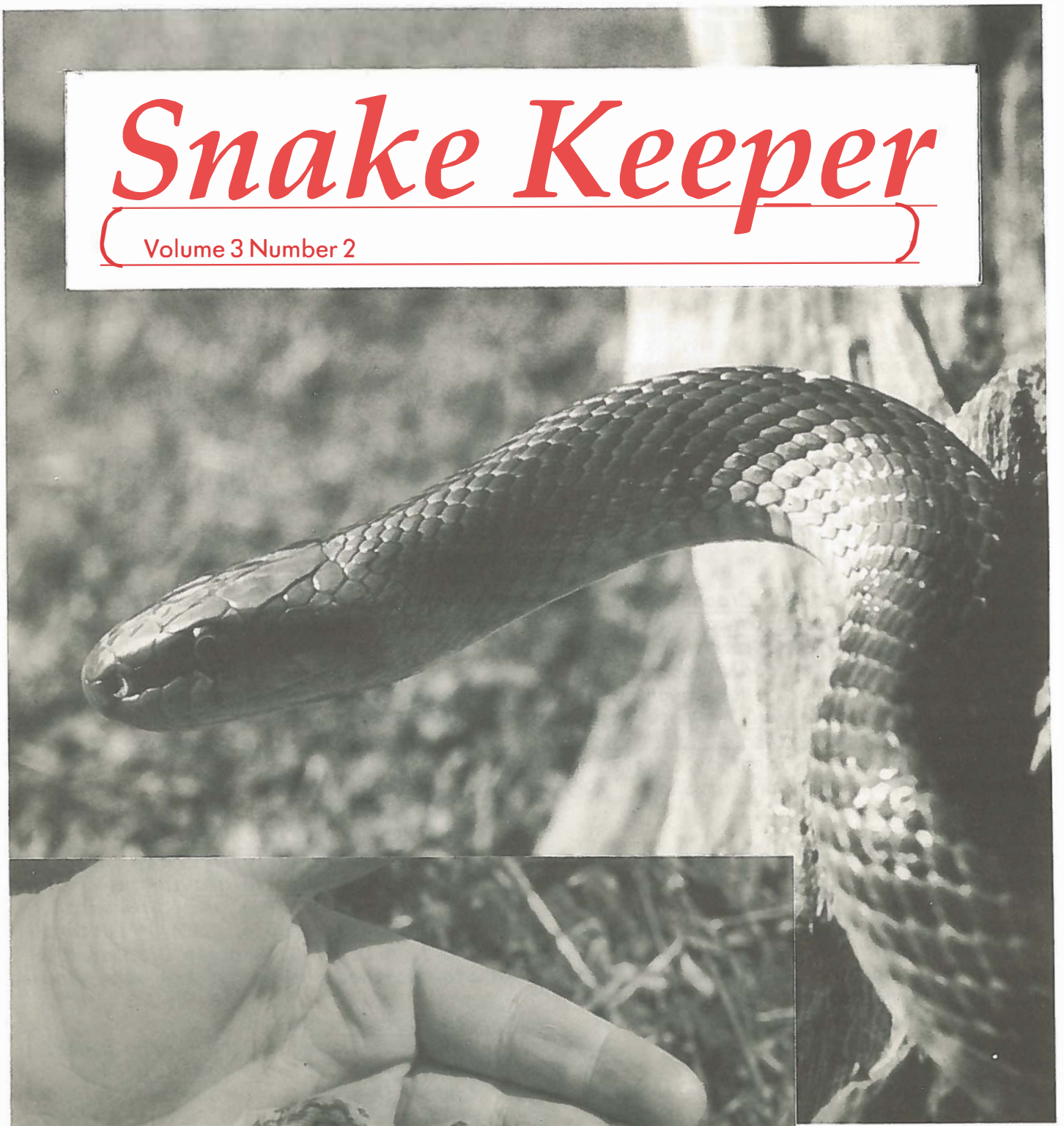
Snake Keeper

Volume 3 Number 2





Encounters with European Snakes

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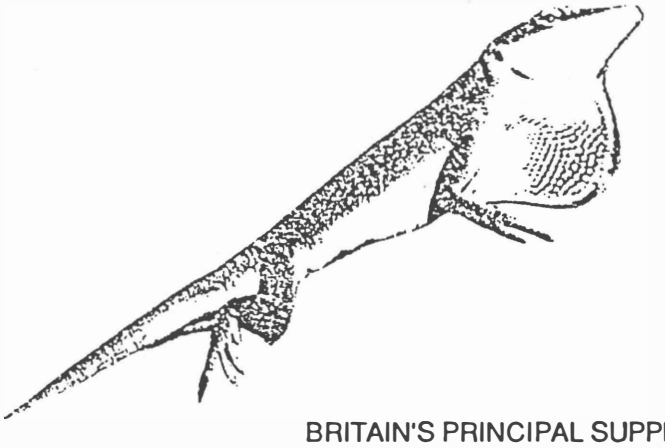
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Front cover:
Aesculapian Snake, Elaphe longissima (top) and Viperine Snake, Natrix maura (bottom).
Photograph: Werner Munsch

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Encounters with European Snakes

by Werner Munsch



I am neither a snake fanatic nor an expert in this field. I am equally fond of all other animals, irrespective of whether they have fur, feathers or scales. Snakes however have several characteristics which make them particularly interesting; the elegance of their movements when crawling, climbing, swimming or diving and, in many cases, the beauty of their colours and markings. They have, however, become very rare and in some cases one has to rely purely on memory.

The Smooth Snake (Coronella austriaca).

I would like to begin with the European Smooth Snake because this was the first snake I had any contact with as a boy. If one was aware of their habitat (see left) of forest edges and gravel pits on the outskirts of towns, they could be found quite frequently. I often visited one colony in which the male snakes had the normal reddish belly colour whilst the females had a distinct light-blue under-side. Because at that time there were numerous Slow Worms (Anguis fragilis) and lizards in the wild, the snakes had no problems in obtaining food. I often had bloody wounds because, when handled, these snakes would bite quite viciously. In captivity however they soon settle down and become quite tame. The only exception was a male which I caught in the Bavarian Forest. Soon after I caught the snake, I handed it to my wife so I could photograph it. This animal made no attempt to bite. On one occasion I caught a gravid female which presented me with seven young. These are born inside a thin foetal membrane from which they soon free themselves. I have often found young Smooth Snakes and Slow Worms in the spaces behind loose bark on fallen tree trunks. In the wild they have many enemies. I saw a Blackbird with a dead young Smooth Snake. Even large Ground Beetles will 'gang-up' on young snakes.

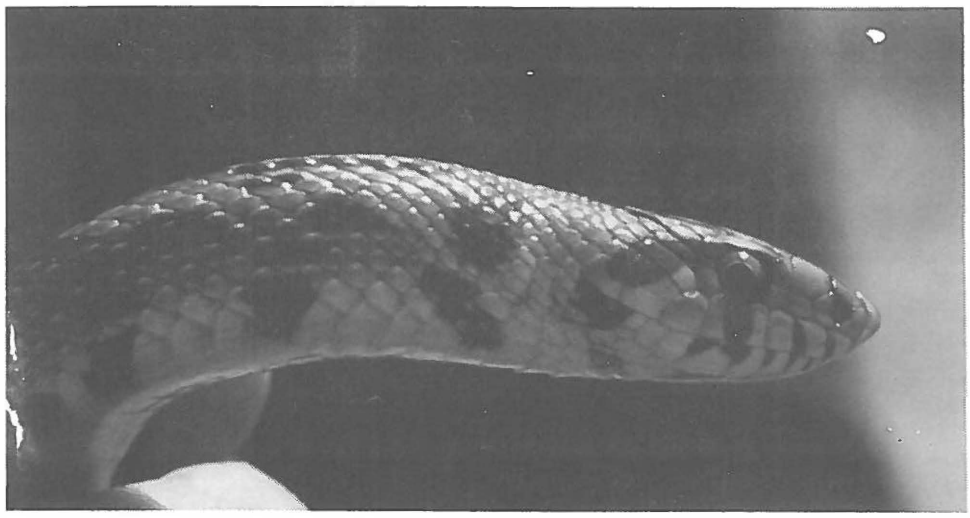
A close relative of the Smooth Snake is the Southern Smooth Snake (Coronella girondica) which I was able to catch on a visit to the Camargue. When my son and I saw these snakes in very rough terrain, usually trying to escape from us, we



Above An unaggressive Smooth Snake (Coronella austriaca) from the Bavarian Forest

Below Coronella girondica, The Southern Smooth Snake Photographs: Werner Munsch





Left and below
A Ladder Snake,
Elaphe scalaris
in the Camargue

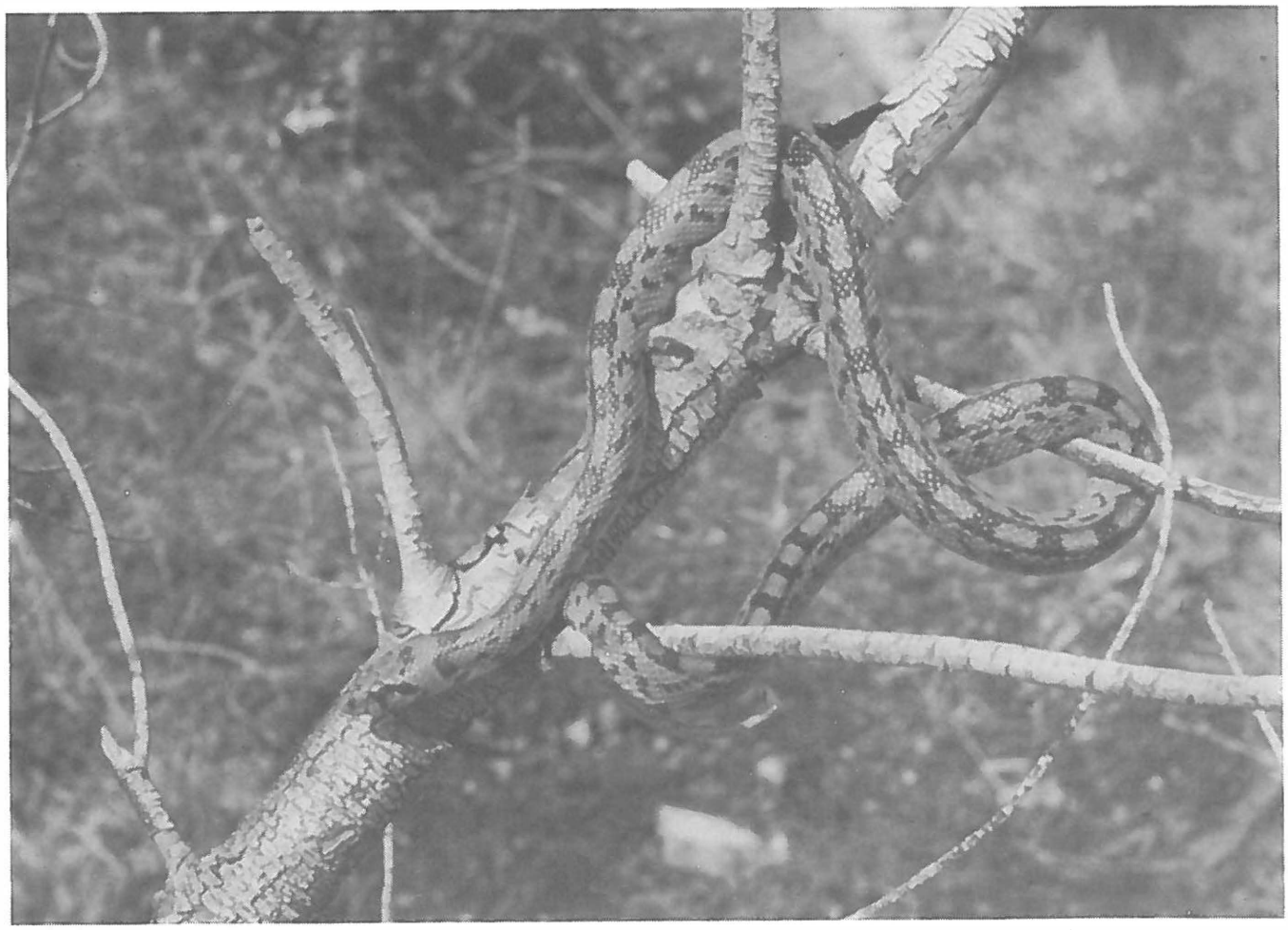
developed a little trick. We wandered along a large stream bordered by a footpath and, using a stick, we prodded along the bank which ran parallel to the footpath. When we found snakes it was relatively easy, using sign language, to signal one another so that we could stealthily get closer to photograph or film them.

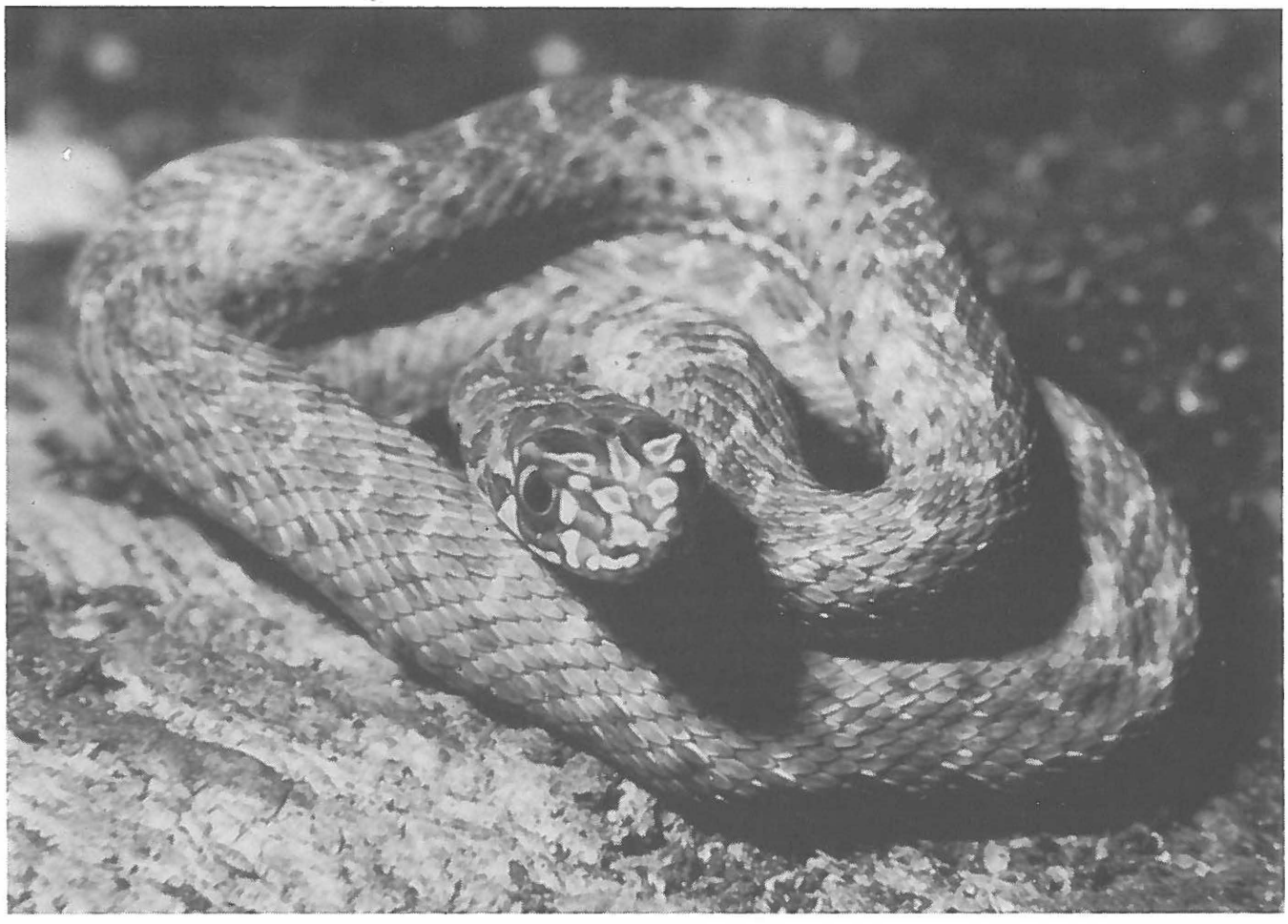
The Ladder Snake (Elaphe scalaris)

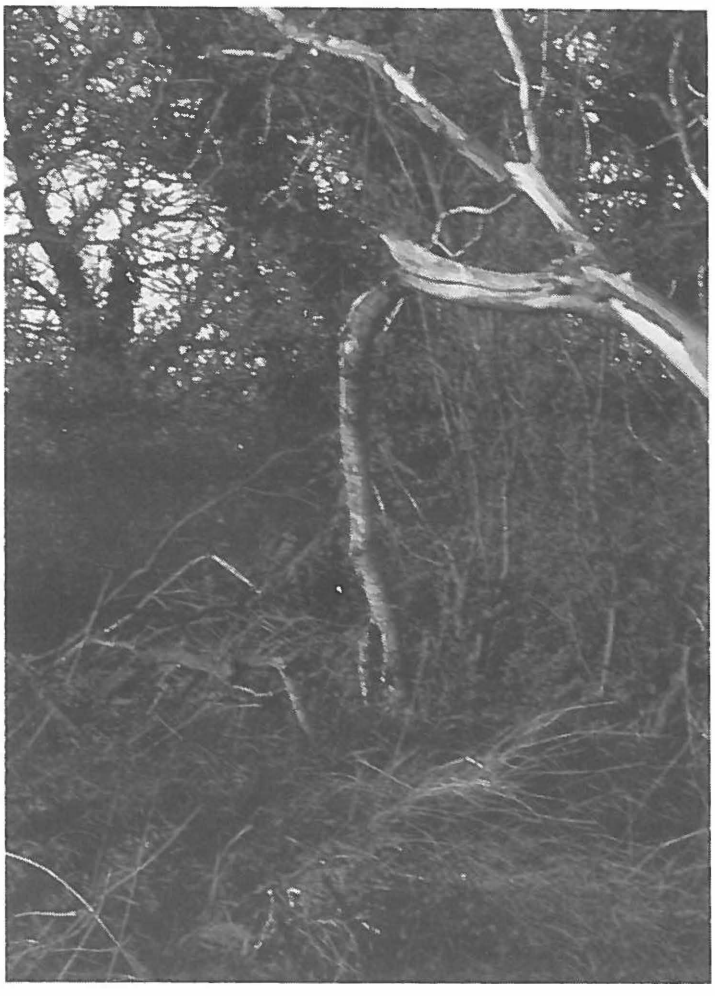
My first Ladder Snake was one I found in the Camargue and I was quite unprepared for this encounter. When I found it coiled up under an old board it reminded me of the resting stance of a young boa. My son agreed with me. With young Ladder Snakes it is very easy to see how they got their common name. They are only aggressive if they are handled roughly. If one allows them to glide freely from hand to hand they remain quite placid. These snakes were later more often found in terrain which offered numerous hiding places and which, judging from the numbers of mouseholes, obviously provided them with sufficient prey.

The Montpellier Snake
(Malpolon monspessulanus)

I found my first Montpellier Snake quite by accident. I was searching for Midwife Toads (Alytes obstetricans) in a dried up stream near Blanes in Spain. Because they







Above Young Malpolon monspessulanus

Left Biotope of the Montpellier Snake
Photographs: Werner Munsch

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like to burrow into soft and moist earth I was examining freshly dug holes when I came upon a juvenile snake. With opistoglyphic snakes of this size there is certainly no danger from a bite because the small snake is unable to open its mouth sufficiently wide to be able to bring the venom fangs into play. My most memorable experience of all with snakes also happened in the Camargue. There were two fallen trees over the path at the side of a field. One of these trees lay like a footbridge over a small marsh and ended in the undergrowth. When I approached this tree I disturbed two large basking Montpellier Snakes which immediately fled. Accompanied by loud hissing, they slid off in the direction of the 'footbridge'. As I followed them, one of the snakes stopped fleeing and turned towards me. It raised the front part of its body, inflated its throat and began to hiss loudly. This was an imposing and unforgettable sight. One could easily imagine one was facing a



cobra. I had previously read that an unexpected experience like that is truly unforgettable and in my case this is certainly true. When I remained standing still the snake turned again and fled into the undergrowth and, because I did not want to harass the snake any further, I turned and walked in the opposite direction. The next day I returned to take photographs. Because I knew the basking place, I wanted to surprise the snakes but I was only able to hear them disappearing and did not'get a shot'. My son tried to block their escape route but they were much too quick for him. Using a stick which lay on the 'footbridge' we were able to determine that these snakes were around two metres long. This measurement was possible because the snakes sped off in an almost straight line. My opinion of the danger expressed above is certainly not true for animals of this respectable size. A bite should not be solicited. Several people have perished because they have ignored the bite from one of these snakes.

The Aesculapian Snake (Elaphe longissima)

Not only is this snake an excellent climber in bushes and trees but it is also extremely elegant when moving around the stonework of old walls. Every niche and

Above
The Aesculapian Snake (Elaphe longissima)
Photo: Werner Munsch

---

irregularity is used. I was able to see this snake on an old park wall near Pisa in Italy. One must however be very cautious. Usually I was unable to find out why they suddenly became restless and disappeared. I was able to come into closer contact with this species when someone gave my wife a specimen some 110cm long. The snake had been found elsewhere and was passed on to us because of our interest in reptiles. I am certain that this snake had escaped from captivity but it was not very tame. Although it did not actually bite, it darted its head forwards when one passed near it. I was unable to find its owner so I fed it for a short time on white mice which it immediately accepted. We only kept this snake for a short time because at that time we planned a trip to Lake Neusiedel where we knew a colony of these snakes lived. It was a source of great delight to release this well-fed snake into the wild at the same time using a few metres of Super 8 film to record the spectacle.

The Western Whip Snake
(Coluber viridiflavus)



Left Biotope of the Western Whip Snake

Below The Western Whip Snake, Coluber viridiflavus

Photographs: Werner Munsch

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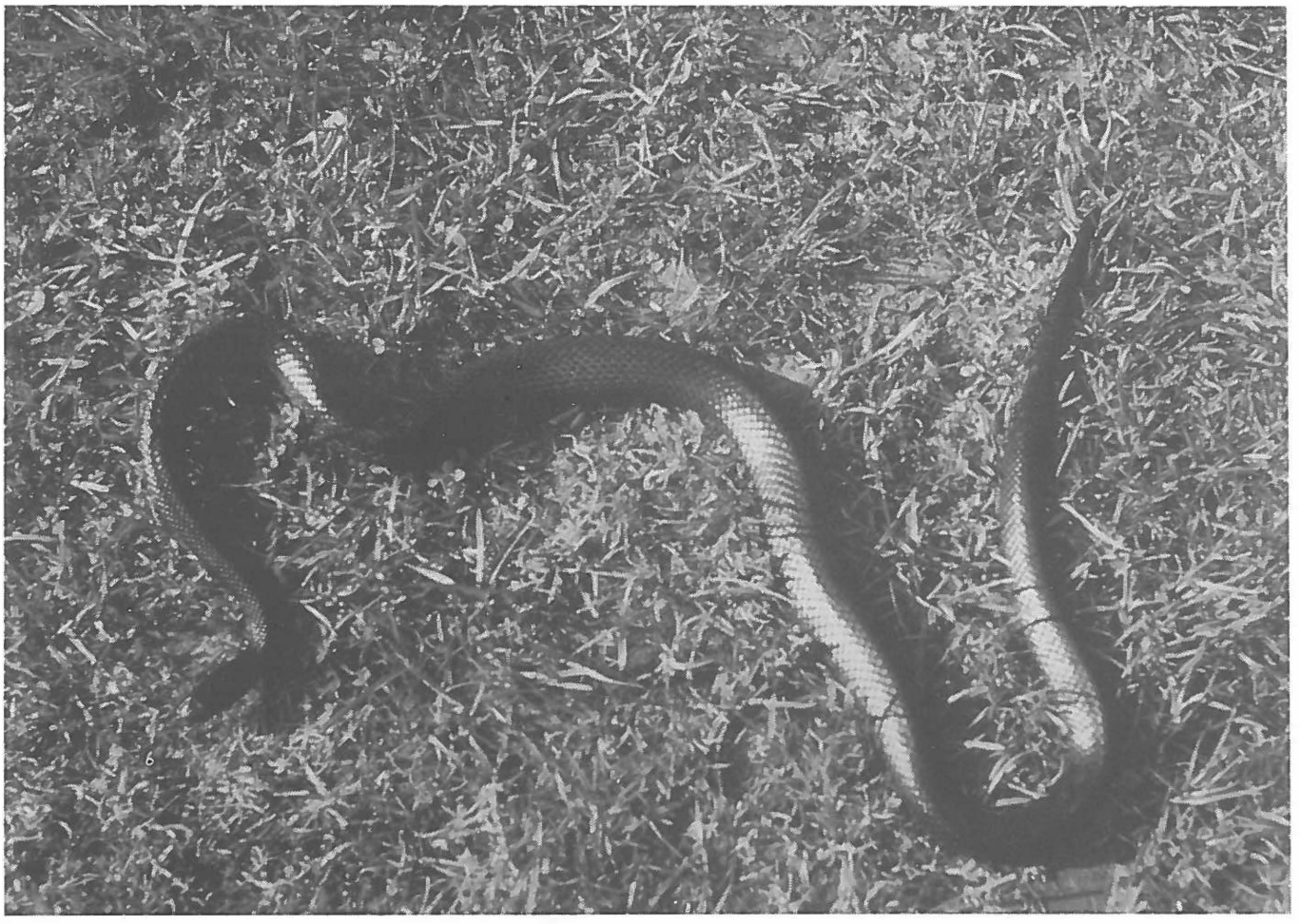
scars to remind me. I had an unforgettable experience one morning when, just after dawn, I saw a large specimen eating an adult Eyed Lizard (Lacerta lepida).

The Black Whip Snake (Coluber viridiflavus carbonarius)

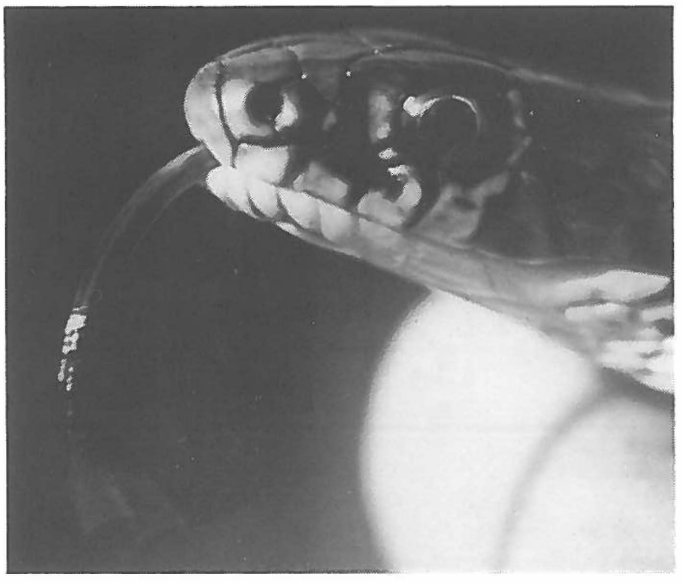
In Yugoslavia I was able to save one of these snakes from being stoned to death. Because I wanted to get it to safety quickly, I was unable to examine it in great detail. A short time later, however, I was given another specimen to keep. Newly-sloughed, it presented a wonderful sight. This snake appears to be even more bad tempered than the Western Whip Snake. After he had been bitten several times, my friend gave his



Most of these snakes were seen during a holiday on the Italian Riviera. A dried-up river bed with lots of rocks and driftwood and thickly overgrown with Agaves and Opuntias, was the ideal biotope for these snakes. Hatchlings were quite rare. The snakes we saw were around 80 to 150 cm long. It is not easy to catch this beautifully marked but quick and irrascible snake. To this day I have a few



animal back to the dealer. During a Spring holiday at Gran Sasso in Italy I was fortunate to find a number of these snakes basking in the early morning in rough terrain with lots of rocks and fallen trees. They had newly emerged from hibernation. In an area of around 200 square metres I found seven of these snakes. They were all extremely dirty and nondescript but were quite well behaved. When I returned a few days later they had all sloughed and were a beautiful lacquer-black. Their belligerance had also returned.



Above The Black Whip Snake, (Coluber viridiflavus carbonarius)

Below The Large Whip Snake, (Coluber jugularis)

Photographs: Werner Munsch

The Large Whip Snake (Coluber jugularis)

I encountered this snake near Zadar in Yugoslavia. It occurred in all sizes. It lives mainly in the hollows of centuries-old olive trees. I found that this snake was not as aggressive as its relatives described previously. I took home an extremely peaceful specimen and it quickly became quite tame. Some of my friends had the opposite experience. The snake settled down very quickly and soon afterwards took its first white mouse. It was an ideal charge apart from the manner in which it killed its prey. After slightly constricting its prey it presses it against a rock until it is dead. Some comparison with monitors can be made here and, for this reason, we released the snake back into the wild during our next holiday at Zadar.

*****

Encounters with European Snakes, Part II, will appear in next month's issue.

Asian Rat Snakes of the *Elaphe* Genus
Part XII *Elaphe conspicillata* (Boie, 1826)

by Klaus-Dieter Schulz

Introduction

The Japanese Forest Rat Snake, Elaphe conspicillata, is not a very well-known species. Its habitat is very similar to the closely-related Mandarin Snake, Elaphe mandarina.

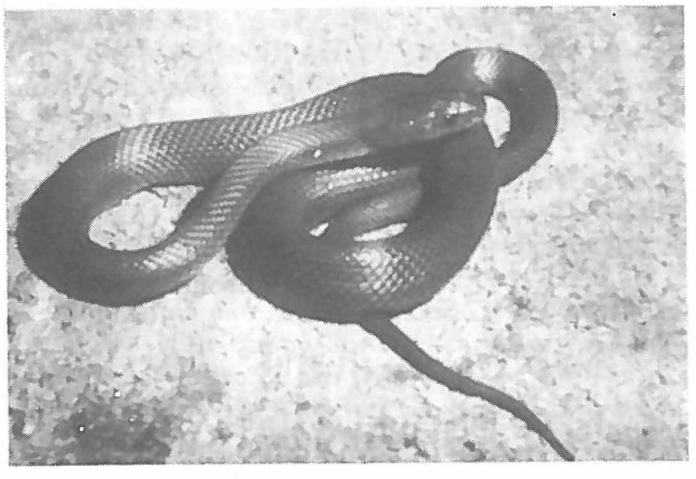
Description

The colour of the upper side of the body is very variable. I have heard of greenish, brownish and reddish-brown specimens. According to the ground colour, there are either matt-black or small white spots scattered over the body. These spots become more insignificant in adult animals. The ventral surface is red or red-brown with a black checkerboard pattern. The markings on the head resemble an arrow-shaped pattern which extends from the middle of the frontal scale to the neck. From each eye there is a stripe reaching to the upper labials and to the corner of the mouth. The upper and lower labials, as well as the underside of the head, are either cream or yellow.

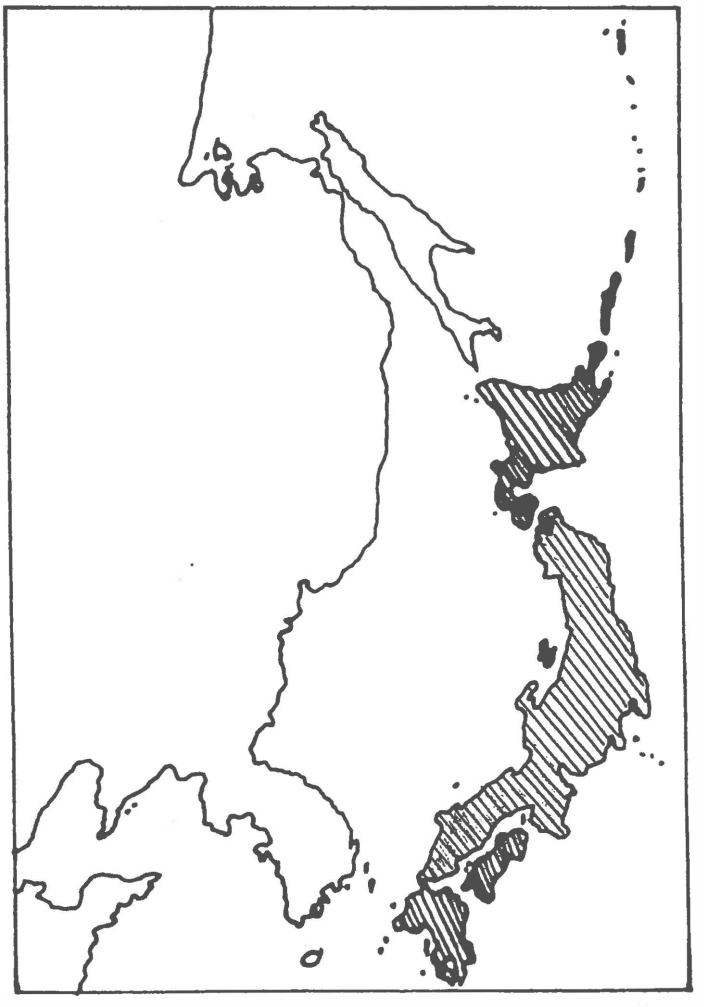
On the island of Hokkaido, specimens with a black belly and without spots along the back can be found (Goris, written communication, 1987).

A further variant is Elaphe conspicillata f. japonica which was earlier classed as a species in its own right (E. japonica, Maki, 1931). However, since there are animals which can not be assigned to E. japonica or E. conspicillata without considerable doubt, they were later classed as a colour variant of the latter species. The variations from the normally coloured E. conspicillata are the unicoloured red-brown or vivid red specimens which have no markings on their back and which have a unicoloured yellowish or greenish underside. E. conspicillata f. japonica is classed as very rare (Mori, 1984). Young animals are identical to adults but have much more significant markings.

The species can reach a length of up to 120cm but normally they remain smaller.



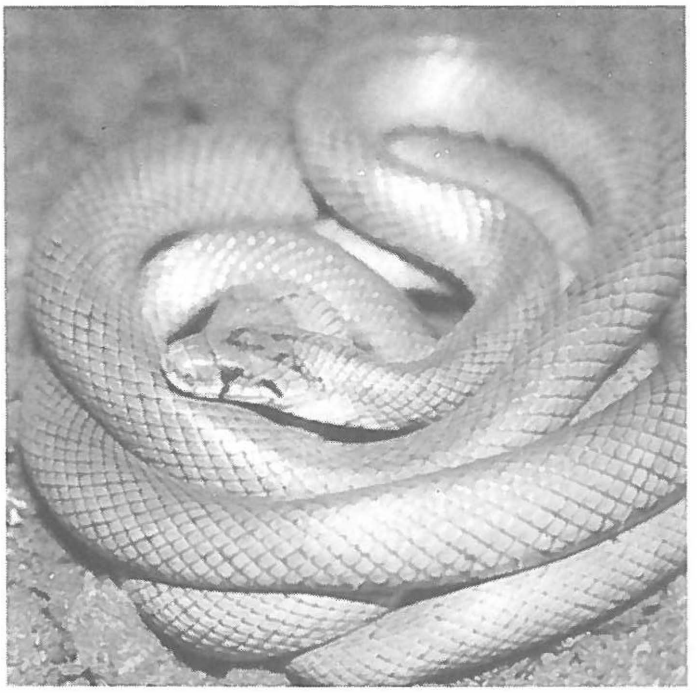
Elaphe conspicillata f. japonica, the red version of the Japanese Forest Rat Snake.
Photo: Max Mori



Distribution range of Elaphe conspicillata
K-D Schulz

Distribution and Habits

Elaphe conspicillata:
Japan (Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu)



Elaphe conspicillata

Photo: K-D Schulz

U.S.S.R. (Kunasir, the most southerly of the Kuril Islands).

Elaphe conspicillata f. japonica:
Japan (Hokkaido, Honshu), U.S.S.R. (Kunasir).

The Japanese Forest Rat Snake is a nocturnal, terrestrial animal which likes to burrow (Fukada, 1965). Goris (1975) observed this snake in and at the edges of a sweet potato field and was able to confirm the findings of Fukada (1965) that these snakes are frequently to be found in rodent burrows and below clumps of grass. The main food of E. conspicillata consists of voles and moles (Fukada, 1965). Goris (1975) mentions that in captivity these snakes would only rarely eat the mice and chicks which were offered to them. As opposed to this, however, the tadpoles of Rana catesbeiana were greedily devoured. However, with this basic food the snakes only survived for two months. It would thus appear that amphibians also form part of the diet of the Japanese Forest Rat Snake.

Alexander and Diener (1958) observed E. conspicillata on the island of Honshu in the prefecture of Kanagawa. The solitary animal was basking on a natural stone wall in the vicinity of Lake Hakone.

Goris (written communication, 1987) describes the 'japonica' variety as a pure highland species.

Between the months of May and October, Fukada (1986) carried out field expeditions on several Japanese specimens and measured average body temperatures of 24 degrees C. Since he was only able to observe this species early in the year, he came to the conclusion that Elaphe conspicillata prefers lower temperatures.

Maintenance in the Vivarium

To date nothing is known about the successful maintenance of this rat snake in the vivarium. (Goris (1987, written communication) reports that this species presents almost the same problems as other mountain-dwelling species. It is difficult to accustom them to laboratory mice and at higher temperatures the snakes go on hunger strike completely.

For the past three years I have been in possession of an adult pair and have had exactly the same experiences. At first they were housed in a vivarium at temperatures of 25 to 30 degrees C and were kept completely dry. Whilst the male immediately accepted young mice, the female refused any kind of food and behaved very aggressively with tail vibrations and wild biting. It was later found that the animal was gravid. In May four very large eggs were laid but I was unable to incubate them. Fukada's (1965) E. conspicillata laid three to seven eggs between the months of July and August and from these the hatchlings, averaging 33mm in length, emerged after 47 to 55 days.

One month after the eggs had been laid my female ate a young mouse but, after that, went on a renewed fast and refused any kind of food. In July the male also began to refuse food. Moreover, I was able to determine that both animals were having trouble sloughing which I ascribed to them being kept under conditions which were too dry. For this reason they were transferred to an unheated vivarium, part of the substrate of which (peat) was kept constantly moist. In this vivarium, the temperature was kept between 22 to 27 degrees C. Soon after this transition both animals ate a young mouse and that was all they ate during that year. It was not until February of the following year, after a hibernation of two months at 10 degrees C, that both snakes began to eat voluntarily and regularly again, taking a half-grown mouse every ten days. They were active until the end of June and then again stopped eating until the following

February. During this time the snakes did not appear to lose any weight.

We can only guess according to Fukada's field experiments that this short period of activity corresponds to their natural behaviour in the wild because the results of long-term experiments with this species are not available.

I do not know whether anyone has yet succeeded in breeding this snake in captivity.

*****

Asian Rat Snakes of the Elaphe Genus, Part X111, Elaphe moellendorffi will appear in next month's issue.

This series of articles, 'Die hinterasiatischen Kletternatern der Gattung Elaphe', was originally published in the magazine 'Sauria' beginning in 1985. Part X11, featuring Elaphe conspicillata, appeared in 'Sauria' 1, March 1988. This English translation by John Hackworth has been printed by kind permission of the author

Book Review

A Beginners Guide to Keeping Frogs and Lizards by C.H. Keeling.

Pub'd by Bassett Publications, Plymouth
ISBN 094 6873 992 Price £4

Having met the author of this book at a recent Thames and Chiltern Herpetological Group meeting and knowing what a great depth of knowledge and caring for animals the author has, I was looking forward to reading this book. I hasten to add that I have not been disappointed.

Chapters 1 & 2 are thought-provoking sections which experienced keepers as well as beginners would do well to read, encouraging us to find more information about the intended animal and its habitat before any purchase is made. This is something about which I feel very strongly and which is a very enjoyable task as, after all, books can easily be obtained from libraries. One of the aspects of owning a pet shop (albeit briefly!) which I found very upsetting was my customers' reluctance to buy books with their animal, even an excellent book costing only 70p on how to keep snakes. The purchase of a book such as the one being reviewed at the same time as an animal is purchased would undoubtedly save the lives of a large number of animals.

The one section which I feel leaves a lot to be desired is housing. This relies on the light bulb as the sole source of heat, my feeling is that this form of heating is barbaric. Although this book was written in 1985, heater pads, cables, tubular heaters, bi-metal thermostats, electronic thermostats, timers and ceramic heaters were all available then. I feel that there should also have been a greater emphasis on obtaining a good thermometer (maximum/minimum) to ensure that the correct temperature ranges are maintained. This, after all, is one of the major adjustments we have to make and one of the most frequent causes of problems beginners have with their newly-bought animals. An incorrect temperature can cause problems because below a certain temperature the animals stop feeding and at the other extreme they become very distressed and die.

The chapter on health also contains a lot of information and suggestions which should provoke a desire to keep the animals correctly.

Chapter 5 includes a section which many of us would do well to ponder; I have found it to be very true that some of us are better at keeping certain types of reptiles and amphibians than others. In my case I have realised that snakes and terrapins seem to be easy for me whereas lizards seem to go downhill very fast in my hands.

In conclusion, the text is superb and has a much better approach to the subject than many books of equal or greater cost. The book is of great value to beginners and experienced herpetologists alike. My one big worry about the likelihood of this book reaching the beginner is that, at this price or less, there are several other more lavishly illustrated books on the shelves which may attract the beginners attention without providing all the information they need.

Reviewer: Roger Grenville

A Visit to the Reptile House at Glasgow Zoo

by Ian Mitchell and Jacky Appleby

When we recently visited Glasgow Zoo we were amazed at the changes and improvements which had been carried out since our last visit several years ago. Naturally our main interest lay with the reptiles so we headed straight for the Reptile House where we experienced the greatest surprise of our visit. The Tropical House, which formerly housed a random collection of animals and birds from the tropics, has now been placed under the expert management of the Curator of Reptiles, Mr. Les Brown, who has transformed the building to such an extent that the name must surely soon be changed to the Reptile House. There is not a tropical bird or cat in sight, just a magnificent array of snakes (most of them in colonies) in huge vivaria about the size of the average living room, surrounding an impressive array of large palms, the only remnants of the original Tropical House. On arrival we were met by Les Brown who took the time and trouble to guide us through the collection and made our visit interesting and very worthwhile. He give us many tips and a great deal of advice on feeding, husbandry and the breeding of snakes and, as he showed us around, his pride in the collection was obvious, and justifiably so. There are some magnificent snakes on display and they are obviously exceptionally well cared for. This is underlined by their recent breeding successes; Rainbow Boas, Cuban Boas, Hog Island Boas, Indian Pythons and various species of tortoises have all been bred this year and many of the young can be seen in the Nursery Suite near the exit. The incubators are also in full public view and always have a captive and fascinated audience.

Whilst we were primarily interested in the snakes, mention should also be made of the superb collection of Mexican Beaded Lizards (Heloderma horridum) which are Les Brown's first love. He has spent ten years working with this species and hopes soon to be able to breed them for the first time not only in Glasgow but in Britain. He has in the past almost had success with Gila Lizards in that viable eggs were laid but unfortunately did not hatch. We naturally wish him success in the future.

Glasgow Zoo specializes in giant snakes and, if not the largest collection of giant snakes in the country, it is certainly one of the most imposing. We were particularly impressed with the colonies of Australian Water Pythons (Liasis fuscus), Rainbow Boas (Epicrates cenchria maurus), Carpet Pythons (Morelia spilotes variegata) and the Cuban Boas (Epicrates angulifer).

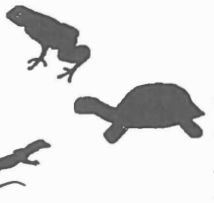
The colony of Blue-tongued Skinks (Tiliqua scincoides intermedia) are also very interesting. If anyone keeps this subspecies, Les would like to hear from them. Les Brown is a pleasant, interesting and entertaining person with an obvious love for and devotion to his charges. Although he is happy to discuss snakes and snake keeping with interested herpetologists, he is a very busy person with an enormous amount of work and responsibility; because he is the Species Co-ordinator for Heloderms for the Reptile Joint Management Group of British Zoos, great demands are made on his time.

The following snakes are currently on display at Glasgow Zoo.

Australian Water Python *Liasis fuscus*
Rainbow Boa *Epicrates cenchria maurus*
Indian Python *Python molurus molurus*
African Rock Python *Python sebae*
Reticulated Python *Python reticulatus*
Jamaican Boa *Epicrates subflavus*
Puerto Rican Boa *Epicrates inornatus*
Cuban Boa *Epicrates angulifer*
Emerald Tree Boa *Corallus caninus*
Carpet Python *Morelia spilotes variegata*
Hog Island Boa *Boa constrictor sp.*
Amethystine Python *Liasis amethystinus*
Honduran Milk Snake *Lampropeltis triangulum hondurensis*

Glasgow Zoo has undergone enormous and far-reaching changes and improvements under the directorship of Richard O'Grady and this zoo will no doubt continue to improve in content, housing and facilities until it becomes one of the foremost zoos in the country. In short, for a smashing day out with a wonderful collection of reptiles, give Glasgow Zoo a visit soon. Their address is Glasgow Zoo, Calderpark, Uddingston, Glasgow G71 7RZ. Telephone (041) 771 1185

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LETTERS

Snake Keeper
159 Stanley Hill
Amersham
Bucks HP7 9EY

Dear Sir,

I note with interest Chris & Marcia Martin's comments on the use of domestic light bulbs in their article on page 22 of Volume Three, Number 1 of Snake Keeper magazine.

Obviously Mr and Mrs Martin are entitled to their views and equally entitled to keep their animals under their own methods but I am a little astonished to read that they regard the use of light bulbs as 'barbaric'. I'm sure there are a greater percentage of herpetologists who use domestic light bulbs to provide both heat and light for their reptiles and amphibians than there are those who use alternative methods.

I have been keeping a very wide range of reptiles for around 12 years and I have always used domestic light bulbs, sometimes without but usually with a thermostat to regulate temperature levels and I can say in all honesty that my findings totally contradict those of Mr and Mrs Martin. I also know of many other herpetologists in my region who use the same methods as I do and they too have had more successes than failures. As for providing a photoperiod, I can prove that this is not always essential for a large number of the more common species being kept in captivity in this country. I am pleased to admit that I have had success in maintaining and breeding many species of herptiles and I have even managed to breed Foxsnakes (Elaphe vulpina vulpina), for what appears to be the first time in the UK. This I achieved in 1987 without subjecting the adult snakes to any set photoperiod whatsoever. I have just repeated a breeding success with African House Snakes, again without using a photoperiod.

As for being 'barbaric', well, my snakes seem to be far from stressed to me. They eat their food, slough and breed which really speaks for itself. Perhaps I'm not a 'serious herpetologist', albeit an amatuer, simply a barbarian.

I know of far too many cases of burns in snakes because the keeper has used heating equipment far too powerful in wattage such as tubular heaters, spot lamps and ceramic heater bulbs to be convinced that these methods are safe. The 'typical' home vivarium is not large enough to cope with the heat given off by these heaters, especially if a thermostat goes on the blink or, worse still, is not used at all. I'll stick to my cheap reliable light bulbs and Uno thermostat and forsake implementing a photoperiod until my snakes start doing cartwheels or sit gibbering in the corner of their vivarium or, worse still, stop feeding and breeding in which case they will probably be dead and not insane.

Yours sincerely, Kevin J. Hingley
Dudley

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Dear Editor,

Could you give me any information on the captive conditions and breeding of the Hog Island Boa, Boa constrictor nebulosa? I have a large collection of snake books but I can't find any details about them. I'm building a large vivarium and I hope to breed them.

Yours faithfully,

S. Smith
Glasgow

Dear Mr Smith,

Hertfordshire reader Colin Clark, who has contributed two articles about this snake keeps two Hog Island Boas in a vivarium measuring 1m x 1m x 53cm (lxhxd). The cage is heated by a 250 watt ceramic trough heater giving an average temperature of 26 to 29.5 degrees C in the middle to lower areas. The temperature at the top of the cage is slightly higher at 31 to 32 degrees C. Colin sprays the vivarium occasionally but more often when the snakes are about to slough.

Glasgow Zoo acquired some Hog Island Boas in February 1988. Mating activity was noted immediately the snakes arrived and,

in September last year, two females produced a total of nine live young and some dead. Two young were kept and the rest were sold. The Zoo are not claiming this was a captive breeding but they are hoping for a repeat this year. As you live nearby it would be worthwhile visiting the zoo.

Finally, a Berkshire reader, Mike East, who keeps two females and a male which he acquired in February 1988 reports that one of his females is definitely gravid. Hopefully, Mike will keep us informed about her progress.

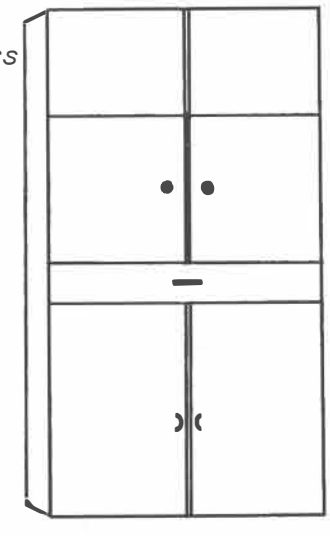
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How to Create 'Thamnophia'

by Col. G. Pywell-Fox

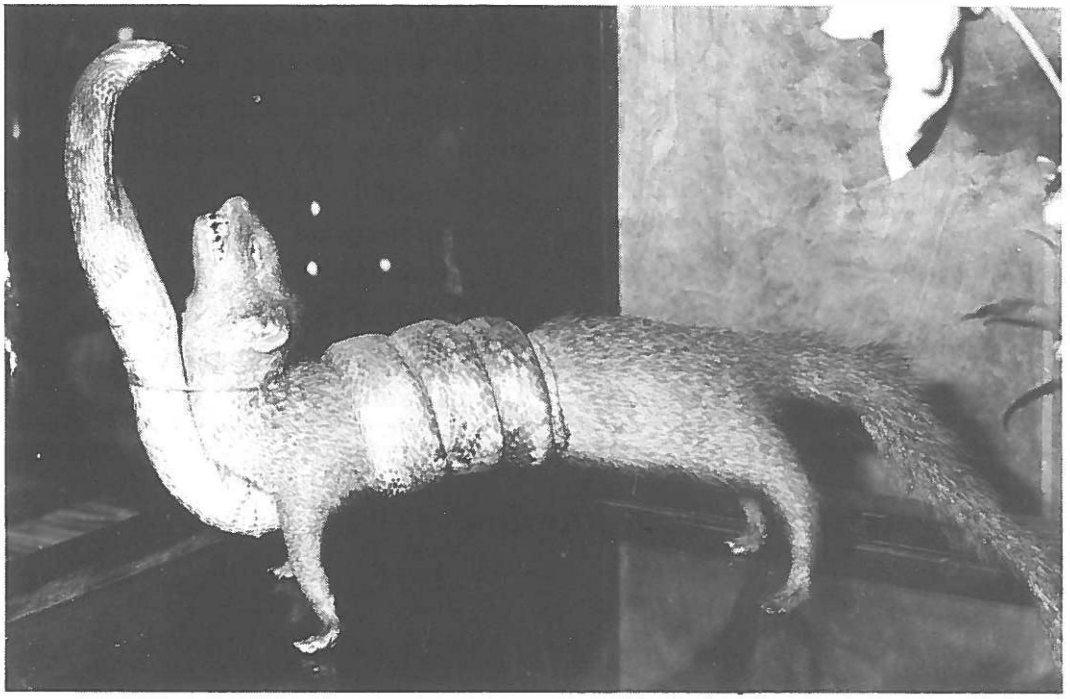
The main requirement for this project is an ex-kitchen unit. These can usually be picked up at junk shops, furniture sales, second-hand shops, etc. for around £3-£10. They usually comprise:-



I find the only bits worth keeping are the two glass doors. When the unit is laid flat it will probably measure approximately 1.5m by .9m. When I made mine, I removed all the doors and the drawer. I was then left with 3 or 4 partitions (ex-shelves). These can either stay or go, as you require. It is useful to leave one with a hole cut in to use as a partition. One of the old shelves propped over the hole will act as the "closed door". I was lucky enough to get a carpenter to make two windows to use as lids. Alternatively, sliding glass runners can be pinned around the edge, with two sheets of glass or perspex to act as the access. Two holes drilled through the wooden strut next to the original glass sliders will hold a wire, through which a light bulb can be suspended (60W or 100W, depending on room temperature). About 30cm away, a cable can be connected to a ceramic bulb and thermostat. If the thermostat is carefully positioned, the ceramic heater will only come on when the light bulb is off, either at night or if the bulb should blow.

A lot of snake keepers keep Garter Snakes in small tanks, etc. to make cleaning easy. I use newspaper for a substrate, so that as soon as I spot any faeces, I can quickly change the paper. With a large surface area, you also have a lot of scope for furnishings. I have a large, easily changeable pond in mine, along with rocks, branches, hide boxes, etc. It is also very useful to have one or more small well-ventilated tanks within the unit. I raised a ten day old Corn Snake in a 60cm tank within my unit: it is now in a larger unit, which it shares with a juvenile Black Rat snake. This unit has also been home to an Agama, a Yellow Rat Snake, an Indian Python, a boa, terrapins, geckos and an Argentine Horned Frog. With careful temperature control, the list of different charges which can be housed in Thamnophia is endless. I call it Thamnophia because mine was originally constructed for Garter Snakes.

Mongoose in the coils of a Cobra



This magnificent tribute to the art of the taxidermist was recently spotted in a guest house in Berlin by reader Norbet Schneeweis. Norbet, who lives in the German Democratic Republic, is the author of 'Experiences in Keeping Cook's Garden Tree Boas' (Snake Keeper Volume Two, Number Ten).

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Snake Keeper News

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS IN CAPTIVITY 1989 INVENTORY REQUEST

Frank L. Slavens, Compiler of the Inventory of Reptiles and Amphibians in Captivity is requesting contributions for the 1989 edition.

Anyone keeping live reptiles or amphibians is asked to contribute to the annual inventory. Please submit the following information.

(1) A complete list of all reptiles and amphibians living in your collection as of January 1st 1989. Sexes of adult animals should be included and should be listed male (1.0.0), female (0.1.0), unknown (0.0.1). Juvenile animals should also be listed using the same format. For example: 1.2.1 + juv 0.0.10 would read one adult male, two adult females, one adult of unknown sex, no juvenile males, no juvenile females and ten juveniles of unknown sex.

(2) A list of all species which bred during last year (1988). Information may be very sparse with simply an indication that the taxon was bred during the year or it may be quite lengthy including, but not limited to: dates of copulation, dates of egg laying and hatching, types of substrates and temperatures used

during incubation, light cycles, hibernation etc. Any type of information up to three or four paragraphs may be used.

(3) Please list all specimens in your collection which you believe may set a longevity record for the species. List the date of acquisition, your specimen ID number, the sex, estimated age at capture, wild or captive bred, living or dead. There is also room for some brief notes.

(4) A listing of any publications (including books, museum bulletins, journals, magazines etc.) with reference to reproduction of captive reptiles and amphibians.

(5) Be sure to include your name, address and telephone numbers as you want them listed.

The deadline for information is May 1st.

Send all information to

Frank L. Slavens
P.O. Box 30744
Seattle
Washington 98103
U.S.A.

The Inventory, Longevity, Breeding Notes - Reptiles and Amphibians in Captivity current January 1st 1988 is now available.

This 402 page inventory lists 462 genera, 1357 species and several hundred subspecies. The information has been compiled from 400 reptile and amphibian collections (148 public, 252 private), mostly in the United States. The inventory costs $32.50 hardbound and $25 softbound plus $3 postage ($4 overseas).

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SOFTWARE DONATION

A reader who wishes to remain anonymous has recently donated a new computer software program to Snake Keeper to help us keep control of our expanding subscriber mailing list. The new program gives us a greater flexibility regarding label addressing. Whereas we were only able to print one initial and a surname using the old program we can now print full forenames. If you are not happy with your current address label (or it contains a mistake) please let us know. The new program also offers greater scope regarding mailshots to shops etc. and can hold over 2000 addresses.

Please note: Your name and address are held on our computer files solely for the purpose of mailing your copies of Snake Keeper. At no time will they be made available or sold to anyone else. If you do not wish your records to be held on our computer files please let us know immediately.

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Lamprophis fuliginosus (Black phase). *Lamprophis arabicus* (Green phase). *Pituophis melanoleucus catenifer* (1.1) adult. *Elaphe obsoleta spiloides* (1.1) 1986/1987. Consider exchange. Ralf Hermann, Wilhelm-Kunze-Ring 39, 3320 Salzgitter 1, Federal Republic of Germany Telephone 05341/41066.

Young Garter Snakes, £4 each. Telephone (02406) 6328 after 6pm (Bucks).

Hog Island Boa, approximately 3.5'. £150. Telephone (0895) 833734.

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INFORMATION

New herpetological society in the Surrey/Hampshire area. Monthly meetings. Monthly newsletter, quarterly journal, junior section. First meeting to be held on January 30th in Aldershot. Future venue depends on membership distribution. For further information contact:
Jim or Shiralee Hughes
1 Springfield Road
Elstead
Surrey GU8 6EG
Telephone (0252) 702714

Volume Two Back Issues
Continued from page 2

No.12 December 1988
* Asian Rat Snakes of the *Elaphe* genus, Part X, *Elaphe flavolineata*
* An account of first year growth in the Russian Ratsnake, *Elaphe schrenckii*
* The Dutch Snake Society Snake Day 1988
* The snakes of Transcaucasia, Part II, Colubrids * Fangs for the ferret
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