SNAKE KEEPER

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 7 JULY 1987 £1.00p



INFORMATION

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c/o The Zoological Society of London
Regent's Park
London, NW1 4RY

Bulletin published quarterly.
Journal published June & December.
Ten meetings a year.
Subscriptions: Ordinary members £15.

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2561 XC Den Haag
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Oxon, OX8 4JW

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includes full set of Care-in-Captivity pages and binder.

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SNAKE KEEPER

Vol 1 No 7 July 1987

Edited and published by

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159 Stanley Hill
Amersham
Bucks
HP7 9EY

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Subscription: One year (12 issues)

U.K. £12
Europe £16 sterling

Snake Keeper magazine does not hold itself responsible for any opinions expressed by the authors and contributors.

Printed in Bristol
by Pyramid Press.
Tel: 0272 556539

INDEX

Hertfordshire Snake Keeper - Fred Parkyn 4

The benefits of day/night temperature variation 7

Success and failure with Royal Python eggs 8

The False Water Cobra in captivity 10

Tree Snakes 11

Quarantine - how essential is it? 13

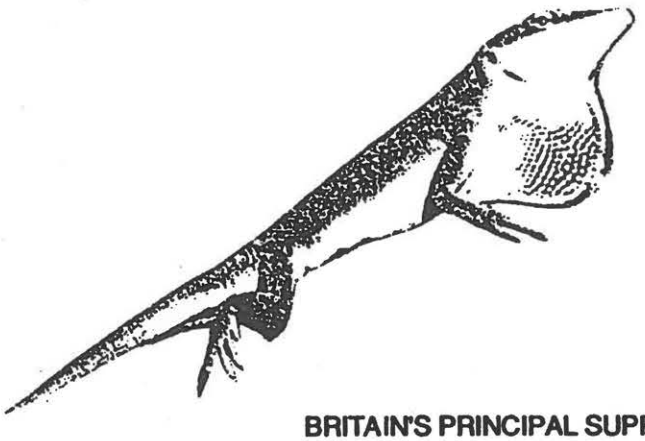
Junior Snake Keeper 15

Front cover: Hatchling Royal Pythons *Python regius* *by D. Durham.*
Photographs: Lesley Close
Roger Grenville (pages 8&9)

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Hertfordshire Snake Keeper - Fred Parkyn

If you have borrowed a library book at an A.S.R.A. meeting or written to the Thames and Chiltern Herpetological Group for any reason, you have probably made contact with Fred Parkyn. Such is his interest in reptiles that he manages to combine the librarianship at A.S.R.A. with his role as secretary to the T.& C.H.G. and still he has time to look after his large collection of reptiles. We recently visited Fred to photograph his collection and find out how his interest started.



Fred and Rigsby

Fred first came into contact with reptiles in 1980 when a snake-keeping friend from Ireland went on holiday to Europe. As his friend's mother would not have the snake in her house, Fred was given custody of the animal - a Royal Python - for a couple of weeks. At the time he thought, like many people, that snakes must have live food. He was keen to keep a snake but the thought of feeding a live animal to the reptile was abhorrent to him. Fred offered to keep the snake as long as he didn't have to feed it. The original agreement was for two weeks but time passed and the two weeks became six weeks, then eight weeks and finally three months. The snake didn't feed during that time.

When the snake had finally been reunited with its owner Fred had become so interested that he purchased his first reptile, a Water Dragon, from Somerset. He also ordered an Indian Python which was to come from Holland. 'Rigsby' duly arrived weighing only 10 ounces; more of him later.

At this point Fred followed the well-worn route trodden by most new reptile keepers: he bought every snake he could find. He was really hooked and soon had a collection of 23 animals, none of them paired and most of them hatchlings.

A wise move followed in 1981 when he joined A.S.R.A. From that time he has hardly missed a meeting unless on holiday or bad weather intervenes. For the next two years, although he attended the meetings regularly, he didn't talk to other members apart from the friends he went with. He found that he "wasn't exactly learning much. I was looking up to the people who were breeding animals and wondering why mine were not breeding. I didn't stop to think that I hadn't got a male and female amongst my stock in the same cage."

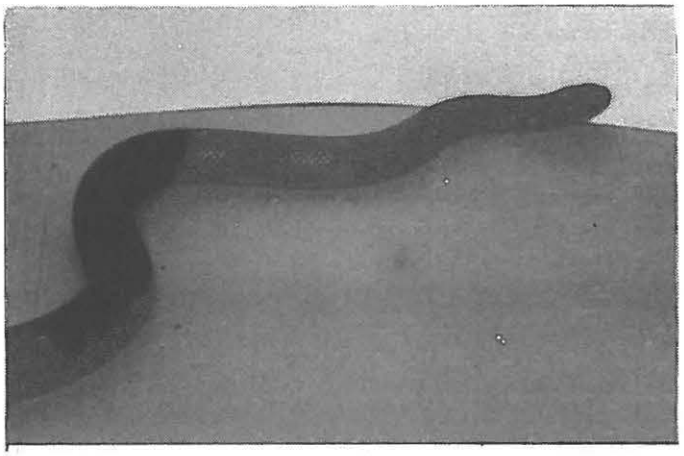
After a while Fred got into conversation with another A.S.R.A. member, Chris Martin and "Chris, being the person he is, criticised me for having 23 snakes and he told me to reduce the number to half a dozen pairs. It was hard to get rid of the excess snakes because I was attached to them." Fred found that he "couldn't afford to match them all up or I would have had 46 snakes."

The first real pair were Indian Pythons following the acquisition of a female in 1983 as a mate for Rigsby. The female laid eggs the following year but they were all infertile. Fred approached Chris Martin for further advice and was told that the fault lay with his photoperiod.

After a visit to Chris and the purchase of some equipment, Fred hoped to have more success but the following year the female didn't breed. Fred feels that this was because she was readjusting to the light cycle as the next year (1986) she laid 36

eggs of which 34 hatched.

Fred is a member of the Dutch Snake Society and makes an annual trip to Holland for their exhibition. He occasionally buys snakes whilst there and tends to favour the exotic rather than the traditional animals. He is particularly fond of black snakes.



Black King Snake (Lampropeltis getulus nigritis). This 3' long male was bought 2 years ago and is probably about 4 years old. Fred also has a 2 year old female.

Before joining the Thames and Chiltern Herpetological Group, Fred knew most of the other members but his job at that time prevented him from attending their meetings. As well as his other memberships he subscribes to the International Herpetological Society and the British Herpetological Society.

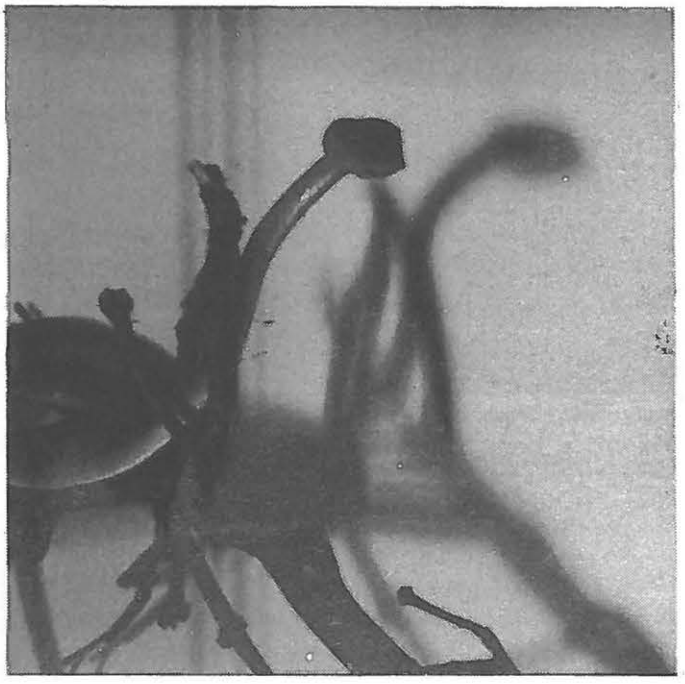
After recently treating mouth-rot in an Indian Python using an autogenous vaccine he co-wrote an article about the method with veterinary surgeon Keith Lawrence. The article has appeared in the Dutch Snake Society Journal.

In addition to his interest in snakes, Fred also keeps spiders, lizards, scorpions and a tortoise which he has just discovered is about 45 years old. At some time in the future he would like to own a pair of adult Cook's Tree Boas. He would also like to increase the number of snakes in his collection, keeping to pairs and trios. The prospect of being a professional breeder has a certain attraction for him.

Local schools have benefited from lectures given by Fred. His record is twenty-six schools in one year. One school in particular has received four lectures so far with another six planned. He has investigated lecturing as a business venture and is presently taking lots and lots of slides of his own and other people's animals in case this becomes a career. Besides the school lectures, Fred and his animals make regular attendances at local fetes.

The Parkyn reptile collection is housed in two rooms. The three Indian Pythons live in their 7'x 5'x 4' tank in one room and the rest of the collection occupies the other room. The Indian Pythons are kept warm with a 250 watt, thermostatically controlled infra-red heater whilst the other group live in a heated room.

Of the three Indian Pythons, 'Rigsby', a 1980 hatchling, is the heaviest and longest. Although only 10 ounces when purchased he now weighs in at approximately 120 pounds and is about 16 feet long with a maximum girth of 26 inches. Food consists of two five pound chickens every four to six weeks. He shares his cage with another male, also hatched in 1980. This male, the subject of the D.S.S. article, weighs only 32 pounds and has been unwell almost since birth. Fred thinks the snake still has a slight touch of pneumonia as it holds his head up at a strange angle - pointing backwards - to drain its lungs. It eats well but may never gain full health.



Long-nosed Tree Snake (Dryophis nasuta) This arboreal rear-fanged snake comes from Thailand. This specimen, one of a pair, is nervous but not aggressive. As this species feeds primarily on lizards they are expensive to keep although this particular snake will accept frogs.

The third Python, the female mentioned earlier, once belonged to a strip-tease artiste. The snake apparently became too heavy for her and as it weighed 63 pounds when purchased for the Parkyn collection, this is understandable.

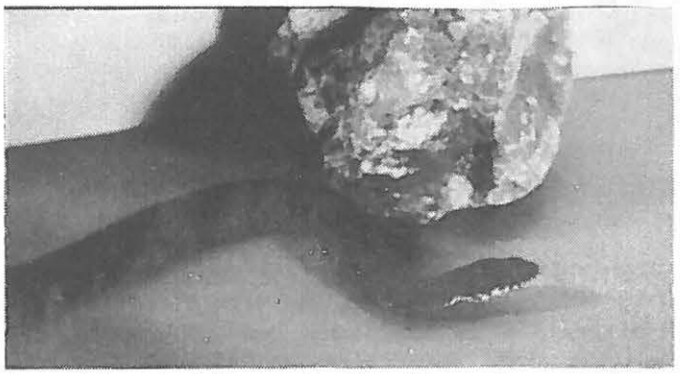
The female, which measures 13' in length, has only shown aggression on one occasion, when her first clutch of eggs went bad. Fred donned anorak and wellingtons and ventured into the cage to remove the decomposing mass. The snake was not in complete agreement with this policy and made her feelings known. Normally she is a friendly snake although she hisses quite a lot.

When Rigsby first arrived, he bit readily and often, until he was about two and half years old when the attacks ceased. Despite his weight and length, Fred somehow takes him to school lectures where his behaviour is always impeccable.

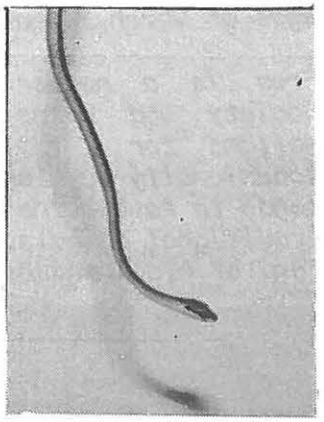
Fred's collection is an interesting mix of common and unusual snakes, a few of which are shown here.



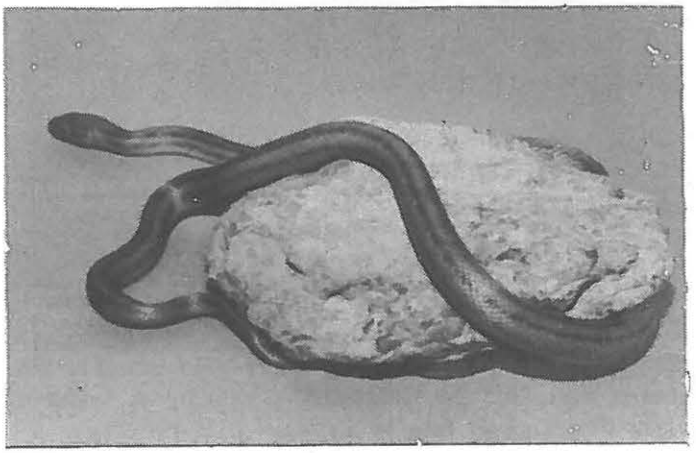
Grey Rat Snake (Elaphe obsoleta spiloides) One of a pair born in 1986. Captive-bred.



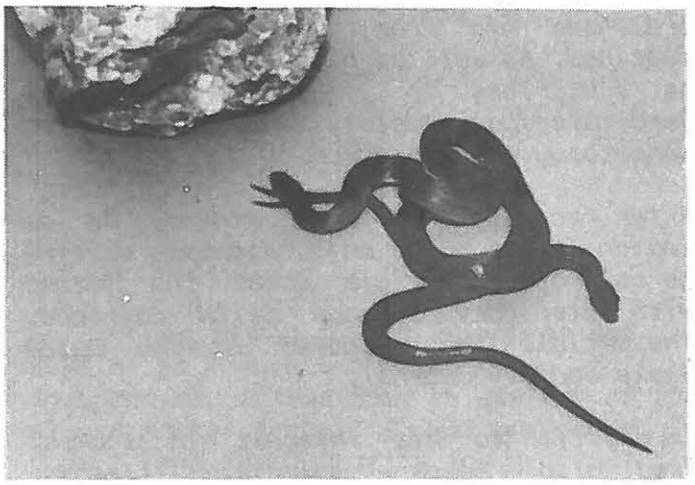
Broad-banded Water Snake (Nerodia fasciata confluens). This specimen is aggressive and bites readily.



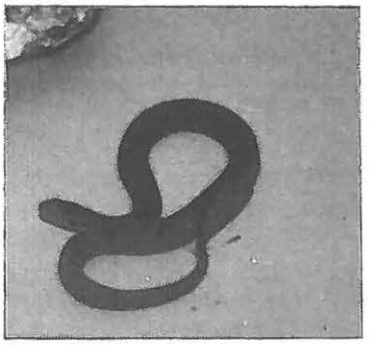
Parrot Snake Leptophis ahaetulla An imported female snake laid six eggs shortly after arriving in this country from South America. Four of the eggs hatched successfully, this snake being one of them.



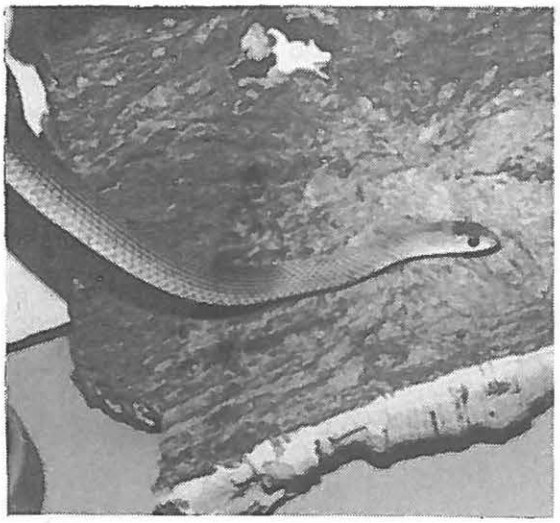
Orange, or Everglades, Rat Snake (Elaphe obsoleta rossalleni)



Marsh Snakes (Natriciteres o. olivacea) These snakes come from Zaire and Kenya. Habitat is marshes and forest edges. Maximum length is 16 to 18 inches

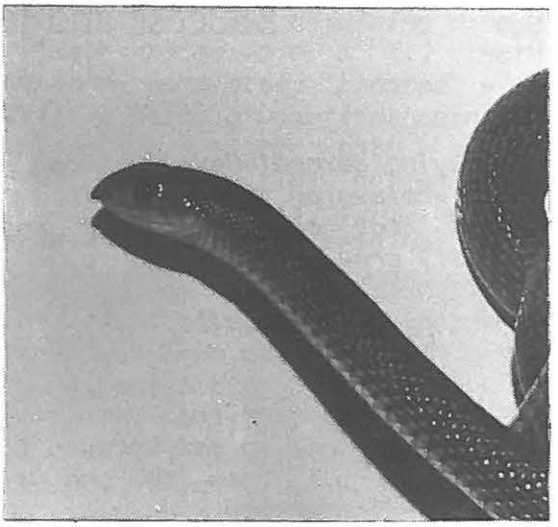


Banded Water Snake Nerodia f.fasciata One of a pair. Fed on lance fish and kept on a peat substrate as they like to burrow.



(Right and Left)

Rufous Beaked Snake Rhamphiophis oxyrhynchus Although this snake is only two and half feet long at present, it will eventually grow to six feet. It comes from Ghana and Kenya.





Dog-toothed Cat Snake (Boiga cynadon). This male, about seven feet in length, eats one chick per week. He has enormous teeth and dislikes being sprayed with water. His female companion recently laid five eggs and died a few days later. All the eggs were infertile.

The benefits of day/night temperature variation

by Chris and Marcia Martin

All our breeding tanks are equipped to give a day/night temperature differential. It has been argued by a number of people that this is an unnecessary expense. We disagree for the following reasons.

We think that the environment in which the reptile lives should be as natural as possible. Controlling the photo-period (the length of daylight) is a must so that the reptile knows what the time of year is, i.e. summer, winter, spring, etc. Controlling the temperature between day and night in conjunction with the photo-period can only help to put the reptile in a more natural situation. That should contribute to a more normal life for your pet, hence a better chance of breeding.

Two other benefits you will obtain from this system:

1) *The growth rate of the bacteria in the vivarium will be checked. If the temperature is low, the bacteria can't multiply at the rate they could if the temperature was higher.*

2) *If the temperature drops at night, you use less electricity. If you use less power, the cost of keeping your reptile is reduced.*

Chris and Marcia welcome enquiries about any aspect of snake-keeping (except veterinary problems) providing an sae is enclosed. Their address is 18, Ballinode Close, Cheltenham, Glos. GL50 4SQ. Telephone Cheltenham 573477.

Success and failure with Royal Python eggs
by Roger Grenville

Upon buying several Royal Pythons from a London wholesaler for resale in our shop I noticed that one particular snake was obviously gravid. Four eggs could easily be felt and counted. In my opinion it seems that you are quite lucky to obtain gravid females these days as, firstly, the African exporters retain them, hatch the eggs and then export the youngsters and, secondly, if some do get through then the wholesalers put them to one side and charge a higher price.

Fortunately I had a spare cage at home so the female was removed to these more conducive surroundings. All my own snakes are North American species, Lampropeltis (King Snakes) and Elaphe (Rat and Corn Snakes) and the cages are designed to supply the captive animals with an area of heated floor and a false floor enabling the snakes to go 'underground' if they wish.

A few days after taking the snake home she laid her eggs and coiled around them. The only problem was that she was coiled up on the heated part of the floor. As the heating pad was on for 24 hours a day at that time of year I was concerned that they might be hard-boiled in a very short time. I did not have an incubating medium ready so I thought it sensible to spray her and the cage as an intermediate measure.

The spraying inadvertently produced a very easy method of removing ticks from these snakes. Within a few minutes of spraying, huge numbers of ticks appeared all over the snake. I had noticed a few on the snake previously but not in such large quantities as appeared after spraying. The spray would seem to simulate heavy rain in the wild, causing the ticks to immediately engorge themselves with blood and run around the cage looking for somewhere to lay their eggs.

When I removed the eggs from the snake prior to placing them in an incubator, I was surprised to see just how large they were in relation to the size of the snake. In fact, I would describe them as colossal compared to other snakes and their eggs.

Of the four eggs laid, two looked healthy, one looked reasonably good but the fourth looked doubtful. The eggs were incubated in the traditional medium of vermiculite with an equal weight of water added. I believe that the incubating eggs do not need to be kept as wet and humid as we are often led to believe. I only bury the eggs in the medium to one third of their depth and keep the top air space well ventilated with only an occasional spraying. I'm sure that excess moisture causes more problems than insufficient moisture.

The eggs were incubated at a temperature of 30 - 32 degrees C. After 55 days the dubious egg started to deteriorate rapidly, becoming first darker, then obviously smelly and finally the shell started sweating and collapsing. After 60 days I decided to open the egg and found a well-formed but dead youngster. (See photo 1.) Note the almost complete lack of side markings on the rear half of the snake.



Photo 1.

Next day, I must admit to panicking and opening the next egg having convinced myself that the snake could be seen trying

to get out. Inside I found a perfectly formed youngster and, judging from the amount of yolk still to be absorbed, this snake still had a long time to go before hatching. (See photo 2.) In retrospect, this course of action was a mistake and I can offer no rational explanation for my behaviour.

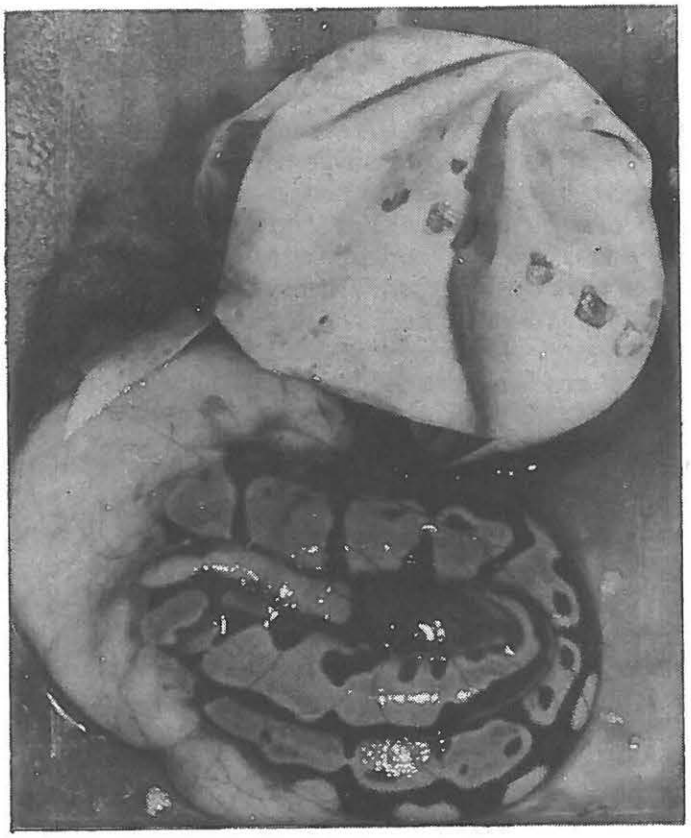


Photo 2.

Sixty seven days after being laid, the first snake to hatch by itself appeared, taking 24 hours to complete the process. (See photo 3.) It is easy to see why the Royal is also called the 'Ball Python' after looking at photograph no. 4.



Photo 3.

Seven days later the remaining egg hatched. (See photos 5,6 & 7.) Both youngsters were completely bloated with yolk as well as being a beautiful pair of snakes. Seven days later both snakes sloughed and, at the time of writing, neither snake has fed. This could be due to the large amount of yolk retained.

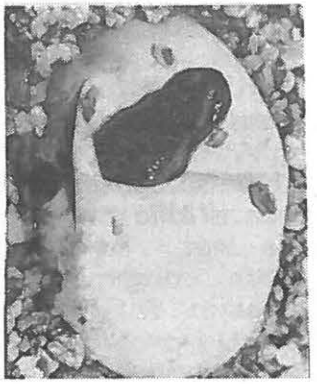


Photo 5.



Photo 6.

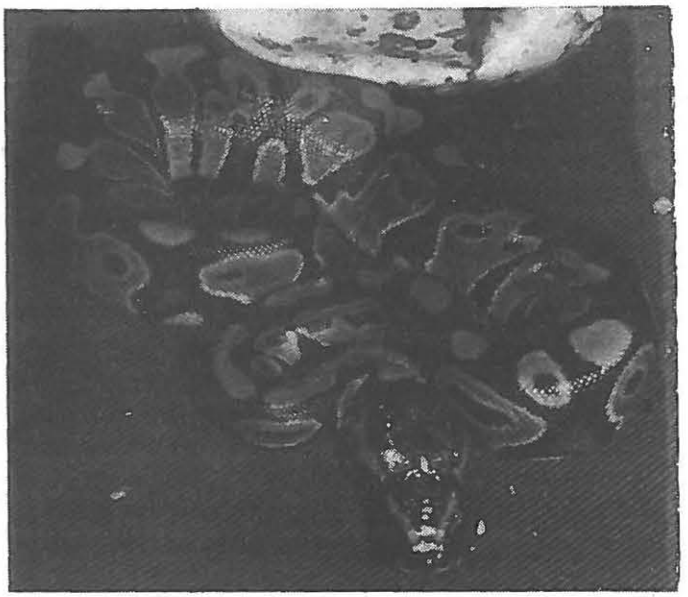


Photo 7.

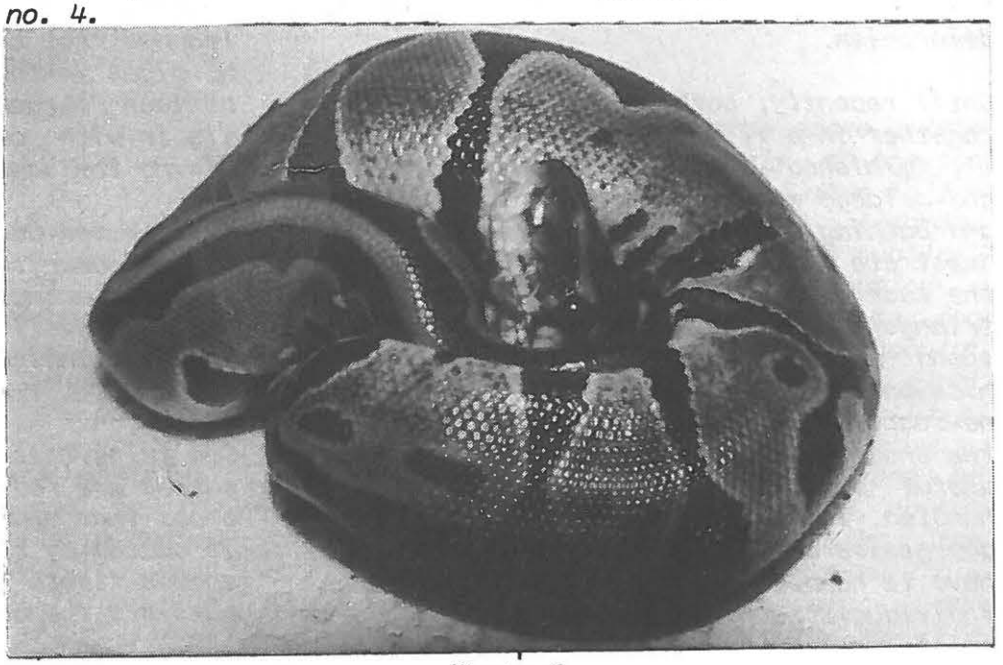


Photo 4.

The False Water Cobra in captivity

by John and Carol Friend

Introduction:

The False Water Cobra, Hydrodynastes gigas, is a large S. American colubrid which can attain a length of up to two metres. It is given the name of 'Cobra' because of its habit of inflating the fore-part of its body, and spreading a narrow hood when annoyed. Our own experience with a pair of these snakes has shown that, unlike the true elapid Cobras, the False Water Cobra does not rear the fore-part of the body in order to intimidate a potential enemy; it merely spreads the hood, occasionally arching the neck so as to display the hood towards an adversary, inflating the first third of the body simultaneously.

The natural range of these snakes includes E.Bolivia to S.Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina.

Husbandry:

We have owned our 'Cobras' for four years, since they were both around 12 months old. At the time of purchase both specimens were a light golden brown colour with dark irregular crossbands. The male has retained more or less the same colouration but the female gradually grew darker with age and is now a dark olive green in colour; the crossbands are barely discernible. The male measures about five feet and the female is about five and a half feet long. Stidworthy (1969) states that this species displays sexual dimorphism.

Until recently, both snakes were housed together in a vivarium measuring 4' x 2' x 2', furnished with large branches, rocks and a large water tray for both drinking and bathing. Newspaper is used as the substrate and, resting on the shelves in the rear corners of the vivarium, are two triangular hide-boxes. Since the snakes spend most of their time in the hide-boxes, it is easy to replace the newspaper when soiled without disturbing the snakes unnecessarily. This is also useful as neither snake enjoys being handled. The male in particular is very aggressive and bites readily when we do have to handle him. A bite from large individuals such as these can be very painful as they tend to hang on and chew in the same manner as some rear-fanged species. Whilst they are not considered to be venomous, their saliva is quite suspect, and people bitten by these snakes have reported symptoms resembling envenomation. The bite can cause swelling, and a friend of ours who was bitten on the finger by a juvenile had a swollen finger and arm as a result, along with symptoms resembling influenza which lasted for several days. We should add that the snake managed to chew on the finger for some time before being removed. These snakes don't strike and bite like most other snakes; they swing round in a sideways motion and bite and chew.

The diet of wild specimens is said to include small rodents, birds, fish, frogs and other snakes. The pair we own will only eat mice and small rats, which are offered freshly killed. We have also offered them day-old chicks but these have always been refused. When both snakes were housed together the food was offered to each snake in turn using a pair of "Algarde" tongs. These tongs are available in various sizes (and quite cheaply) from most aquarist shops. They are ideal for offering food items to snakes such as these.

Around January each year both snakes go off their food. This fasting lasts for several months, and they usually start feeding again around April. We have learned from London Zoo that the pair of H. gigas in the Reptile House there mate between February and April; this seems to tie in with our pair refusing to feed during the same period.

False Water Cobras do not use constriction to overpower their prey. They simply bite the prey animal, subdue it with the body and then swallow it, in much the same way that the Indigo snake (Drymarchon corais) does.

One thing that we have noticed when our snakes are fed is the large amount of blood that exudes from the prey item. This is caused by the punctures made by the snakes' teeth during swallowing, and possibly the action of the saliva.

cont.

Sloughing:

Our pair of Cobras slough once every 6 to 8 weeks, on average 6 times a year. Griehl (1982) states that H. gigas have a habit of tying the rear part of the body into a tight knot and then crawling through the knot in order to facilitate the slough. Unfortunately we have never witnessed this process when our snakes slough so perhaps they are not into yoga.

Related species:

Freiberg (1982) lists Hydrodynastes bicinctus in his book "Snakes of South America". This species has two subspecies: H.b. bicinctus and H.b. schultzi. The genus was previously known as Cyclagras.

Additional information:

The False Water Cobra has various common names. We have used the most commonly used name in the U.K. although it is also called the Brazilian Smooth snake or Boipevassu. Regional South American names include Nacanina, Yacanina and Boipevacu.

References:

Griehl, K. 1982. Snakes (translated from the German text 'Schlangen'). Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 113 Crossways Park Drive, Woodbury, N.Y. 11797.
Freiberg, Dr. M. 1982. Snakes of South America. T.F.H. Publications Inc. Ltd.
Stidworthy, J. 1969. Snakes of the World. Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd

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Tree Snakes by Bernard Forshaw

Many snakes, like the Boomslang and Vine Snake are well adapted to life in the trees. Attention is given here to the tree snakes of southern and South East Asia which are not only most adept at climbing in trees but have also earned the name of 'flying snakes'.

One of the best known is the Paradise Tree Snake, Chrysopelea paradisi, of Malaya. It is black with a bright green spot on each of its scales, so that it seems to have a regular pattern of green spots. It also has a row of four-petalled red spots along its back. Its underside is yellowish green. The Golden Tree Snake, Chrysopelea ornata, ranges from Sri Lanka through South East Asia to the Philippines. It is black with golden-yellow to orange markings and red spots on its back. These snakes grow up to five feet in length and are very slender, with a tail that is nearly half the length of the head and body.

Expanding Ribs

Tree snakes are most accomplished climbers, able to go up almost vertical walls or tree trunks by making use of every little irregularity in the surface. They are helped in this by a well marked angularity along each side of the body and tail. They can also spring across gaps of 3 - 4 ft. in an almost vertical position. This remarkable feat is performed by the snake coiling itself loosely over a branch then straightening explosively. The most famous exploit of these snakes is, however, to drop through the air in a glide, either from bough to bough or from tree to ground. The snake holds its body rigid and launches itself into the air, and at the same time it 'draws in its belly'. Part of this action involves spreading the outer ends of the ribs. On each side of the ventral scales is a suture and, by muscular contraction, the outer ends of each scale are drawn down and slightly in, so the whole lower surface becomes concave, trapping a cushion of air beneath it. The effect is similar to that of dropping a stick of bamboo, split lengthwise. The split bamboo falls more slowly than a comparable bamboo stem that is intact, and it descends more nearly in the horizontal position. The tree snakes are even said to help the forward movement of the glide by alternately inflating and drawing in their belly.

Hunting By Sight

When actively hunting, a tree snake climbs slowly, and almost noiselessly, to the top of a tree then glides slowly down to the lower branches, looking for lizards, geckos and similar prey. In such hunting, sight is the best way of locating a target. Related snakes belonging to the same sub-family are known to use binocular vision. They have a long horizontal pupil and the sides of the snout are hollowed out in front of the eyes, forming grooves. Light from objects directly in front of the snout travels along the groove, enters the front of each eye and strikes the retina on the other side of the eye. This almost certainly gives binocular and stereoscopic vision, demonstrated by the

way such snakes turn their heads and follow the movement of anything they are investigating.

Females Store Sperm

A related North American snake, Leptodeira annulata, known as the Cat-eyed Snake, is remarkable for the behaviour of one member of its species which laid a clutch of fertile eggs after having been kept on its own for 6 years. There are other examples of a female snake in captivity producing several clutches of fertile eggs at intervals of about a month. Presumably, therefore, some female snakes can store sperm inside their bodies for use over long periods. Whether this is general for tree snakes is not known. In fact, in spite of their being numerous and widespread, and known for a very long time, we are very ignorant of their breeding habits except to say that they lay eggs.

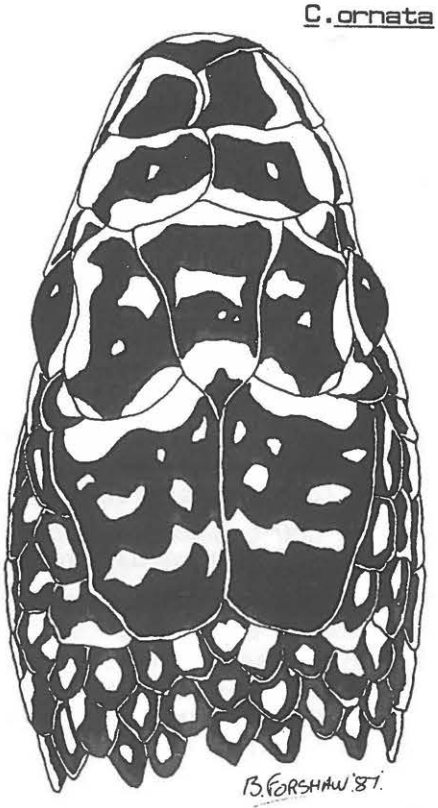
Ignorance Dispelled

This is not the only aspect of their life that has suffered from lack of knowledge. The 'flying' habit is another. As usual when information is lacking, legend and folklore take the upper hand. In Malaya and Indonesia it was believed that to get from tree to tree a snake changed into a bird and flew. Moreover, it remained in this disguise until a real bird alighted nearby, when it immediately changed back to a snake and seized the bird. Zoologists were not taken in by such stories, nor were they prepared to believe that the snake could fly, or even glide, until Major Stanley Flower kept some tree snakes in captivity. It is not easy to induce a flying snake to throw itself through the air, but Major Flower finally persuaded his pets to leap from the top windows of his house to the lower branches of a tree several yards away.

In captivity, tree snakes must have a warm vivarium - 82 to 86 degrees F - with plenty of branches and cork bark or something similar for them to hide in during the day. These snakes are at their most active late afternoon/early evening. A relative humidity of 80 - 90% will suit them and they can also be given a light spray with tepid water in the morning. The food (small mice) should be given in the evening and left overnight.

My own tree snake, the Golden Tree Snake,

Golden Tree Snake
C.ornata



C. ornata, is an excellent snake, although they are very bad tempered and will bite if wrongly handled. Of all the snakes I've kept this one tops the bill. Once he starts moving you can't take your eyes off him. Although the tree snake is mildly venomous it is totally incapable of inflicting a serious bite on a human being but, generally speaking, they are a nervous and bad-tempered species that will bite if molested. Nevertheless this is a very beautiful and interesting snake that requires a good environment, and a great deal of patience to begin with, to be kept successfully in captivity. It is not a snake for beginners.

Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Squamata
Sub-order:	Serpentes
Family:	Colubridae
Genus & species:	Chrysopelea ornata (Golden Tree Snake)
	C. paradisi (Paradise Tree Snake)

REFERENCES
"Animal Life" published by Phoebus

The author, who is in his early twenties, lives in The Wirral. His drawings have appeared in past issues of Snake Keeper. He is currently nursing a broken leg, the result of a traffic accident.

Quarantine - How essential is it?
by Kevin J. Hingley

Every good book and every worthy author will always stress the importance of placing newly purchased animals into quarantine quarters, well away from the rest of an established collection. It makes sense if you think about it as you cannot ascertain whether or not a seemingly healthy snake, or any other animal, is free from disease simply by giving it a 'once-over' glance. Some forms of disease or bacteria may have a lengthy incubation period before any visible signs of illness become apparent, and by that time it may well be too late to act. If the animal concerned has already been introduced to any other animals within a collection it is highly likely that the disease or bacteria will have spread. The same thing applies to external parasites such as mites and ticks, in particular the former of the two, which often seem to appear from nowhere and can have a devastating effect on the animal.

Before the start of my experience with reptiles, I used to keep tropical fish. I can recall just how often I would buy what appeared to be healthy stock only to discover a few days later that half of my fish were covered in 'white spot'. It is all very well saying that this is something that can be remedied quickly but what if it were something far more serious that wasn't so easy to treat? It could have been avoided had the new fish been quarantined first but, with so many 'over the counter' treatments available, and by assuming that the dealer had used quarantine to protect his own interests, one tends to be a little blasé in these matters.

My first experience with diseased reptiles concerned a young Reticulated python (Python reticulatus). A few weeks after purchase this snake displayed signs of a respiratory disorder and was taken to our vet for treatment. From the day of purchase it had been sharing a large vivarium with a pair of Royal Pythons (P. regius). I had only just managed to get the male Royal Python to feed voluntarily and the female was still having to be force fed. The young Reticulated Python refused all food offerings and was steadily going downhill when the respiratory disorder became evident. Our vet considered that the snake had a cold and, after giving the snake a multivitamin and an antibiotic injection, suggested that the temperature in the vivarium should be raised to 90 degrees F. (32 degrees C.) to cure the problem. The snake was dead before we reached home! The vivarium was scrubbed clean and disinfected and fortunately neither of the Royal Pythons contracted the virus. Of course, had the young Reticulated Python been housed separately from the beginning, then there would have been no cause for alarm as far as the Royal Pythons were concerned.

Of course there are times when it may not be possible to house newly bought specimens individually in order to quarantine them. I would advise that any animal that isn't quarantined should be monitored very closely for the first few months so that any signs of infection may be detected at the earliest possible stage. However, in the case of a virulent disease it may well be too late to prevent the spread of it amongst animals that are housed together. Every effort should be made to keep at least one vivarium free for use as a quarantine cage, and this should be kept as sterile as possible before, during and after use. The furnishings should be simple, practical and easy to clean. By avoiding the temptation to buy every 'new' snake one sees, the risk of overcrowding and therefore the possible spread of disease is greatly reduced. It is all too easy to get carried away when keeping animals, especially in the 'early days' when the bug is biting hard and every visit to a dealer reveals another species that you have just got to have. Herpetology is a strong bug indeed, and some authors have gone so far as to give the condition various names such as "Herpetitis" and "Herpetomania", as well as describing the 'symptoms'. The 'sufferer' has an overwhelming desire to read as much literature on the subject as possible and own a collection on the scale of a zoo's reptile house. It is at this stage when little thought is given to adequate housing or quarantine that overcrowding occurs, which means that instead of preventing the spread of possible infection it is being actively encouraged.

The question arises - "When is it safe not

to quarantine?" The answer has to be that it is never really safe to overlook the quarantine of any new acquisition, although there are instances where it is probably less of a risk. It is widely accepted that captive-bred animals are less likely to be diseased or infected, and therefore may be considered to be in the low-risk bracket. In my experience it is the tropical forms that are most likely to be carrying infectious diseases or bacteria, which puts them in the high-risk bracket. In the case of any wild imported animal, quarantine is essential if the risk of infection to an already established collection is to be reduced. Prevention is better than cure, as the saying goes, and if newly imported snakes are to be placed in amongst longer term captives then it would not come as a great surprise if at least half the collection showed signs of illness due to at least one of the new imports being a carrier of disease.

By limiting the size of a collection, avoiding overcrowding and ensuring that each new addition has undergone a period of quarantine lasting from one to three months, the risk of infection is greatly reduced. As a final precautionary measure, it is advisable to keep different species from differing continents in separate quarters to prevent the cross-transference of 'foreign' diseases.

SNAKE KEEPER T-SHIRTS

Design shows front cover of issue six printed red and black on white. Sizes: Small, Medium, Large and Extra Large.



£5 including postage and packing

Send your name, address, size and a cheque or postal order for £5 to:
Snake Keeper T-Shirt Offer
159 Stanley Hill, Amersham, Bucks HP7 9EY
Please allow up to 28 days for delivery.

Snake Keeper News

Unwanted passenger update (issue six)
After further searching of the Northamptonshire woman's car, the snake has been found and identified as a Grass Snake.

Many thanks to the readers who responded to our appeal for more articles. As a result of the response, next month's issue will contain more pages. Please keep them coming.

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Competition results, issue 5

The only correct entry came from:
Michael Cass, Sale, Cheshire.
The solution appears on page 15.

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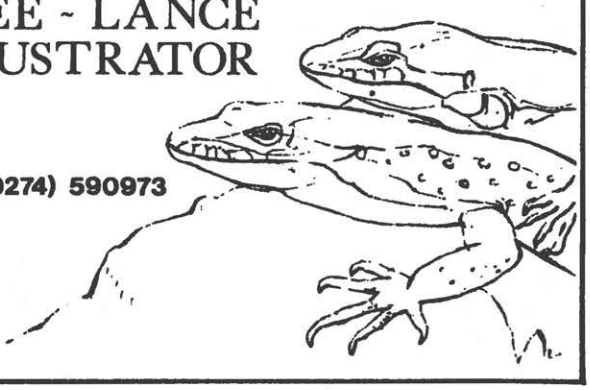
Next issue includes:

Keeping poisonous African snakes
by Stephen Spawls

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JUNIOR SNAKE KEEPER

Rearing hatchling Yellow Rat Snakes

by Dominic Betmead

The snakes, named Ringo and Tigga, were obtained from a London dealer on the 30th August 1986, having hatched 17 days earlier. They were very, very thin and light. They weighed 14 grams and were 14" long.

Accommodation

The snakes, when bought, were housed in a glass and wood vivarium, with a sheet of perspex neatly punctured with holes as a lid. The door was an outward swing type. The snakes had 2 plants, a water bowl and tiny flower pots as hiding places. Heating was provided by a lightbulb foolishly controlled by a thermostat (Slik-stat) which was later abolished as the flashing on/off disturbed the snakes. The substrate was clean paper that was replaced daily as many people find that young snakes can get skin blisters from unsterile conditions. Climbing branches were also provided.

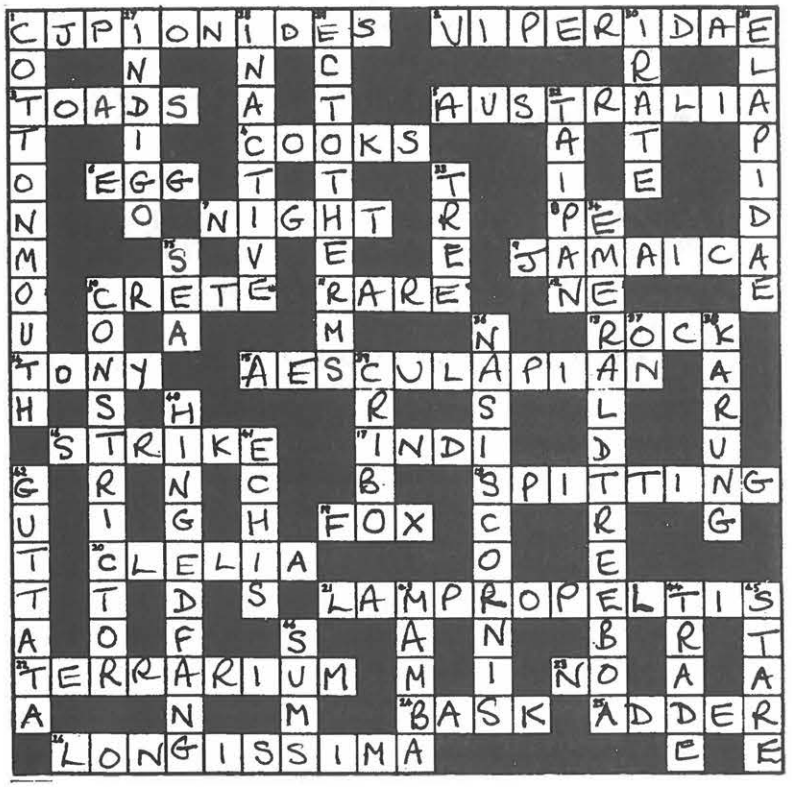
Problems

The first problem encountered was that I was unable to find mice small enough for the snakes. However, I did manange to obtain some frozen ones at long last - and then, no prizes for guessing what happened. The snakes would not eat!

Finally, one night, I placed a 'pinkie' on one of the succulent plants in the cage. I had not handled the snakes for a day or two, and Tigga bravely came and ate. The spell now broken, Ringo and Tigga would eat 1 or 2 mice at each feeding.

The next problem was that the snakes were found to be infested with mites, and so, after consulting a fellow snake keeper, I placed a strip of Vapona small space insect killer in the cage. It was suspended from the top of the cage. I left it in overnight and in the morning, when I checked, almost every mite was dead. However, Ringo, the smaller of the two looked seriously ill. He was very lethargic and would not flicker his tongue. Also, he would flatten his head and hiss slowly if touched. Naturally I was worried and I took the Vapona out immediately. When I returned home from school he was fine again! I recommend that any solid pesticides be placed by the vents of a snake cage, so as to avoid the risk of a snake touching or licking it.

After a while a new cage was obtained for the snakes; this time an all wood type with sliding glass doors. The snakes are now 30" long and growing fast.



JSK 'ANAGRAM QUIZ' by CG Pywell-Fox

Take the first letters of the ten correct answers and rearrange them to spell the name of a large venomous snake.

1. *Which sort of venom causes the blood cells to break down and is used by vipers?*
2. *Sometimes referred to as the Water Boa?*
3. *Boiga dendrophila?*
4. *Genus of N. American Garter Snakes?*
5. *Venomous desert snake named after its method of locomotion?*
6. *German name for snakes?*
7. *This was the type of back-fanged snake that killed K.P.Schmidt.*
8. *Shield-tailed snakes?*
9. *Small python famous for its habit of refusing food?*
10. *Genus of Rat Snakes?*

Answers on a postcard please. The first correct entry drawn on the closing date of 30th July will win a £5 book token. Winner notified by post.

INFORMATION

The Association of
British Wild Animal Keepers

Membership Secretary
2a Northcote Road
Clifton
Bristol BS8 3HB

Five national meetings per annum
Bi-monthly journal, RATEL
Subscriptions: £8

Leigh Herptile Society

The Secretary
27 Siddeley St
Leigh
Lancs WN7 5AZ

Monthly newsletter
Fortnightly meetings
Adm: 50p

EVENTS

REPTILE AND AMPHIBIAN EXHIBITION

The Thames and Chiltern Herpetological Group are holding an exhibition of Reptiles and Amphibians at Amersham Community Centre, Amersham, Bucks on Saturday, 25th July. The event starts at 11am and continues until 5pm. On display will be a variety of Snakes, Lizards, Frogs, Toads, Newts, Tortoises, Spiders and Insects. Admission charges are 70p for adults and 30p for children. Refreshments are available. The exhibition hall is 3 minutes walk from Amersham Station (BR and Metropolitan line). Further details from the Secretary, T.C.H.G., 30 Milton Dene, Woodhall Farm, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.

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Salisbury and District Aquarist Society
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Details from Mark Jeaves, 32 Trenchard Ave Winterbourne Gunner, Salisbury, Wilts.

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Rates: 10p per word..Min. 10 words
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FOR SALE

Bosc Monitor, male, 18 inches. £40. Tel: Peter, Chesham 775174.

Quality snakes for sale. 4' Indian, Two young Retics, Royals, Two pairs each Fourlines and Aesculapians. All excellent, clean and feeding. Also very nice Herman and Spur-thigh Tortoises with papers. £95 each. Will rail. Tel: Gill Toller (0823) 432754.

Second generation British-bred baby Boa Constrictors £70 each and Burmese Pythons (P.m.b.) £42.50p each. Contact Chris and Marcia Martin, 18 Ballinode Close, Cheltenham, Glos., GL50 4SQ. Telephone (0242) 573477.

Leopard Geckos (Eublepharis macularis) £7.50p each. Available July: Corn Snakes (Elaphe g.guttata) Amelanistic (Orange); Anerythristic (Black); Hetrazygous (Normal colour but carries genes for albinism). £15 - £25 each. Pine Snakes (Pituophis m. melanoleucas) £35 each. Tel: (0305) 62311. after 6pm.

Burmese Python, 6' female. Excellent condition. £85 or exchange for male - same condition, size. Tel: Pete Jarvis (0793) 611273 (Swindon).

WANTED

Florida/Eastern Indigo Snake. (Blue Black) Cash waiting. Will collect. Hatchling or mature snake, either sex. T. Nicholson, (0474) 351600.

Brazilian Rainbow Boa (Epicrates c. cenchria). Tel: (0305) 62311 after 6pm.

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The North East Herpetological Society
in conjunction with
Lambton Garden Centre

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August 28 - 31 1987

Lambton Garden Centre,
Chester-le-Street, Durham.
Details: Dave Robson (091) 4173732
TV coverage planned