

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY of AMATEUR HERPETOLOGISTS (Inc.)

(Member of the Australasian Affiliation of Herpetological Societies)

NEWSLETTER

3 June, 2000 (22)

NEARLY THERE!

Well, after all this time things are almost in place for a great keeping system in Western Australia. The last-minute finetuning, the public discussion process and parliamentary approval of the new regulations may cause a few delays, but let us hope that these are minimal. The draft regulations look quite good generally with only minor modifications suggested by WASAH and PIJAC along with requests for explanations defining a couple of grey areas regarding "farmers", "dealers" and "harvesters". No doubt these will become more clear once issuing of the respective commercial licences commences.

It is definitely a "user pays" system, which should see a greater worth placed on our herpetofauna. It may take some time for many of us to move into this new era. I know that it is sometimes difficult to accept that once the bottom line comes down to dollars, it does

not reduce these living things to nothing more than a commodity. Consider though that any monetary value is no more than a reflection of the intrinsic value most of us already place on these animals. The monetary value will definitely encourage keepers to do the best for their pets. It should encourage captive breeding too and reduce the likelihood of keepers releasing animals they have lost interest in

WASAH Meetings

To continue to give members the chance to plan ahead, the ordinary meeting dates for the remainder of 2000 are tentatively selected below subject to venue availability. Meeting time will be 7.30pm. These are the third Friday of the third month as follows -

16 June

15 September

15 December

UK SALMONELLA WARNING

Salmonella Warning on Reptile trade from UK Department of Health 23rd February 2000

Exotic pet owners warned over salmonella risk - the Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Liam Donaldson, today issued a warning to the owners of snakes, lizards, terrapins and other reptiles about the risk of contracting salmonella from their pets.

Professor Donaldson is advising those with an increased risk of infection from salmonella to avoid contact with pet reptiles. This includes children under five years old, pregnant women, the elderly and those with impaired immunity.

The warning has been issued after laboratory figures showed a recent increase in the number of cases of salmonella associated with exotic pets in children and infants. In December, a three-week-old baby has died after apparently contracting the disease from

the family's pet lizard and five other children have contracted salmonella as a result of contact with pet reptiles in the last six months. An adult also contracted the disease. In the last two years 13 people have contracted salmonella from pet reptiles. Nine out of ten reptiles shed salmonella in their faeces and attempts to treat reptiles to eliminate salmonella have proven ineffective. There has been a huge increase in the number of exotic animals sold in Britain over the last ten vears and it is estimated that tens of thousands are now kept as pets. Professor Liam Donaldson, Chief Medical Officer for England said,

"Thousands of reptiles are now kept as pets and it is important that their owners are made aware of the potential health risks associated with these animals. It is estimated that nine out of ten reptiles carry salmonella and people must take precautions if they own these exotic pets.

"There have been a number of recent cases of people contracting salmonella from their pet reptiles, one of which resulted in the tragic death of a three-week-old baby. The advice I am issuing today will alert the public to the dangers of keeping reptiles and I am also considering what further steps need to be taken."

To avoid possible risk of infection, the Chief Medical Officer has issued the following advice: People at increased risk of infection or at risk from serious complications of salmonellosis should avoid contact with reptiles. This includes children less than 5 years old, pregnant women, the elderly and those with impaired immunity. Infants under one year old are at particular risk from direct and indirect contact with reptiles. Always

wash hands with hot, soapy water after handling reptiles. reptile cages and equipment and stools from reptiles. Children should be supervised whilst handling reptiles to prevent hand to mouth contact. Reptiles should be kept out of food preparation areas. Kitchen sinks should not be used to bathe reptiles or wash reptile dishes, cages or aquariums. If bath tubs are used for these purposes, they should be cleaned thoroughly and disinfected with bleach. Consider keeping reptiles confined or limiting the parts of the house where they are allowed to roam free. Do not eat, drink or smoke whilst handling reptiles or their equipment.

- In December 1999, a three week old baby developed salmonella meningitis and died. Isolates from Margate General Hospital and St. Thomas's Hospital have been identified as Salmonella rubislaw by the PHLS Laboratory of Enteric Pathogens. It is thought that the baby contracted this rare strain of salmonella from the family's pet water dragon as salmonellas isolated from its drinking water and a piece of wood from its cage have been identified as S. rubislaw.
- Most Salmonella infections from reptiles in humans are mild self-limiting illnesses characterised by diarrhoea, fever, and abdominal cramps. However, severe and sometimes fatal illnesses are possible and more likely to occur in infants and individuals with a compromised immune system. Often these infections are invasive, leading to complications such as Salmonella meningitis and septicaemia.
- PHLS Laboratory of Enteric Pathogens reports that there have been six cases (five

children and one adult) of infections acquired from reptiles since July 1999.

- In the USA reptiles are now recognised as an important public health hazard. In 1996 an estimated 7.3 million reptiles were owned and approximately 93,000 cases of salmonella infections are now attributable to reptile of amphibian contact in the USA.

FOR SALE

The durable super professional, and scintillating extendable pocket snake hook.

ONLY \$20 each



Frogs and free lunches

Agence France-Presse (Copyright 2000) BANGKOK, Feb 22 (AFP)

A school in Thailand's impoverished North-east has begun rearing frogs in a bid to feed hungry students, reports said Tuesday.

Now children at Baan Khok Kham Noan school in Buri Ram are munching free lunches of spicy frog curry and grilled frog, while making pocket money exporting the hoppers to restaurants in Hong Kong. "All of us are proud of raising our own food and earning our own money through the profits from frog farming," 12-yearold Prem Hosoongnoen told the Nation daily.

Teacher Prasong said the school lunch program was begun in April last year with funding from the Thai-Magsaysay Club.

He said last year the school and students made a total of 20,000 baht (\$540) exporting frogs to Hong Kong restaurants, which imported them at 80 baht a kilogram.

Hairy Tortoise Urine?

From CNN (USA) - 22 Nov 99

Green-haired tortoise is king in China - Hair on a tortoise? Well, sort of.

The "green-haired" tortoise doesn't exactly have hair, but the parasitic algae that lives on its shell gives this creature the appearance of long, green locks.

This treasured animal is one of the most valued in Chinese society, some say more than the panda. The urine of the green-haired tortoise is considered a valuable tonic. Traditionally, these creatures are given to older Chinese people on their birthdays, as a symbol of long life.

China's Wuhan Cable TV brings us the story of Zhang Zhonghua, who devotes his time to raising these greenhaired tortoises.

Zhang lives in downtown Wuhan, China, and, for 20 years, he has raised more than 200 tortoises of 38 different breeds. It takes a specific kind of algae to grow on the shell of the tortoise. To find the proper parasitic algae, Zhang has to travel to the rural countryside, collecting this plant life in freshwater lakes.

Zhang treats these tortoises as his children. He prepares special food for them every day, including meat and melon seeds, and even combs their long, green hair with a paintbrush.

He cultivates the urine of these special animals to create tonics that he hopes will one day improve the health of others so that the green-haired tortoise is not only a symbol of long life, but a source of it, too.

Care of Australian Reptiles in Captivity

by John Weigel.
Available from
WASAH for \$17 the bible on herp
keeping in this
country and a must
for any personal
library.

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Attracting Frogs to your Garden by K. Casey. Available from WASAH for \$15 - a must for people wanting to create an amphibian-friendly garden.

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

The views expressed by contributors to the WASAH Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Executive, the Society or its members. As editor I tend towards minimal censorship as I believe everyone's opinions should be heard, but I will exercise this if I believe an article's content reflects poorly on WASAH.

Brian Bush

World amphibian populations plummet toward extinction

THE OREGONIAN (Portland, Oregon)
19 February 00 (Richard L. Hill)
Washington, D.C.:

Frogs, toads, salamanders and other amphibian populations have been mysteriously dying in Oregon for years. But now the

species decline is being documented around the world.

- Fourteen species of amphibians have disappeared from Australia in recent years.
- The golden toad has become extinct in Costa Rica.
- Other amphibian declines have been recorded in Europe, South America, Asia and Africa.

Amphibians are extremely sensitive to their environment,

and their decline possibly could be a signal that the planet's health is being jeopardised, according to scientists who talked about the issue during an international scientific conference Friday.

The combined reports, which document that frogs are in trouble around the world, worry biologists, including an Oregon State University researcher who has been raising a red flag on this issue for several years.

"The overall result is that this group of animals, which has been around since the time of the dinosaurs, is now in serious decline all over the world," said Andrew R. Blaustein, a zoology professor at OSU.

"And some of the things that are killing frogs almost certainly have implications for other animal species, including humans."

Causes include insecticides, crop fertilisers, weather and viruses. One cause might not be enough to bring on death or deformity, Blaustein said, but a combination of factors could work to cripple some populations.

"Finding out exactly what is causing die-offs is an incredibly complex problem and requires intensive study," Blaustein said.

"Amphibian species vary tremendously, so what might kill one frog might not kill another."

Already, five species in the Northwest are listed as candidates for the endangered species list, including the Cascades frog, the red-legged frog, the Oregon spotted frog, the Colombia spotted frog and the Western toad.

"We're trying to find out what variables are at work to cause these significant declines and even some species' extinction. We're looking at everything from microscopic viruses to global climate change," James P. Collins, a biologist at Arizona State University, said at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C. The agency is the oldest and largest general-science organisation. Although human encroachment on wetlands and other amphibian habitat is considered the primary cause for the animals' decline, the biologists reported other culprits that are either causes or suspects:

- Outbreaks of a lethal chytrid skin fungus that has been found in Washington, Colorado, California, Illinios, Australia, and Central and South America.
- A fungus called Saprolegnia, which has turned up in Oregon, can kill larvae and adult amphibians.
- Non-native predators, such as voracious bullfrogs and trout, that kill native amphibian species.
- Pollutants, such as herbicides, insecticides and crop fertilisers.

All of these destructive factors have been found in Oregon. except for the chytrid skin fungus. In recent years, Blaustein also has found that the rising level of UV-B radiation in sunlight caused by the thinning of the Earth's protective ozone layer is taking its toll on salamander eggs in Cascade ponds and lakes. He also published a study in 1998 that linked an increase in UV-B radiation to eye damage in the Cascades frog. Blaustein and his OSU colleagues also reported recently that they have found another potential threat to Northwest amphibians:

nitrogen-based compounds found in crop fertilisers. Their study, which was published in the journal Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, found that some tadpoles and young frogs exposed to modest amounts of nitrates and nitrites -- levels considered safe in human drinking water -- developed abnormalities and died. They found that the imperilled Oregon spotted frog was the most sensitive to the compounds.

Fresh & Frozen Reptile Food

Live Mice				
Adults	\$	1.00		
Juv	\$	0.80		
Pinkies	\$	0.50		
Frozen Mice				
Adult Pk of 12	\$	10.00		
Juv Pk of 12	\$	8.00		
Inoc each	\$	1.50		
Live Rats				
Adults	\$	2.50		
Juv	\$	1.50		
Pinkies	\$	1.00		
Frozen Rats				
Adults Pk of 12	\$	25.00		
Juv Pk of 12	\$	15.00		
Inoc each	\$	3.00		

BULK ORDERS WELCOME 10% DISCOUNT FOR ORDERS OVER \$60

(INOCULATED FOR INTERNAL WORMS & PARASITES IN REPTILES)

DELIVERY AVAILABLE

PAYMENTS BY CREDIT CARD, MONEY ORDER, CHEQUE or CASH

GST APPLIES AFTER JUNE 30th

PH 08 9497 2880 FX 08 9497 4922 MB 0412 810 436

COGGER'S IS NOW AVAILABLE TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE:

Desrae Clark* Philip Glover Eric Kidd Amelia Briggs* John Smith Sandy Griffin

You can pick these up at the June meeting after payment is made.

*Already paid

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

You would have learnt from the last WASAH Newsletter that CALM appealed the magistrate's decision in my trial in January '00. My second trial was heard in the supreme court on 25 May with no final decision being made by the judge.

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BALANCE in bank on 22 October '99:

Basically CALM appealed the spent conviction order and return of my cages. My lawyer Robert Mazza was in court for most of the day on my behalf. I now have to await the judge's decision, although doubt, no matter which way it goes, that it will satisfy those with a personal axe to grind within CALM.

Where was I when all this was going on? No worries, out in the bush doing something far more constructive - collecting reptiles in an isolated sandplain north of Southern Cross.

Stay tuned for the next instalment of waste of taxpayers monies, bureaucratic expediency, misinterpretation of legislation, counterproductivity, ignorance, arrogance and unrealistic protectionist views. No need to say who I am talking about. BM

Ed here - Others have had similar results without appeal, therefore I am perplexed by the apparent lack of safeguards in a bureaucracy to exclude personalities from influencing official business. I am also astounded that Brad Maryan could rattle the cage so much that

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it would cause substantial public resources to be used on what amounts to no more than a point proving exercise.



Take That!!

(1999, Nicosia, Cypress)
Under similar circumstances, an Iranian hunter was shot to death near Tehran by a snake that coiled around his shotgun as he pinned the reptile to the ground. Another hunter reported that the victim, named Ali, tried to catch the snake alive by pressing the butt of his shotgun behind its head. The snake coiled around the butt and pulled the trigger, shooting Ali in the head.

		WASAH 1999 Balance Sheet	
INCOME			
	Bank Balance beginning 1999:		1910.00
	Memberships:		930.00
	Book sales:		938.00
	Small hooks:		55.00
	Hoop bags/hooks		210.00
	T-shirts:		44.00
	Donations:		80.00
TOTAL:			+4167.00
EXPENDITURE			
	Hoop bags/hooks:		225.00
	Herpetofauna journals:		805.50
	Herpetofauna postage:		173.45
	Newsletter postage:		161.18
	Newsletter printing:		580.00
	Books:		735.46
	Refreshments:		63.99
	Advertisements:		85.50
	Woma sheets:		114.00
	Biodiversity workshop:		50.00
	Donation to legal costs:		100.00
TOTAL:	-		-3094.08

+1072.92

WASAH GENERAL MEETING 7.30pm

Friday

16 June, 2000

at

Perth Zoo Ed Centre Labouchere Road, South Perth

No Guest Speaker:

NGTV's Video

"Outback Venom"

Also SEE EXCURSION NOTE LAST PAGE

WASAH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President/Editor: Brian Bush

(08) 9295 3007

Vice-President: Robert Browne-Cooper

(08) 9445 2409

Secretary/Treasurer: Brad Maryan

(08) 9444 6412

Executive: Bruce George (08) 9490 2107; Russell Brown

Russell Brown (08) 9390 8091

CALM-WASAH LIAISON SUBCOMMITTEE

Home numbers Simon Ball 9448

2168

Mike Lynch 9300 2496 Jamie Stuart 9571

1832

WASAH is an informal group of people with similar interests - all wishing to keep for private study and "love", frogs, turtles, lizards or snakes!

WASAH joined the Affiliation of Australasian Herpetological Societies in 1994.

Address all correspondence related to this newsletter to:

The Editor, 9 Birch Place, Stoneville, Australia 6081

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 17 March 2000 **MINUTES**

- 1. Convene Meeting 7.37pm at Perth Zoo Education Centre
- 2. Attendance 39 (head count) although only 22 members & 7 visitors signed book
- 3. Apologies Gary Davies, Trevor Howe and Bruce George
- 4. Correspondence Tabled • E-mail from Gordon Wyre CALM) Re: current progress towards new pet herpetofauna licensing system.
- 5. President's Report • BB explains rational behind subscription fee increase. Mention of current concern over Boid Inclusion Body Disease (IBD). Snake mite incriminated as likely potential vector. BB urges members to be vigilant with mite awareness and control.
 - New Regulations moving forward delays explained by current reorganisation/split within CALM.
 - Explanation of reason for changes to WASAH executive positions (to more closely match people's current duties).
- 6. Vice-President's Report NTR
- 7. Treasurer's Report • Membership due.
 - Reasons for members not receiving Journal "Herpetofauna" was because it was printed
 - Revised edition of Harold Cogger's Book available to members at discount price (WASAH Affiliation).
- vote.
- 8. General Business • BB suggests that members vote on recent subscription fee increase. It was then put to members vote unanimously in favour (20 in favour, zero against).
 - Financial statement available for members to view on the night.
 - D. Pattison showed and demonstrated to members his patented snake trap. Available for purchase to Snake Busters.
 - Dave also showed a custom built reptile cage and explained features including its convection ventilation system.
- 9. Editor's Report • NTR

who

- **10.** Call for further business Nil
- 11. Speaker • D. Pattison queries the proposed Reptile Care Course venue being the Armadale Reptile Centre (ARC), and his concern about quarantine at that facility in light of mite and recent IBD.

• BB responds - stated that he advised the course coordinator by fax of the risk to python keepers do the course at the ARC who might then unknowingly transfer mite or IBD back to their own pythons. In the fax BB suggested another (non-contaminated) venue for the reptile care course.

- BB introduces David Pearson as guest speaker talking about his python research.
- Following David's talk, several members showed slides.
- 12. Meeting Adjourned • 9:30 pm followed by general chit chat and beverages.

MY SAY by BOBTAIL

"My Say by Barbatus" was always a regular feature in the Victorian Herpetological Society newsletter which evolved into the well known *Monitor* bulletin. It was written by the long standing president Brian Barnett who played a major role in the formation of that state's herp licensing laws and was always written as Brian saw the situation with no punches pulled. By the way, Barbatus refers to the specific name of the big East coast bearded dragon - Brian is a big fellow.

Where is the VHS now? Well, after being a long-term society that boasted the largest Australian membership of any herpetological society (500+ members) it has unfortunately folded, and along with it the very popular and internationally circulated *Monitor*. Recently WASAH received a letter from the Cape York Herpetological Society (CYHS) expressing regret that it had followed the same path - no more society. There could be many reasons for this and some people might say that all societies have their ebbs and flows, however, and this is my opinion only, the main reason seems to be an apathetic membership. The same people year after year performing all the tasks on behalf of the members without much support.

Living in WA we are lucky in a way as, not having the luxury of being legally allowed to keep reptiles privately, we have bonded together quite well to lobby for change. Now it seems that WASAH is at the crossroads of its existence. WASAH was formed to create this change and it looks like all the negotiating, letter writing, phone calls, faxing, e-mailing, petitioning, meetings and heated moments (only a few) have finally paid off. Once the system becomes a reality, herpetology in WA will never be the same again and for some of us it will come as a big shock. However, interesting times lay ahead for all those wanting to keep herpetofauna for hobbyist purposes.

So, where does WASAH go to from here - to be blunt, we can either sink or swim, but it depends on what you want as members. We are a young society (in our tenth year, six incorporated) and the founding members of Brian, Rob and myself (Paul Orange is in England) have continued their involvement. We have had a single election without any alternative nominations being received and therefore assumed our respective roles uncontested. During the time when our lobbying for change reached a critical level we formed the WASAH-CALM liaison Subcommittee to continue with this. It has taken ten years to get to the eve of the change that we desire so much. We are almost there and as if to temper our elation three members of WASAH get simultaneously raided by CALM and have their animals seized. It has been quite a turbulent time for those people with their heads above the trenches and no easy feat to convince the powers that be that WA needs to adopt legislative change to bring us into line with the rest of the country.

The direction that WASAH takes from now on is up to you. At the moment it is the same people doing the work and we seem to have fallen into what one may describe as a 'comfort zone'. The executive and subcommittee have been busy concurrently juggling their work and WASAH commitments. Another thing to bear in mind is that the current executive may not necessarily be the right people for the job at this point forward of WASAH's existence. In essence, I think that we are a due for a change and if this is not forthcoming then at least more people need to put their hand up. For instance, the day field trips have been a huge success. If you know of an area that would be worthwhile visiting let us know and we can plan a day. Any ideas are good ideas. Other worthwhile ventures to explore are fund raising activities. Failing this, we will probably have a year 2000 election for the executive roles and see what happens. I for one do not want to see WASAH follow the same path as the VHS and CYHS - do you?

Finally, let us express a big thank you to Busho, Jamie Stuart, Simon Ball, Michael Lynch, Robert Browne-Cooper, Bernie Masters, David Knowles and Ken Aplin for their contribution towards [almost] the change that WA herpetoculturists want so badly - a licensing system.

We have not quite got it yet though!

Pails' Price List

Included here for members' information is a Victorian price list for various herps compliments Mr Roy Pails (03 5335 7780) and *The Crocodilian*, the journal of the VAAH. I have been advised that South-western Carpet Python (*Morelia spilota imbricata*) is available from South Australia at \$800 each.

CARPET PYTHONS

2' Brisbane Male Line-back - \$400

5' Brisbane M&F' - \$500

6' M&F - \$600

2' Darwin Male - \$350

4' Male Darwin - \$400

4' Darwin Male - \$480

5' Darwin M & F - \$500

2' Atherton - \$450

Juv Vic - \$180

6' Vic Male - \$550

Juvenile Jungle X - \$280

Juvenile Brisbane - \$200

Juv Central - \$300

6' Grafton M&F - \$480

DIAMOND PYTHONS

7' M&F - \$800

5' Male - \$620

CHILDREN'S PYTHONS

Juv - \$130

SPOTTED PYTHONS

Juv - \$130

Slightly older - \$180

Male *21/2 - \$320

Breeding pair - \$900

STIMSON'S PYTHONS

Adult Male - \$380

OLIVE PYTHONS

Juv - \$380

5' Male - \$600

6' Male - \$750

7' Female - \$750

WATER PYTHONS

5' Male - \$480

Breeding pair - \$920

SCRUB PYTHONS

Juv - \$380

7' Male - \$700

9' Male - \$750

BLACK-HEADED PYTHONS

Adult Male - \$1500

Juv Male - \$1100

Juv Female - \$1200

NORTH QUEENSLAND BROWN

TREE SNAKES

Adult Banded M&F - \$400

Adult Normal M - \$280

NT NIGHT TIGERS

Adult Male - \$350

SLATEY GREY SNAKE

Adult Male - \$400

BLUE BELLIED BLACK SNAKE

Juv - \$80

3' Female - \$220

4' Female - \$350

(Bred 1999)

COLLETT'S SNAKES

Juv - \$80

4' unsexed - \$270

6' Male - \$350

NORTHERN DEATH ADDER

Juv - \$80 (Cardwell OLD)

Black Soil NT: Adult Male (Hayes Ck) - \$200

Cairns Male - \$300

COMMON DEATH ADDER

Adult Bris Male - \$280

BLACK TIGER SNAKES

Western - \$120

CURL SNAKES

Adult - \$150

BEARDED DRAGONS

Adult Eastern - \$150

Juv Central - \$90

PAINTED DRAGONS

Adult - \$190

MAJOR SKINKS

Adult - \$380

SHINGLEBACKS

Adult - \$55

SOUTHERN WATER SKINKS

Adult - \$25

WATER DRAGONS

Sub Adult Eastern - \$180

Adult Eastern - \$250

Juv Gippsland - \$80

Adult Gippsland - \$280

CUNNINGHAM SKINKS

Adults - \$60

BLUE TONGUES

Juv QLD Common - \$40

Adult Common Vic - \$55

Blotched Adult Vic - \$55

GOULD'S MONITORS

Adult Pair (flavirufus) - \$1800

SALAMANDERS

Adults - \$100

WASAH EXCURSION

to

MOUNT STIRLING NATURE RESERVE

Sunday 9 July

Meet 10am at the Kellerberrin turn-off in Yoting on the Quairading-Bruce Rock Road

Situated approximately two hours drive from Perth via Quairading on the Yoting-Kellerberrin Road, this interesting Wheatbelt site should prove rewarding for participants during the bleak winter.

