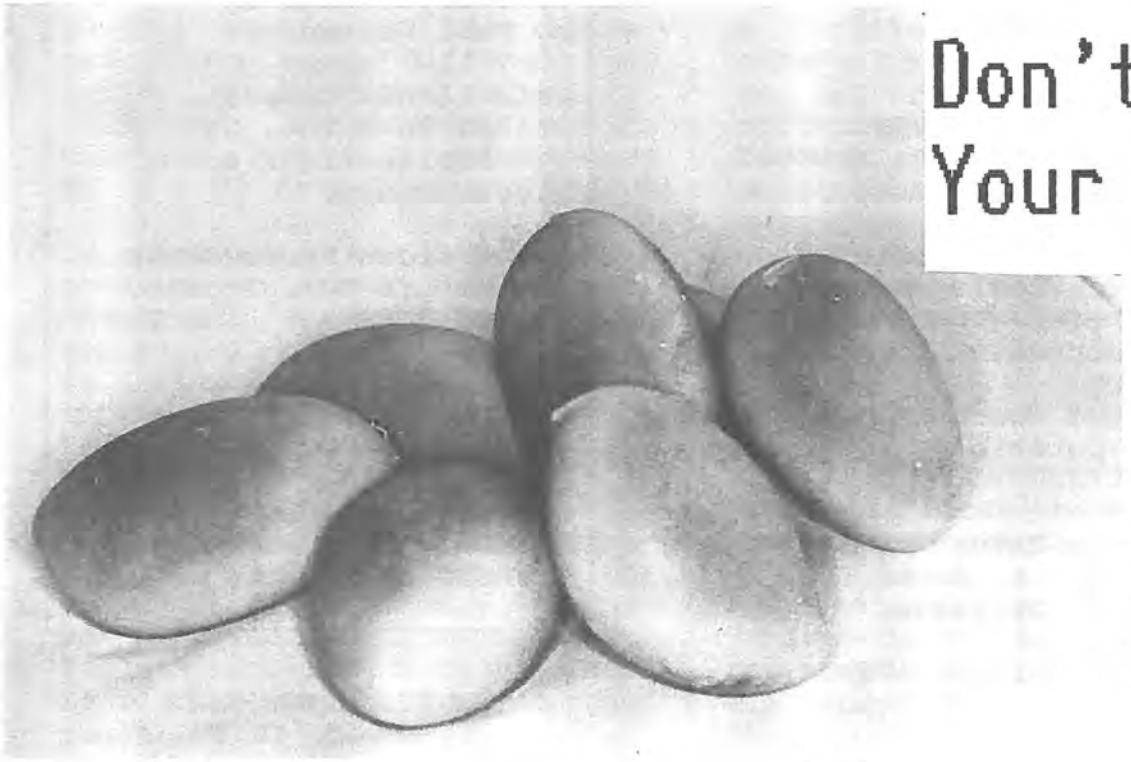
snake breeder

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In This Issue:

The African House Snake, Part I



Plus
Notes on the Rough Green Snake
An Injured Garter Snake

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Snake Breeder

The International Newsletter for Snake Enthusiasts is published by
Snake Keeper Publishing
159 Stanley Hill
Amersham
Bucks HP7 9EY
England
Telephone (0494) 722769
International +44 494 722769
Fax (0494) 728786 (Phone first)

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77 Baronwood Court
Brampton, Ontario
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Subscription Rates:
UK & Europe 6 issues £10
12 issues £18

Rest of the World 6 issues £11
12 issues £20

Payment by cash, cheque or money order in £ sterling drawn on a UK bank.

Trade Advertising Rates:
Display 1/4 page £8
1/2 page £15
1 page £30
(Prices based on ready-to-paste copy)

Animal & Equipment Supplies Box £5

Inserts (A4) £5 per 100 (UK & Europe)
Overseas rates on request

Display Deadline: Camera-ready - 10 days
Setting required - 20 days

Animal & Equipment Supplies Box - 5 days
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The publishers would be overwhelmed to receive your contribution to Snake Breeder whether it is an article, news report, photograph or letter. Remember - if you don't write it - we can't print it! Financial contributions in excess of £10000 are always welcome but they may lead to a short break in the production of the newsletter.

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Starting with the delivery of this issue we will be including details of your subscription expiry date on the address label. The issue indicated is the last issue you will receive. With that final issue you should find a renewal form. Expiry date details will only appear on your label if you have subscribed to Snake Breeder. If you are receiving Snake Breeder as part of your Snake Keeper subscription please ignore this notice. PS There is nothing more unpleasant than rooting around in a bin full of potato peelings and soggy paper trying to find an envelope.

Snake Breeder
April 1990 **4/90**

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THE FIRST OF MANY?

Welcome to the following readers who rushed off their cheques to become our first subscribers:
V. Johnson, A Goode, L Chapman, G Woolgar, E Lough, T Skelton, D Warr, A McBride, J Arnold, J Weir, B Pomfret, D Herbert, R Grenville, N Hardwick, G Cook, P Kite, J Conneeley, Mr Demain, N Morgan, P & A Conroy, C Martin, D Ellard, B Cottis, R Sohm, G Langridge, C Leeke, M Laurence, A Brown, H Eastham, R Bowles, T Hayter, S Oliver, M Mixon, N Clayden, A Oscroft, M Carruthers, A Wardle & Y Soudan (France).

We can still supply original or reproduction copies of the complete set of Snake Keeper. If you would like a list of contents and prices, give us a call on (0494) 722769.

Notes on the Rough Green Snake, *Opheodrys aestivus*

by Paul Wozencroft

I recently had the opportunity to acquire one of these most charming of reptiles. The general feeling is that these snakes are quite difficult to settle in and often refuse to feed and, considering their startled, skittish behaviour, it is easy to understand why.

My acquisition was a beautiful grass-green coloured male with an egg-yellow underside. It was approximately eighteen inches in length, wild-caught and a little on the thin side, even taking the species' natural slightness into account.

The snake was housed in a 24" x 12" x 12" wooden vivarium with glass sliding doors. Heating was supplied by a Crompton Low-light pearl light bulb. This kept the temperature in the region of 82° to 84° F.

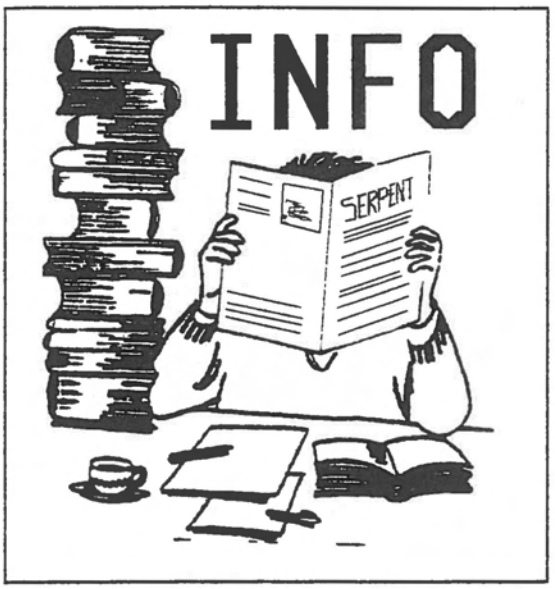
I found that using ordinary 15 watt or 25 watt light bulbs sent the temperature soaring into the 90s, so the low-light seemed just about right. The light is left on for 14 hours a day. As this cage is on top of another vivarium also operated between 82° and 84° F the night-time temperature remains a constant 76° to 77° F.

Upon arriving home the snake was placed in its cage with a substrate of newspaper, two small indoor plants, a length of bark, a small water dish and a hide box.

As with any new animal you worry yourself sick with thoughts such as have you got the temperature correct? Will it feed? Well, it was... and he didn't. He seemed to spend most of his time under the newspaper lying upside down. This seemed a trifle unusual for an arboreal snake! Whilst chatting to a knowledgable man in Streatham, London (thanks J.G.) I was advised to try a substrate of dead leaves. I threw out the newspaper and put in a 1" layer of bark chippings and eight large oak leaves which had been washed in a warm T.C.P. solution and then rinsed. I also replaced the plants, bark and water dish.

The change certainly did the trick. At first the snake spent the day beneath the leaves with his head poking out inquisitively. After a few days he was to be seen frequently basking in the plants or on top of the bark. He then fed voraciously on crickets and medium-sized locusts which I would pre-kill and then place on the leaves. The main reason for this was that the crickets kept escaping from between the sliding glass doors and also so that I could maintain a more accurate feeding record. I usually fed the snake three or four crickets every other day at about 6pm. If you wish to feed these snakes on live insects a planted aquarium with a mesh lid would be a better bet.

Unfortunately the Rough Green Snake has gone now as my Leopard Geckos are about to lay eggs and I need the cage space but, in my opinion, this snake is a pleasure to own and appreciate.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Biology and Conservation of *Coronella*

A Linnean Society Symposium sponsored by the Nature Conservancy Council is to be held at Southampton University on the 11th to the 14th September 1990.

Although the habitat of the two snakes *Coronella austriaca* and *Coronella girondica* has diminished and is under threat throughout Europe, only recently has there been much research on the two species. It is, therefore, timely that a Symposium be held to bring together results from research programmes and to discuss the biology and conservation of these species. The Symposium will consist of invited papers, workshops, discussion groups and a field excursion.

Further details from:
Dr Ian Spellerberg
Biology Department
The University
Southampton SO1 6AN
Tel: (0703) 592442
Fax: (0703) 558163

Annual Congress of the Société Herpétologique de France

The SHF announce an appeal for publications for their 1990 Congress on the theme of 'Amphibians and Reptiles, Natural and Cultural Heritage' to be held at Maison de la Culture, Place Léon Gontier, 80000 Amiens, France between the 28th June and the 1st of July 1990.

Further details from:

Christine MORRIER
Département Culture et Communication
5 rue Puvis de Chavannes
80000 Amiens
France

Tel: 22.92.00.67.

SNAKES IN PRINT

Litteratura Serpentium
Dutch Snake Society
Volume 9 No. 6 - December 1989
(English edition) (A5)

Bacterial infections and treatment with antibiotics in snakes, part II by R Jooris (10 pages)

Breeding the Taiwan Ratsnake (*Elaphe taeniura friesei*) by T Steehouder (6 pages)

The keeping and breeding of *Agkistrodon bilineatus bilineatus* by H Boerema (1 page)

Keeping and breeding *Elaphe bimaculata* by H Bartz (3 pages)

Herpetozoa
Österreichische Gesellschaft für Herpetologie (ÖGH)

Volume 2 No. 1/2 November 1989 (A5)

A checklist of Greek reptiles, part II, Snakes by BP Chondropoulos. The systematic status and the geographical distribution of the 30 snake taxa occurring in Greece are presented. (34 pages, E with G abstract.)

Lacerta
Nederlandse Vereniging Voor Herpetologie en Terrariumkunde
No. 3 Feb-Mar 1990 (17 x 24cm)

Trimeresurus albolabris in captivity by JW Verkerk. (5 pages, D with E abstract.)

Breeding *Elaphe mandarina* by WB Gillingham. An account of a successful breeding resulting in six eggs by a well-known North American snake breeder (and publisher of 'Fauna Classifieds'). The eggs hatched to produce 3 male and 3 female snakes. (3 pages, D with E abstract.)

Milton Keynes Herpetological Society Newsletter
February 1990 (A4)

Experiences with African Rock Pythons by B Pomfret. (6 pages.)

Milton Keynes Herpetological Society Newsletter
March 1990 (A4)

Egyptian Sand Boas (*Eryx colubrinus colubrinus* by Tony Rome. (1 page.)

The Natrix (Newsletter)
North East Reptile and Amphibian Group
Number 9 (A4)

The systematics, maintenance and reproduction of Kingsnakes by Dr D Schmidt. (4 pages.)

Sauria
Terrariengemeinschaft Berlin
December 1989 (16 x 23cm)

Die hinterasiatischen Kletternattern der Gattung *Elaphe*, Teil XVII, *Elaphe porphyracea*. (Asian Rat Snakes of the Genus *Elaphe*, Part XVII, *Elaphe porphyracea*.) (4 pages, G with E abstract.)

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Reptile and Amphibian Magazine

A new bi-monthly magazine from North America appeared recently. 'Reptile & Amphibian Magazine' is an A5, colour, 46 page publication edited and published by Norman Frank DVM. The Nov/Dec issue featured articles on *Bufo americanus*, the boids, parthenogenesis in lizards, antibiotics in reptiles, *Notophthalmus viridescens* and a report from the 13th International Herpetological Symposium on Captive Propagation and Husbandry concerning turtles.

The publication includes a centre page of classified adverts (up to 50 words, free of charge) and this particular issue includes a list of the herpetological societies of the United States.

Subscription rates as listed in this issue are; One year (6 issues) $12, Two years (12 issues) $22. Canada add $3 a year. Foreign add $10 surface, $25 airmail a year.International money orders only. Subscriptions to Reptile & Amphibian Magazine Subscription Department, Rt. 61, RD3, Box 3709, Pottsville, PA 17901, USA.

Colour Guide to the Snakes of Sri Lanka

The publication of this book marks the appearance of a new publishing company, R & A Publishing Ltd, which has been formed for the purpose of publishing original herpetological titles in English.

Further titles will be released in four different series:

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Series C: Reptiles/amphibians of a taxonomic unit (family/genus/species).
Series D: Taxonomy, general science etc.
In all titles the use of line drawings and photographs will be encouraged.

The first title (available March 1990) is a 'Colour Guide to the Snakes of Sri Lanka' by Anselm de Silva (ISBN 1 872688 004) £18.75p. This book (130 pages, 69 colour pictures, hardback and dust jacket) includes an introduction to the zoogeography of Sri Lankan snakes, local folklore, an introduction to venomous snakes and local treatments, a key to the families, the genera, the species and subspecies and a checklist to include natural history notes and references.

The guides are designed to give the reader an introduction to the fauna of, and local attitudes to the fauna of, the country, to enable identification and indicate requirements if captive study is considered.

Further information from:
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The African House Snake *Lamprophis fuliginosus*

by Ralph Hermann

Distribution

The range of the African House Snake stretches over the whole of Southern Africa, in the east northwards to Kenya (excluding the deserts), Ethiopia into southern Sudan and Egypt and in the north individually into Morocco (Broadley, 1983; Dullfus et. al., 1928; Gras, 1988; Isemonger, 1968). This species is thus the most common snake in Africa. Because of its vast distribution range it is not impossible that *Lamprophis fuliginosus* can probably also be found in Mauritania, North-east Algeria and Northern Egypt. The proof of this presumption would close the sphere of distribution and confirm the suspicion that the rare findings of *L. fuliginosus* in North Africa are residual occurrences of an afro-tropical species as a result of desertification in the Sahara region (Gras, 1988).

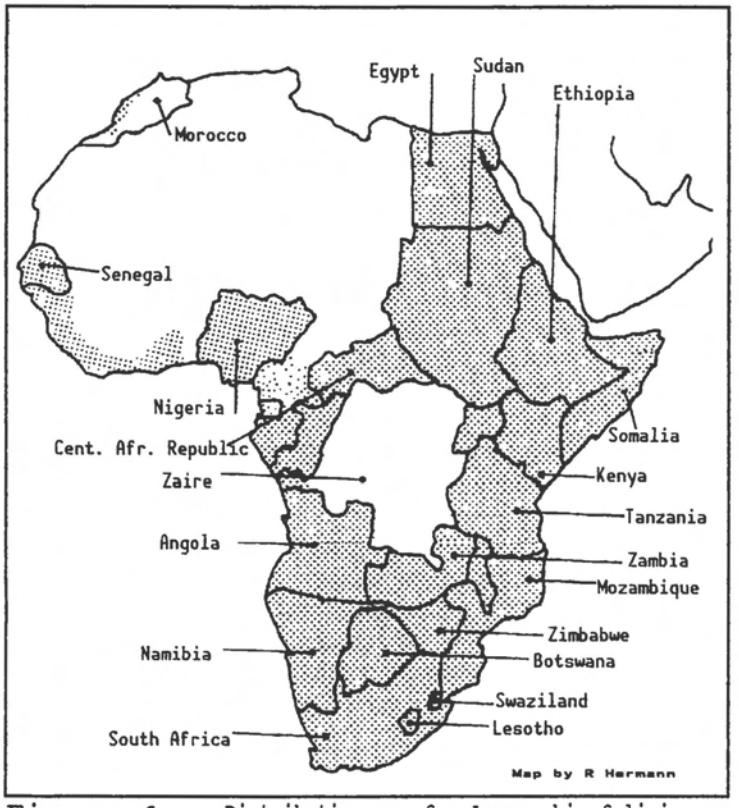


Figure 1. Distribution map for Lamprophis fuliginosus based on available literature.

As a further comparable example of this fact, Gras mentions snakes such as *Dasypeltis scabra* and *Naja haje*. These, like *L. fuliginosus*, are very seldom found in North Africa but are much more common in Southern Africa (Broadley, 1983; Welch, 1982). Herpetological investigations from North African regions would therefore appear to be of great interest.

As the name suggests, the African House Snake can frequently be found in the vicinity of human habitation. They are also found in cultivated and fallow fields. In this way the snake is a useful exterminator of vermin. Nevertheless it is often killed out of sheer ignorance. This snake is usually to be found burrowed beneath rocks or on rubbish dumps.

Size and Colouring

According to the available and frequently contradictory literature, *L. fuliginosus* can reach a length of 60cm (males) and 130 cm (females). Broadley

(1983) furthermore mentions an unusually large specimen of 150cm. The head is only slightly set-off from the neck; the iris is vertical. The scalation is smooth. The colouring is very variable; usually the upper side is light to dark brown but there are also olive-brown, blackish-brown and black varieties. The differences in colour can give an indication of the area of origin. Animals from south and south-west Africa are especially likely to be spotted as juveniles, whilst in adulthood these spots usually fade. Some adults do however retain traces of their juvenile markings. North and north-east African specimens usually have no markings, even in the juvenile stage. With *L. fuliginosus* the amazing differences in the stripes on the head are also worthy of mention (see sketches). Normally the light stripe runs from the nasal scale through the eyes to the back of the head. Another stripe runs along the chin scales. Specimens with a stripe above the eye and only partial or no lower stripe are also known.

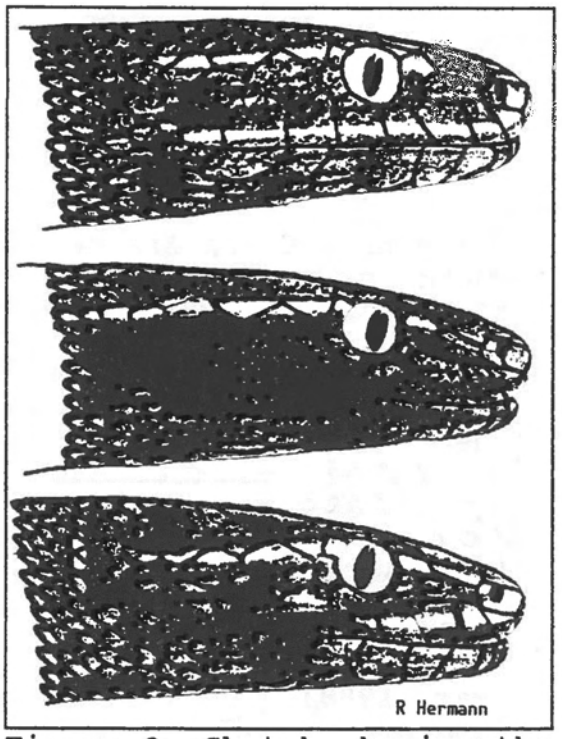


Figure 2. Sketch showing the variations in head markings of *Lamprophis fuliginosus*.

Roux-Estève and Guibé (1985) give particularly detailed descriptions of several specimens.

Roux-Estève and Guibé possibly base their division of the various subspecies on these variations in markings. This is however questionable.

In each case the belly is creamish-white, nacre or pure white and in sunlight it appears to have been lacquered. On their upper sides the specimens which I keep have a blueish sheen. In all available literature, details of scalation are also very divergent. A compilation of information from three sources gives the following general survey:

	Males	Females
Ventralia	192-230	209-246
Subcaudalia	56-75	42-59

In my female (No. 1) I was however able to count 249 ventralia.

Further information on head scalation can be found individually detailed in Broadley (1983). According to him *L. fuliginosus* has eight or nine upper labials whereby, with eight scales, the fourth and fifth touch the eye whilst, with nine scales, the fifth and sixth or fourth to sixth touch the eye. He cites nine lower labials, very rarely eight or ten.

Food

In its juvenile stage, *L. fuliginosus* feeds mainly on lizards whilst adults prefer to eat small mammals (Broadley, 1959). In captivity, young snakes can be fed on nestling mice without any problems. Broadley (1959) mentions that in captivity this species eats skinks (*Mabuya sp.*) and one specimen even ate a frog (*Rana sp.*). One specimen 487mm long ate four *Mabuya v. varia* within three days. I normally feed my snakes on laboratory mice which are constricted before being swallowed. The constriction force is so great that even a young rat was killed in a few seconds by my female. The male also took a young canary without any hesitation. *L. fuliginosus* are extremely greedy feeders. It is almost impossible to simultaneously feed several snakes with mice because as soon as they are aware of the prey they react so wildly that they will bite anything which moves in their vicinity. Their siblings are no exception! It often happens that a duel occurs when two snakes bite and proceed to swallow the same mouse. In these cases it is very difficult to separate the snakes since they both refuse to release their bite and occasionally the keeper gets bitten. For this reason I place each snake in a separate container for feeding.

*****

Part II of this article, covering Maintenance and Breeding will appear in the next issue of Snake Breeder.

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Dear Snake Breeder,

I thought your readers may be interested in a little problem that I recently encountered.

One of my Grey Rat Snakes, *Elaphe obsoleta spiloides*, underwent an incomplete slough, leaving the old skin and eye shields intact on the top of the head.

I attempted to remove the skin by wrapping some Sellotape - sticky side out - around my finger and pressing it against the eye shield (crude but normally effective) but on this occasion I did not free the skin.

I then placed the snake in a small tank containing a solution of water with a couple of drops of 'Shed-aid' added as I have done previously with other snakes with good results. After approximately 5 minutes in the solution the snake became very still and sank to the bottom of the tank; up to this time he had shown no signs of any distress. I immediately rescued him from the tank and he appeared completely lifeless. I held him up by the tail and a surprisingly large amount of fluid drained from his lungs but he still did not move. In desperation I found a small drinking straw and placed one end around his windpipe. I then blew into the straw very gently several times and he made a very quick return to normal, biting both the straw and me but for once I did not mind. I can only assume that his nostrils were blocked by the accumulation of skin causing him to take in water through his mouth and nearly drown.

I'm pleased to say that he appears none the worse for his ordeal and that his voracious appetite is undiminished.

Yours sincerely,

T M Skinner
Leics.

*****

Dear Snake Breeder,

The house stood still and quiet... The sad inhabitants were moping under a cloud of depression. The snakes lay low in their vivariums, affected by this odd air of gloom. The reasons for such sadness? The end of Snake Keeper!

Ever since that sad day last winter when we received the heartbreaking news by post we have never been the same.

But wait... condolence was to arrive one sunny day in March; condolence in the form of... Snake Breeder! We were delighted to receive this fantastic new newsletter, and wish to congratulate the production team on putting together such an enjoyable read; once again we have our monthly treat!

Yours sincerely,

Paul & Adam Conroy
(aged 14 & 12)
Surrey

BIODEGRADABLE BIN BAG UPDATE

New from Suma is Bio-Sak, a recycled biodegradable refuse sack. Stored in dry conditions, it has a shelf life of 18 months but, once the bag comes into contact with moisture, it biodegrades in 14 days, breaking down into pieces small enough to be eaten by bacteria, leaving only sugar forms, carbon dioxide and water. The Saks retail for 99p for 5 from health shops everywhere.

An Injured Garter Snake

by Kelvin Waltho

I was contacted by my local veterinary surgeon and told that a snake had been found in my area and handed in at the police station. The police had taken the reptile, a Red-sided Garter Snake, to the vet and he remembered that I had been to his surgery several times with my snakes. The vet said that if I was able to look after the snake he would treat it without charge. Obviously, as a snake lover I couldn't say no.

I quickly set up a spare tank with a thermostat and heater and went to collect the snake which was in a very poor state. It had been attacked by something and deep, large cuts covered approximately one-third of its body.

The vet had already given it an antibiotic injection and cleaned its wounds and I was given a bottle of hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2), a syringe and some gentian violet. Due to the state of the wounds the only way to apply the hydrogen peroxide (diluted 1 to 10 in water) was to fill the syringe and swill the wounds, then dry them and apply the gentian violet. This procedure was carried out once a day.

After three or four days I offered worms and pieces of fish but it showed no interest whatsoever. I took the snake back to the vet after seven days. His opinion was that the wounds were clean but it was still touch and go whether the animal would survive.

Sadly two days later (nine days after it came into my possession) the snake died. I contacted the vet immediately and he examined the body. He found that the wounds were clean although some of the scales were missing. He concluded that as the snake's internal organs were normal, the snake probably died from trauma.

He said that although I had cared for the snake to the best of my ability, the animal may have spent some time in the wild in an injured state without feeding and this probably also contributed to its demise.

Although a sad experience, I learned a lot from this episode. I must thank the vet, Alistair Brown, his receptionist and my wife for their help.

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The Newsletter for Royal Python Owners Everywhere

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SNAKE-KEEPING EQUIPMENT

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The up-to-date system for heating snakes. These strips can be used to heat individual shelves and are therefore more versatile than most other systems, are guaranteed for ten years, and do not require grooves to be cut in the shelves.

23 x 6"	15 watts	£7.25	p & p .50
35 x 6"	available soon - please enquire		
47 x 6"	30 watts	£12.40	p & p .50
70 x 6"	45 watts	£19.50	p & p .50

We also carry a selective stock of heat-pads, books, sexing probes, and the more commonly used vitamin and mineral supplements, disinfectants, plastic tubs, etc., and blacklights. A separate list is available for this year's captive-bred snakes. Please send SAE for both lists.

Enquiries to Chris Mattison or Gretchen Davison. Orders to Gretchen Davison. Payment with order please.

138 Dalewood Road • Beauchief • Sheffield S8 0EF • Telephone (0742) 364433

FOR SALE

Captive bred ratsnakes, king and milk snakes, **African House Snakes** (four colour forms). Send sae for details. Kevin J Hingley, 22 Busheyfields Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 2LP.

Common Boa: approximately 4½' male, feeds well but will also take fingers and hands on occasions. Suitable for breeding project, not for inexperienced keepers who want a cuddly pet. £100. Phone Barry Pomfret (0908) 370112.

Captive bred snakes: expected 1990 offspring - ***Lampropeltis, Elaphe*** and ***Pituophis,*** including tri-colours, albino **Black Rat Snakes** and **Black Pine Snakes.** Also **Rosy Boas** and **Children's Pythons.** Some yearlings available. All specimens are captive bred by us and supplied with accurate feeding records. For full list, write to Anne Clegg /Kim Loader, 130 Sebert Road, Forest Gate, London E7 0NL. (Please enclose stamp for reply.)

WANTED

Anyone breeding or selling good, healthy, captive bred, feeding ***Corallus caninus.*** Please contact Pauline or Doug on Plymouth (0752) 790748.

Pair of hatchling ***Chondropython viridis*** or ***Corallus caninus.*** Will pay cash or can offer pair of ***Epicrates cenchria maurus,*** 3', approximately 18 months old in part exchange with cash adjustment. Phone Dave on (0483) 67924 (Guildford).

Adult male **Honduran Milk Snake,** ***Lampropeltis triangulum hondurensis,*** preferably 'normal' colour phase but orange or tangerine phases considered. Contact Kevin J Hingley, 22 Busheyfields Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 2LP or phone (0384) 457368.