaires
Zoo news - a series of articles about each of Britain's zoos; history, reptiles kept, breeding, IUCN specialisation
Conservation news/articles - habitats, threats, etc
Colour centre spread
Animal trade news
Advertisements - trade and members
Book reviews (both new and 'classic')
Product reviews

All the above are supplied by the herpetologists, members, etc, of each group and thus the content will reflect both national and local news and articles. Surely this is the only serious and sensible way forward!

Experiences with Burmese Pythons, Part III

by Mark Hatcher

On the 15th of May I noticed a large indentation in one of the eggs. By the 18th of May the top of the shell had collapsed by almost half the height of the egg. Several other eggs were starting to do the same. On the evening of the 18th I decided to remove the eggs and place them in an incubator. This decision was taken for three reasons. Firstly I feared the eggs were drying out too quickly and collapsing. Secondly I was concerned about the female's health; her skin was now in poor condition, her mouth was gaping (this I realised later was due to the skin becoming excessively tight and stopping the mouth from closing) and she was wheezing slightly. All these problems were exacerbated by the newspaper substrate which was totally sodden. The third factor was the cage, made out of chipboard, which was starting to disintegrate due to the high humidity.

The only information I could find on removing the eggs was DON'T. This appeared to be based mainly on the grounds of personal safety. In the event things went quite smoothly. Having covered the mother's head with a piece of cloth, I was able to grasp her firmly behind the head. I then had to remove her, trying not to disturb the eggs. This proved more difficult as she was attempting to bite all through this operation. Eventually she was removed to another cage without injury to either party.

The eggs were then carefully moved to a pre-heated incubator and partially buried in damp vermiculite. The eggs were not turned at all and were placed as they had been found. The temperature in the incubator was kept between 31° and 34° C. Humidity was kept in excess of 85% by spraying once every other day. The eggs that had started to shrivel were buried more than the others in damp vermiculite to try to stop them drying out too much.

On the 22nd of May two eggs appeared to be going mouldy (light blue, opaque blotches started forming on the eggshell). By the 28th of May a third egg started to look suspect. The following day two of the eggs were removed as they appeared to be getting worse. The third egg was left as it appeared no worse (this egg later hatched, much to my surprise). The two eggs that had been removed were opened up and were found to contain yolk turning to a delicate shade of green. This was accompanied by an evil smell which lingered for many hours after the eggs had been thrown out. No embryos could be seen.

On the 27th of May mould was seen growing on several eggs. These could not be removed as they were stuck to other eggs. The mould was therefore removed and the shells wiped with a dilute solution of Savlon. Despite the mouldy eggs being present the incubator did not smell until the eggs hatched.

A split was seen in one of the eggs on the 4th of July. Other eggs started to split and later the next day heads were seen protruding from some of the eggs. On the morning of the 6th

two hatchlings had emerged and these were removed to a vivarium. Both hatchlings were extremely active and struck at everything in their vicinity. Most of the hatchlings took about two days between splitting their eggs and emerging (normally at night). The last hatchling emerged on the 16th of July.

On the 7th of July an egg that had split two days earlier was opened as no signs of movement had been seen (compared with much movement in similar eggs). This was done by carefully enlarging the split with a scalpel. When the hatchling inside did not respond to stimulus a hole was cut in the egg and a fully formed, dead hatchling was found. This particular egg was turgid and filled completely with a thick, viscous fluid. I presumed that, because of the vigorous movements made by this hatchling two days previously and the absence of any physical deformity, it had been unable to push its head through the shell and had drowned in the fluid. Two more eggs that were similar in appearance (one had a split in it) were opened and found to contain fully formed, dead hatchlings. [If anyone has had a similar experience or can suggest other possible causes of death I would interested to hear from them.]

Worried by these three fatalities I decided to cut small holes in the remaining eggs. Of the ten remaining eggs, three were filled with fluid. In order to create an airspace in the egg a small amount of fluid was removed with a syringe. Having made sure the hatchling was alive the hole was covered with damp tissue. The other seven eggs had all shrivelled to some extent and these, when opened, had internal airspaces. All ten eggs contained live hatchlings and nine of the ten survived. In retrospect I think that the opening of all of the remaining eggs was wrong. Next year (if I get any eggs) I will drain those that are bloated as soon as a split occurs or movement is seen and I will leave those that have shrivelled to hatch naturally.

In all 32 eggs were laid. Three were obviously infertile, two went mouldy before hatching, six contained small, partially decomposed embryos at hatching, three contained dead, fully formed hatchlings and 18 contained healthy hatchlings.

At present twelve have sloughed and ten of these have are feeding on frozen day-old chicks (rats and mice are refused). Hopefully I will have learned some useful lessons this year and I look forward to breeding from both females next year.



Hear Ye!

Hear Ye!

Hear Ye!

The Publishers of Snake Breeder wish to announce that there will be no increase in subscription fees for 1991 and to thank everyone who has supported Snake Breeder during 1990.

Merry Christmas &
A Happy New Year ☺

Starting with a Corn Snake

by Jon Nicholls

As a biology teacher I have long had a keen interest in all types of animals but the most fascinating to me have always been snakes. The thought of owning one myself had been at the back of my mind but it was not until I visited the Southsea Show in 1988 that the real possibility became apparent. At the show were several specimens owned by the Portsmouth Reptile and Amphibian Society. After talking to several of their members I decided to join their club and attended a meeting in August. At that meeting, after talking to several experienced snake keepers, I decided to get a Corn Snake, the classic beginners' snake. A member of the society had several hatchlings and as soon as they started feeding he said I could have one. That would be a few weeks away so I had time to sort out the accommodation.

I had been told that you could not really buy a vivarium so I set about building one from a picture I found in the Salamander book 'A Petkeeper's Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians' by David Alderton. The vivarium measured 100 x 50 x 50cm and was made from chipboard with a pair of glass sliding doors. I used a Grolux striplight for the main light and a spotlight at one end for daytime heat. Under the sliding floor tray at the same end as the spotlight I put a heatpad and I used woodchips as a substrate. With a couple of branches for climbing and a large piece of bark for the animal to hide under the vivarium was complete.

At the September meeting of the society I picked up a female Carolina/Florida Corn Snake (*Elaphe guttata guttata*). She was about the size of a pencil and looked a bit lost in the vivarium. To feed her I put her into a small plastic box. She fed easily on tiny pink mice. She grew rapidly at every slough and her colour changed from dark brown/orange to orange/red. I intended to try breeding her so later that year I bought a male from a Dorset snake breeder. This male, although very healthy, was a little bit aggressive and as I wanted to be able to show him to the children at school, without fear, in the end I reluctantly had to replace him with another snake. The replacement male was a lot smaller than the female but he fed well and is now about the same size. He was a Carolina Corn Snake and is a lot redder than the female who is more orange in overall appearance.

The snakes were both kept at the same temperature throughout the winter, about 30° C at the hot end of the vivarium and 25° C at the cool end. At night the temperature would drop by 10° C until the heat pad came on. (The heat pad is controlled by an aquarium thermostat situated in the roof of the vivarium.) The light was fixed on a 14:10 cycle in the beginning and I had every intention of reducing this as winter came on but somehow it never happened so they have always been in a perpetual summer situation.

The thought of breeding the snakes was at the back of my mind but I did not think they were yet ready. It seemed that in order to be successful they

had to hibernate and I had not got this organised as yet. I changed jobs in September 1989 and, after several months of being unable to sell our house, we moved in February 1990. The snakes went in the only available room (our bedroom) as the kitchen was being rebuilt and the dust downstairs was terrible. The only problem that this created was the smell which we eventually traced to some mice that had defrosted when we moved. Once these had been disposed of the smell disappeared.

We often got both snakes out to handle them. The male is very docile and has never ever jumped when handled. The female is a little jumpy when first picked up, especially around the neck but she soon settles down. I had been feeding her while holding her for some months and she did this quite happily, often striking at the dead mouse I would manoeuvre in front of her. She started to become increasingly less friendly and I wondered why. She was also going off her food and it occurred to us that she might be gravid. By comparing her abdomen with that of the male there was no doubt, she was getting bigger! She was also getting more and more restless. She did not usually move around much during the day, mainly being active at dawn and dusk, but now she was active at all sorts of times. She would push her nose up and down against the glass and was always climbing up and down the branches. I had been told that about ten days after she sloughed she would lay her eggs so when she shed her skin we started the countdown. We kept checking her at regular intervals to make sure she was alright, usually first thing in the morning, once during the day and last thing at night.

About a week after she sloughed I was making the usual night-time check but I could not see her. I opened the vivarium's sliding doors but she was not there. I checked under all the woodchips and in the plant pot but it was obvious you could not hide a 3' snake that easily. Where had she gone? I had checked the vivarium at about 4 o'clock that afternoon and all had been well. If I had left the doors slightly open maybe she would have been able to slide them apart sufficiently to escape, who knows. All that was important was to find her. My wife, Suzanne, and I started looking in the bedroom in all the obvious places. Then we moved to the spare room which was still full of unopened boxes which offered plenty of places to hide. After a thorough search there was still no sign of the missing snake. Then we turned our attention to the bathroom but still without success. If she had gone downstairs she could be anywhere. We looked briefly but it was beginning to seem hopeless. After about three hours searching we gave up and spent a very restless night trying to sleep.

The next day we repeated all the previous night's searches but still could not find her. I thought that she may have gone into the bathroom where she could have got behind the bath and then possibly under the floorboards. I got down on my hands and knees and thought that I could smell her so I removed the bath panel and listened. I heard a rustling and then from behind the skirting board I saw her moving

slowly forward. I made a grab for her but she just went into reverse and disappeared. We were relieved to know where she was but how would we get her out? I did think about pulling off the skirting board but when I considered the mess it would make and the possible damage to our snake it didn't seem a sensible thing to do. We decided to be patient and wait; she would have to come out eventually, wouldn't she? She didn't! Instead she disappeared again. By using a mirror and a torch it was possible to see behind the skirting board. Her head was visible for a few hours and then it disappeared.

The next day we again contemplated removing the skirting boards but, on studying the corner of the bathroom, we decided she may have moved under the floorboards, so we decided to lift them instead. Once the boards had been lifted it became apparent that the space below the skirting board led to the hot water pipes which had recently been channelled out of the bathroom, through the wall, and into the space above what had been an outside toilet but was now part of the kitchen. It had been filled with roof insulation and contained hot pipes, the perfect place for a snake to lay her eggs. It had also been sealed with plasterboard and therefore was impossible to gain access to without making some pretty expensive holes. The options were fairly limited, yet again.

Although the snake was not interested in food I put a mouse next to the pipe channel in the hope that it might attract her. We left her to it, only occasionally checking to see if she was there. I had some floor boards to mend in the spare bedroom and so I got on with that. After a period of hammering I checked in the bathroom and found her head poking out. I moved closer and slowly pulled the mouse away from the hole and she followed the mouse. When about one-third of her body was out she started to turn around so I took a chance and grabbed her. All I managed to grab hold of was her neck and the risk of damaging her if I pulled too hard made me let go.

We didn't see the snake again that day. It was now three days since she escaped and we were concerned that she would get lost in the roof space and die of dehydration. The next day I tried banging on the floor to attract her and put a fresh mouse by the pipes. We checked again and she reappeared down the hole but was not interested in the mouse this time. I wondered if a familiar smell might bring her out so I placed the plant pot from the vivarium, which contained a Devil's Ivy, next to the hole. When I came back after 15 minutes I found that about one-third of her body was out of the hole and she was inspecting the plant. I think she was probably very thirsty. I moved towards her but realised that I could not pull her out by the neck. She turned round and started to head back into the roof space but she did so around an electric cable which meant she was exposing the rest of her body so I grabbed her again. This time I managed to grab the centre of her body and her tail which left her holding on by her head. I didn't pull very hard, I just maintained an even pressure and waited. She released the contents of her digestive system over my hands

but I was not about to let go. Then she started to weaken and come out and in a matter of seconds was free of the hole. She turned round and spat at me with rage but I was so relieved to have her back that I did not mind.

We put her back into the vivarium and she almost immediately went to the water bowl and took a very long drink. She was obviously quite thirsty. The date on which we had expected her to lay her eggs had passed and we wondered if her rough treatment had damaged her eggs. Perhaps she was eggbound! One of the causes of this can be a physical trauma which is exactly what being pulled out of a hole by your lower body when it is full of eggs is. The snake was still restless so I put an icecream container of sphagnum moss in the vivarium but she did not seem to like it so I put the moss in a larger box and this time she went into it. The next day Suzanne saw her laying eggs while I was at work, nineteen days after she sloughed. She laid 12 eggs which were all stuck together in one mass.

I put them into some damp vermiculite in an icecream container and placed it in an incubator normally used for chicken eggs. The temperature was set for 28° C. The female snake looked devastated; she was very thin, pale (like before a slough) and lethargic. The effort of laying 12 eggs had obviously taken its toll. She would not eat but in a few days her eyes clouded and, four days later, she sloughed her skin. She was now more active and after a bit of hesitancy she took a couple of medium-sized mice. Her scales were apparently damaged in a few places as it was possible to see her pink skin between them on her neck and back but this corrected itself after the next slough and she is now back to her old self.

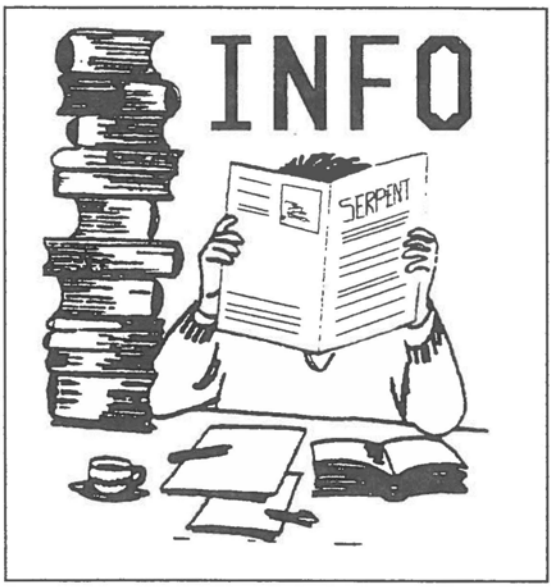
Allowing seventy days for the eggs to hatch they were due on the 16th of August. After approximately two weeks some mould appeared on one of the eggs and it deflated a bit so I peeled it away from the others and removed it. As the weeks passed five more eggs developed mould and were removed. On the 14th of August a head was seen to be poking out of one of the eggs which were now about twice their original size. Within 12 hours the young snake had emerged from its shell and it was placed in a small plastic container in the main vivarium. Over the next three days, one by one, the snakes hatched and they are all now installed in their new home. The male and female are back to their old inquisitive selves although they show no interest in their offspring.

After having success with the perfect beginners' snake I would certainly recommend them. They are as fascinating now as they ever were and the experience of breeding, if a little fraught at times, was very rewarding.

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SNAKES IN PRINT

BHS Bulletin
No. 33 Autumn 1990 (23 x 15cm)
ISSN 0260 5805
The British Herpetological Society
c/o Zoological Society of London,
Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY

Field Notes on Some Reptiles from Southwest Chiapas, Mexico by Peter J Stafford. (5 pages.)

A brief account of the crocodiles, lizards and snakes observed during an expedition to the state of Chiapas, southern Mexico. Snakes observed were *Conophis vittatus, Masticophis mentovarius mentovarius, Oxybelis fulgidus, Pituophis lineaticollis gibsoni, Spilotes pullatus mexicanus, Micrurus browni browni, Porthidium (Bothrops) godmani* and *Porthidium (Bothrops) nummifer occiduus.*

A Report on Herpetological Observations in Afghanistan by Richard Clark. (23 pages.)

Report on an expedition to Afghanistan in early 1968 resulting in a collection of over 1000 specimens belonging to 58 taxa: four amphibians, one tortoise, 41 lizards and 12 snakes. The snakes found were *Eryx tataricus, Coluber karelini, Coluber rhodorachis, Lytorhynchus maynardi, L. ridgewayi, Psammophis lineolata, P. schokari, Ptyas mucosus, Xenochrophis piscator, Naja oxiana, Leptotyphlops blanfordi, Echis carinatus* and *Eristocophis macmahoni.* Of the two examples found of the latter snake, one was dead, apparently trampled by a camel train that had passed overnight!

The Herpetological Journal
Volume 1 Number 11 Dec. 1990
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The British Herpetological Society
c/o Zoological Society of London,
Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY

A Late Pleistocene Herpetofauna from Bell Cave, Alabama by J Alan Holman, Gordon Bell and James Lamb. (9 pages.)

If you have problems getting to sleep at night and lie awake for hours wondering what species of snake were crawling around northwestern Alabama between 12,000 and 26,000 years ago then ponder no more; your sleepless nights are at an end. The Bell Cave deposit (a 26.2 m horizontal crawlway ending in a large 4 by 11.9m oval, pit-like room) is located in a bluff next to the Tennessee River. Of the 3953 fossilised individual bones of salamanders, toads, treefrogs, turtles and snakes found in the deposit, only 18% were identified to the generic or specific level. The snakes identified include *Coluber*

constrictor, *Diadophis punctatus*, *Elaphe vulpina*, *Lampropeltis getulus*, *Lampropeltis triangulum triangulum*, *Nerodia sipedon*, *Opheodrys aestivus*, *Thamnophis sirtalis* and *Crotalus horridus*. Many of these species are found in the area today. Another fascinating paper in the journal describes An Archaeological Study of Frogs and Toads from the Eighth to the Sixteenth Century at Repton, Derbyshire. During excavation work around a church a large quantity of frog (*Rana temporaria*) and toad (*Bufo bufo*) bones were found. A very high proportion of frog bones were recorded among the disarticulate human bones of a ninth century Viking burial mound.

A Simple Consistent Terminology for the Basic Colour Patterns of the Venomous Coral Snakes and their Mimics by Jay M. Savage and Joseph B. Slowinski. (3 pages.)

The authors present a simple and concise set of terms that standardises description of the principal colour patterns for these snakes.

Lacerta
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Nederlandse Vereniging Voor Herpetologie en Terrariumkunde
Zoetendaal 213, 6662 XM Elst (GLD)

De Ruwe Groene Grasslang (*Opheodrys aestivus*) by Eddy Even. (5 pages, D with E extract.)

In 1979 a couple of these snakes were housed together. After three months the female laid three eggs. One hatched three months later but the young snake died after nine months.

Over Een Bijna Geslaagde Kweek Met De Luipaardslang (*Elaphe situla*) by Hans van der Rijst. (3 pages, D with E extract.)

The author obtained a couple of these snakes in December 1987. They were duly hibernated until February but no mating occurred. The hibernation period was extended the next year and a mating took place resulting in two eggs. One hatched after 80 days but the hatchling died after one week.

The Vivarium
Volume 2 Number 5 (28 x 21cm)
American Federation of Herpetoculturists
PO Box 1131, Lakeside, CA 92040, USA. (Available in the UK at £4.25p per issue (post paid) from Jerry Cole, Telephone (03004) 738.)

The Eyelash Viper in Captivity (*Bothriechis schlegelii*) by Hugh Blake. (3 pages with 4 colour plates.)

Habitat, husbandry and breeding plus superb photographs.

Double Clutching in a Dice Snake (*Natrix tessellata*) by Rick Dowling. (1 page.)

A pair of imported (Crete) Dice Snakes produced three eggs in 1987, ten eggs in 1988 and two clutches in 1989 (16 eggs and nine eggs respectively).

Egg Retention in Reptiles by Douglas R Mader, MS., DVM. (4 pages.)

Comprehensive coverage of what seems to be an all too common problem. The author lists a variety of reasons for the problem; an egg which is too large, internal damage, behaviourial stress, improper nutrition, dehydration, disease

of the reproductive tract, imbalances of various reproductive hormones and general poor health. Various solutions to the problem of egg retention are discussed including the oft-suggested hypodermic needle, inducing oviposition with the hormone Oxytocin and, as a last resort, surgery.

MKHS Newsletter
November '90 (A4)
Milton Keynes Herpetological Society
15 Esk Way, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK3 7PW.

Visit to a Snake Farm in Cyprus
by Graham Rowland. (2 pages.)

MKHS committee members Val and Graham stumbled across a snake farm on a recent visit to Cyprus. The establishment's opening hours seem to be rather irregular and safety precautions perhaps a little too casual for the nervous visitor but it sounds an interesting place to visit if you happen to find yourself on the island. No address given but it's near the roundabout at the old port of Limassol.

Endangered Boids of the World
by Jeff Protheroe. (3 pages.)
Does this man never rest? The never-still typewriter of the MKHS Chairman at work again on a list of seven rare and/or endangered snakes including the Southern Rubber Boa and Round Island Keel-scaled Boa.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Items for inclusion in this column are welcome and should include time, date, venue and a contact telephone number.

2nd February 1991
Herpetofauna Recorders' Meeting
David Attenborough Laboratories
Leicester Polytechnic
Scraptoft Campus
Leicester LE7 9SU

Enquiries to Dr M Swan (HRM '91), Dept. of Applied Biology at the above address or telephone (0533) 577726.

20th - 23rd June 1991
International Herpetological Symposium
Seattle
Washington, USA

Enquiries to Richard Ross, Institute for Herpetological Research, PO Box 2227, Stanford, CA 94305, USA. Telephone (9-5 Pacific time) (415) 941-4596.

MISCELLANEOUS

Herpetofauna Recorders' Meeting 1991

Offering an opportunity for herpetologists, amateur and professional, to discover and discuss issues concerning amphibians and reptiles in Britain, the themes for this year's meeting are 'Management of Herptile Sites' in which presentations will consider, practical, political and economic aspects of site conservation through management; and 'The Aliens', where the level of success of herpetofaunal introductions will be reported and policy debated.

International Herpetological Symposium, Inc.

A schedule of events and

tentative list of speakers for next year's symposium in Seattle has been announced. Those of interest to snake enthusiasts include; Colubrid Egg Incubation (Stephen Hammack, Fort Worth Zoo), Captive Husbandry of Emerald Tree Boas (Matthew Moyle) and The Use of Ciprofloxacin, A New Antibiotic, in Snakes (R.J. Klingenberg, DVM). On Friday 21st June a banquet will be held at Woodland Park Zoo where the guest speaker will be Gary Larson, creator of The Far Side.

Wildlife Profiteers Attempt Control of PHS

In the latest issue of the Philadelphia Herpetological Society Newsletter the editor, Chuck Schaffer, reports a conflict within the Society between those interested in conservation and those who want to use the publication for making a profit in the sale of wild-caught reptiles and amphibians. The PHS President, Charles Ball, has recently attempted to sack the editor, cut off publishing funds and, apparently, also solicited letters from reptile dealers who objected to the pro-conservation editorial policy published in the April 'Earth Day' newsletter.

Outstanding Herpetologist Award

Don Brothers, one of the founders of the Idaho Herpetological Society has been chosen to receive their Outstanding Herpetologist Award for 1990. The award cites Don's contributions to the creation of the IHS and his work as the society's first president.

International Co-operation Helps Save Madagascar Boa

Rick Hudson from Fort Worth Zoo and Joe Flanagan from Huston Zoo recently travelled to the Reptile Breeding Centre, Picton, Ontario, to take blood samples from the Dumeril's Ground Boas in the collection. The blood will be studied to determine the genetic relationships between different animals which in turn will help determine future breeding for this species as part of the Species Survival Plan (SSP). The objective of the SSP programmes (initiated by the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums) is the managing of viable populations of captive animals to assist conservation of these species in the wild. There are more than 50 SSPs, with each programme directed by a Species Coordinator and a management committee known as the Propagation Group.

Royal News
The Newsletter for Royal Python Owners Everywhere

Enquiries to Lee Bowler
37 Sixty Acres, Prestwood, Great Missenden, Bucks HP16 0PE. Tel: (02406) 6328.

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MAILBOX

Dear Snake Breeder,

I purchased a Florida King Snake last year and at the time of writing he has sloughed four times, requiring assistance to do so twice.

The first time he sloughed was on the 25th of November; he accomplished this fairly successfully although the skin came off in pieces rather than in one whole piece.

He sloughed again with the same amount of success during hibernation on the 10th of February. I then started to wonder if snakes continue to slough during hibernation as well as throughout the warmer months. (The snake was hibernated at 60° F.)

The real problems occurred in May when he attempted to shed again and, because the skin wasn't coming off in one piece, I placed a large water container under the heat source in his vivarium to increase the humidity. Again he sloughed in bits and one piece of skin stuck stubbornly under his chin. This problem was solved by placing the snake in a pillow case with a damp towel in his vivarium. After about one hour he rubbed off the stubborn piece.

The final time he sloughed was during August when the same piece of skin under his neck refused to come off and had to removed using the method described previously.

The humidity during the period of sloughing (from when he first appears milky to when he fully sloughs) is quite high and is produced by the large water container under the heat source. Two pieces of cork bark, one branch and one rock provide something for the snake to rub against and snag his skin on.

If anyone can explain why he is not sloughing properly or suggest a way in which I can aid him to slough more successfully I would be very grateful.

Yours sincerely,

Ryan Potts
37 Withington Close
Leftwich
Northwich
Cheshire

BOOK REVIEW

The MacDonald Encyclopedia of Amphibians and Reptiles
ISBN 0 356 18813 2
Massimo Capula
Photographs by Guiseppe Mazza
UK Price £9.95

This book is very reasonably priced considering its contents, 256 pages and 250 colour photographs. The first chapter (105 pages) is devoted to amphibians (covering 80 species) and the second (150 pages) to reptiles (120 species).

Each species is carefully detailed with an accompanying photo and the information given is very good. Easy to read symbols accompany each species to indicate their habitat, characteristics and to show whether they are nocturnal or diurnal.

This is an excellent book and I can thoroughly recommend it.

Reviewed by K. Waltho.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTS

FOR SALE

Indian (Burmese) Pythons. Proven breeding pair, very tame. Excellent condition, £300. Their babies, hatched July, £80 each. Also baby **Indian Pythons** (dark) hatched June, £80 each. All young feeding well and very tame. Buyers collect. Telephone (0323) 898515 (East Sussex).

Adult pair of **Amazon Tree Boas.** Long term captives, both feed on dead food, £120. Hatchling **Garter Snakes** (*Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis*), £8. **Chinese Rat Snake** (*Elaphe bimaculata*), £5. Phone Rob or Simon on (0273) 553303 (East Sussex).

Hatchling **Sand Boas** (*Eryx colubrinus loveridgei*). Hatchling **Baird's Rat Snake** (*Elaphe bairdi*). 1.1 adult **California Kingsnakes** (*Lampropeltis getulus californiae*). 1.1 sub adult **Grey Rat Snakes** (*Elaphe obsoleta spiloides*). 1.1 juvenile **Hognose Snakes** (*Heterodon nasicus nasicus*). 0.1 **Baja Gopher Snake** hatchling (*Pituophis melanoleucus vertebralis*). Telephone Roger Grenville on (0923) 836228 day or (08444) 687 eves. (Bucks).

Malaysia Flying Snake. Yellow/black, feeding well. £35 ono. Telephone Alec on (081) 764 5845 after 6pm (Surrey).

Captive bred attractively marked **Corn Snakes.** Four months old and feeding well on large pink mice/rat pups. Approximately 35cm long. £15 each. Telephone Richard Brown on (0279) 445254 (Essex).

1.2 captive bred (1990) **Baird's Rat Snakes** (*Elaphe bairdi*). £40 each or £100 for all three. Very well started and feeding superbly. Records available with each snake. Telephone John Weir on (0484) 720716 (West Yorks).

200 Red worms £2.40p plus 70p first class postage. 200 Brandlings £2.40p plus 70p first class postage. David Silvester, 188 Wrens Hill Road, Wrens Nest Estate, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 3SF.

Indian Python. Female 10', tame, £125. **Reticulated Python,** male, tame, 9½', £125. Freezer full of rats, few rabbits and mice. Worth over £140 but accept £80 the lot. Pair of **California Kingsnakes.** Very tame with vivarium and VTC thermostat plus books. Ideal for beginners who want to start breeding snakes. £225 ovno. Ring Sally on (081) 670 7796 (Crystal Palace).

WANTED

Male **Florida Blue Garter Snake** (*Thamnophis sirtalis similis*). Phone Rob on (0273) 553303 anytime.

Egg-eating Snake. Phone Alec on (081) 764 5845 after 6pm.

Male **African Rock Python,** 3 - 5 years old. Around 10' and tame. Phone (0733) 350324 after 6pm.

Advertisements from private individuals are printed in this section without charge. We are normally able to accept items for inclusion up to the final day of the month, subject to space. Send your advert by post, telephone, fax or Prestel MBX to Snake Breeder, 159 Stanley Hill, Amersham, Bucks HP7 9EY. Telephone (0494) 722769, Fax (0494) 728786 (phone first) or Prestel MBX 494728786.