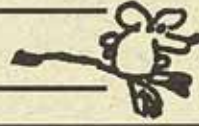




JUNIOR RANGER

Review

APRIL - MAY 1996



LIZARDS RULE! O.K.?

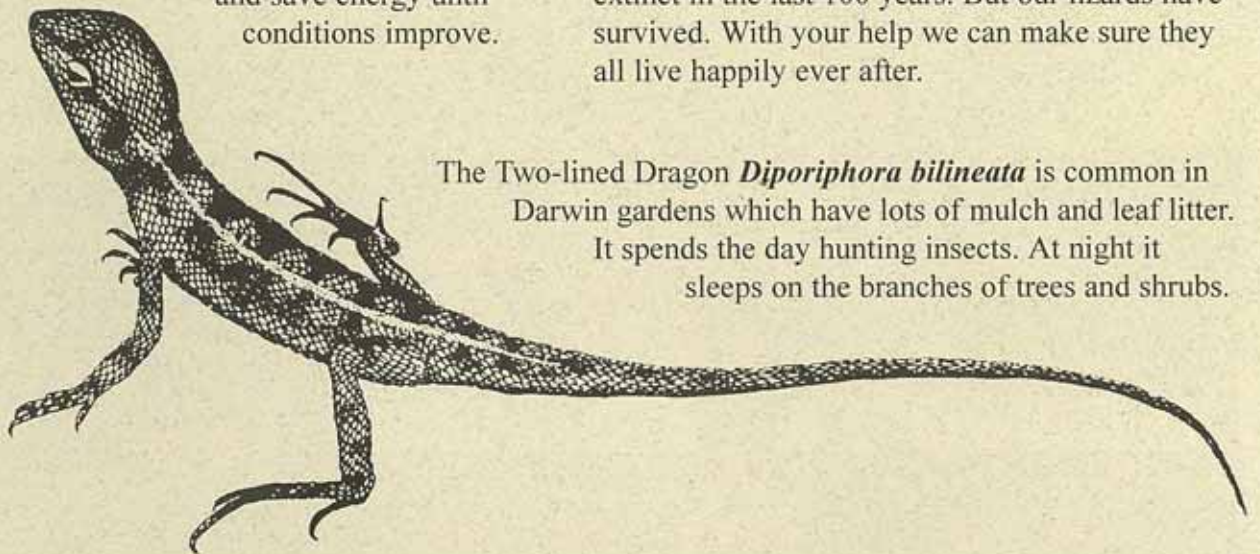
If we don't count Antarctica, Australia is the driest continent on Earth. Most of the Northern Territory is dry country. This is the **land of the lizards**.

Lizards do well in dry country. They're very energy efficient. One day's food supply for a small mammal will last a lizard of the same size more than a month. In tough times they can become inactive and save energy until conditions improve.

The Northern Territory has an amazing number of lizards, big and small. The big goannas look a bit scary, but none of our lizards are really dangerous.

This edition of the **Junior Ranger Review** will introduce you to some of our interesting lizards and other reptiles.

A number of Territory mammals have become extinct in the last 100 years. But our lizards have survived. With your help we can make sure they all live happily ever after.



The Two-lined Dragon *Diporiphora bilineata* is common in Darwin gardens which have lots of mulch and leaf litter. It spends the day hunting insects. At night it sleeps on the branches of trees and shrubs.



Territory Anti-Litter Committee

The Territory Anti-litter Committee generously supports the Junior Ranger program. Litter is not just an ugly sight. Old cans, bottles and other rubbish are potential death traps for lizards and other wildlife.

"Do the Right Thing - Don't Mess Up Your Territory".

Our Frilled Lizard

The word dragon makes us think of fire-breathing monsters. But the Top End's frilled dragon is a harmless creature.



The Frilled Lizard *Chlamydosaurus kingii* is seen a lot in the wet season but not the dry.

During the dry season they hide in rough barked trees, don't eat much and aren't very active. They're hard to spot. If you walk near their tree they move around to the other side of the trunk so you can't see them.

The lizard's frill contains a number of fine, flexible rods like the spokes of an umbrella. It opens its frill when it wants to look ferocious.

Frillies don't live in Central Australia.

Complete the following puzzle to work out the name of their desert cousins.

1	2	3	4	5	2	5

D	R	A	G	O	N
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Join the words on the left with the correct matching statement on the right. This will give you a number code to reveal the dragon's first name.

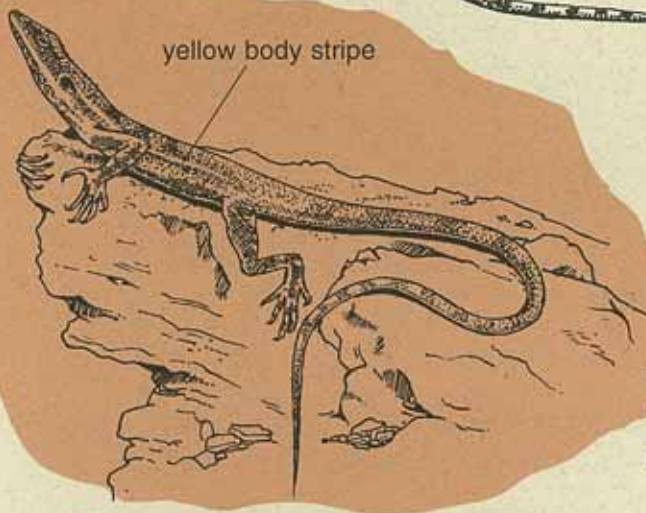
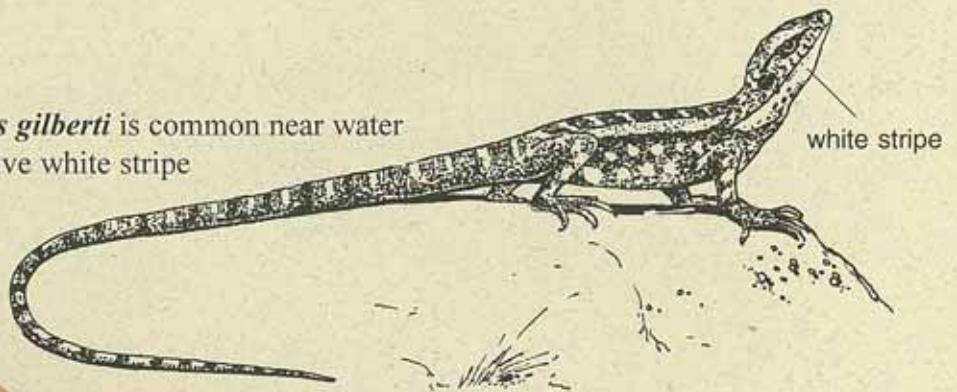
- | | | | |
|--------|-----|-----|--|
| gecko | (1) | (R) | large lizard with a forked tongue |
| snake | (2) | (D) | has webbed feet |
| skink | (3) | (B) | catches insects inside people's houses |
| goanna | (4) | (E) | crawls on its belly |
| turtle | (5) | (A) | skinny lizard |



Ta-Ta Lizards

Long tailed lizards, more than a foot long, are common near Territory waterholes. Don't be surprised if they wave to you as they scurry away!

Gilbert's Dragon *Lophognathus gilberti* is common near water in the Top End. It has a distinctive white stripe on each side of its face.



The Long-nosed Water Dragon *Lophognathus longirostris* may be spotted near waterholes in the Centre. It has a yellow stripe along each side of its body.

These two animals are sometimes called "ta-ta lizards". You can find out why by decoding the following puzzle.

1 = A	5 = E	9 = I	13 = M	17 = Q	21 = U	25 = Y
2 = B	6 = F	10 = J	14 = N	18 = R	22 = V	26 = Z
3 = C	7 = G	11 = K	15 = O	19 = S	23 = W	
4 = D	8 = H	12 = L	16 = P	20 = T	24 = X	

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23 1 22 5 19 □ □ □ □ □	15 14 5 □ □ □	1 18 13 □ □ □	1 19 □ □	9 6 □ □	19 1 25 9 14 7 □ □ □ □ □ □
7 15 15 4 2 25 5 □ □ □ □ □ □ □					

What's my name?

This amazing little dragon lives in the Sandy Country of Central Australia.



If you cross out all the letters **a**, **b** and **c** you should be able to work out what it's called.

a t c h o a r b n c y

d c e b v a i l

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

Despite its name and fearsome look, it's quite harmless. Its diet consists entirely of small black ants. When it's hungry it finds an ant trail. It has a couple of hundred of them for dinner.

It also has an amazing way of drinking. Its skin is covered with many tiny grooves which all lead to its mouth. If it stands in a puddle the water runs up its legs, across the skin and into its mouth.

The spines on its body are for collecting rain water from the air and dew from plants.

Breeding Time for Freshwater Crocodiles

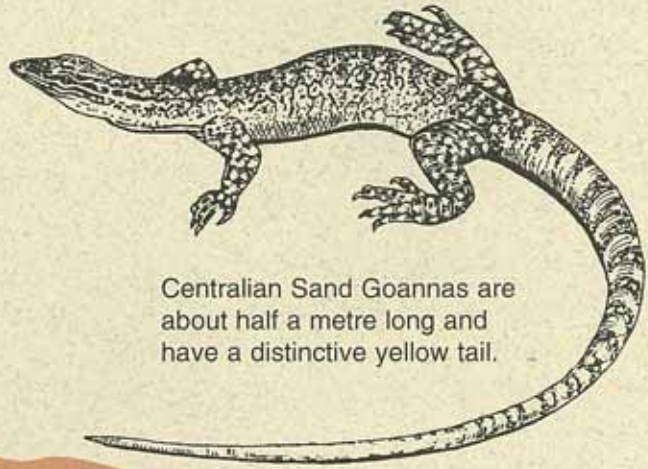
Unlike their saltwater relatives that nest during the Wet, Freshwater Crocodiles (*Crocodylus johnstonii*) lay their eggs at night in September. For at least two weeks prior to egg laying the females dig into the sandy river banks. A suitable moist spot is finally selected. The eggs are laid and buried under about 20 cm of sand. They are then left until hatching time in November. The mother patrols the banks close to the nest as hatching time approaches. Calls from inside the eggs beckon her to uncover them and help the hatchlings into the water. The hatchlings stay together in a creche by the water's edge for a month or so. They are usually hidden amongst debris and the mother stays nearby. Most of them, however, will be eaten by other animals before the wet season is finished.



Miniature Dinosaurs

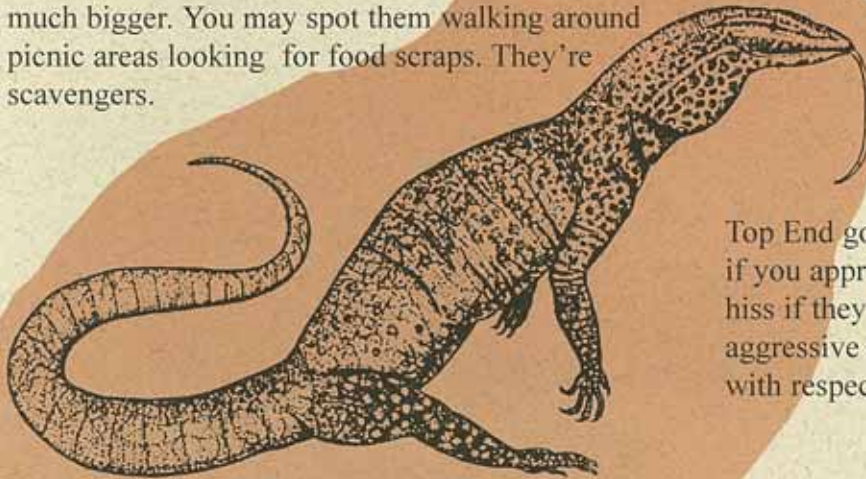
Goannas are the largest lizards in Australia. They are different from all other lizards because they have a forked tongue - like a snake.

You often see Sand Goannas soaking up the sun on Central Australian roads in summer. Unfortunately they often get run over.



Centralian Sand Goannas are about half a metre long and have a distinctive yellow tail.

The Top End cousins of the Sand Goannas are much bigger. You may spot them walking around picnic areas looking for food scraps. They're scavengers.



Top End goannas may stand up on their back legs if you approach them. They arch their back and hiss if they feel threatened. They're not aggressive animals but you should treat them with respect.

The mystery of the forked tongue

Use this grid to decode the missing words and find out why goannas flick their tongue in and out of their mouth all the time.

	1	2	3	4	5
●	A	B	C	D	E
▲	F	G	H	I	J
★	K	L	M	N	O
■	P	Q	R	S	T
◆	U	V	W	X	Y

They the with their

instead of their

Tortoise Or Turtle?

Tortoises spend all their life on land. Turtles live in water. In Australia there are many turtles but no tortoises.

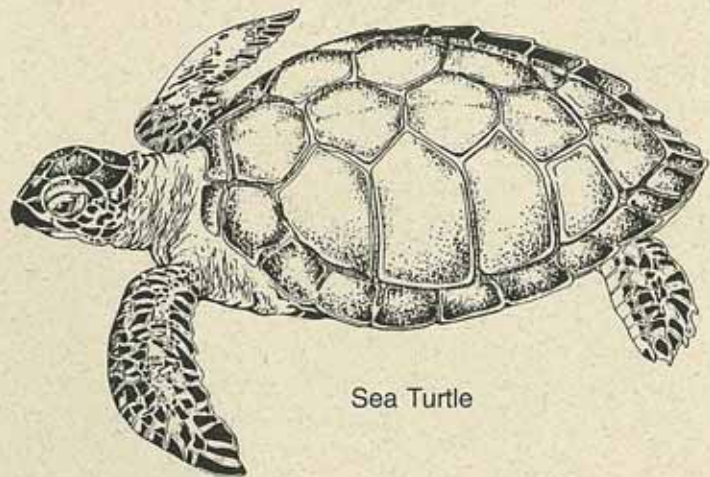
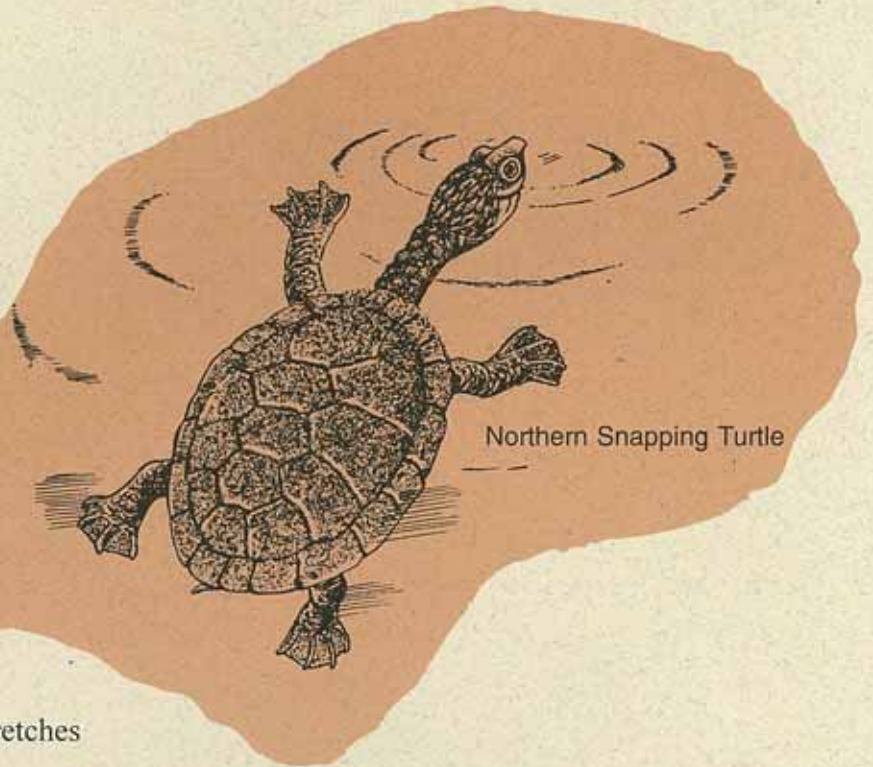
In Australia we've got both freshwater turtles and marine turtles. The freshwater ones go ashore to sunbake or lay eggs. But they spend most of their time in the water.

Freshwater turtles have clawed feet and regularly come to the surface to breathe.

The best place to spot them in the Top End is near shaded banks of paperbark swamps or billabongs. They avoid open stretches of water exposed to direct sunlight.

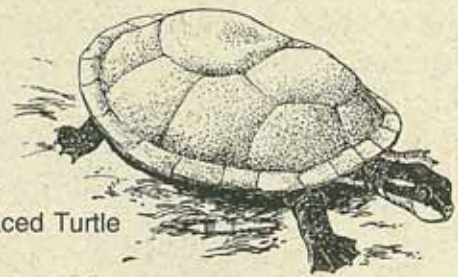
You may spot them with a torch very early in the morning or in the evening. They are likely to be feeding at these times. They eat aquatic insects, tadpoles, crustaceans and mussels.

Marine turtles have flippers. These large animals roam widely in the warm tropical seas. The females lay their eggs at night on Top End beaches when the tide is high. They lay the soft white eggs in deep holes which they scoop out with their back flippers. Several weeks later the young turtles dig their way to the surface and head for the sea. They have to face many enemies on this short but dangerous journey to the water's edge.



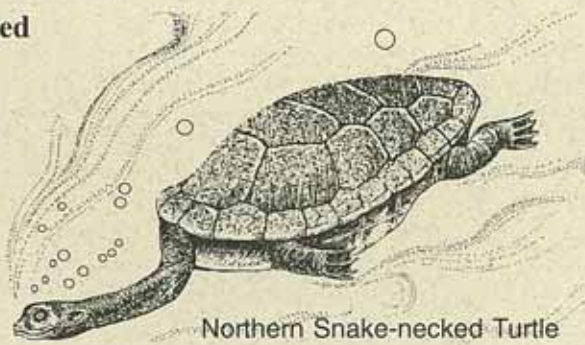
Short necks and long ones

There are a couple of types of short-necked turtle in the Top End. The **Yellow-faced Turtle** *Emydura krefftii* is found near the coast. Further inland, the turtle you are most likely to see is the **Northern Snapping Turtle** *Elsaya dentata*.



Yellow-faced Turtle

The **Northern Snake-necked Turtle** *Chelodina rugosa* prefers paperbark swamps to rivers and large billabongs. If the water dries up it buries itself in the mud until the next wet season.



Northern Snake-necked Turtle

Pet Turtles

Can you keep turtles as pets?

Decode this number puzzle to find out.

1 = A	5 = E	9 = I	13 = M	17 = Q	21 = U	25 = Y
2 = B	6 = F	10 = J	14 = N	18 = R	22 = V	26 = Z
3 = C	7 = G	11 = K	15 = O	19 = S	23 = W	
4 = D	8 = H	12 = L	16 = P	20 = T	24 = X	

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1 19	16 5 20 19	9 6	25 15 21	2 21 25	20 8 5 13	
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6 18 15 13	1	16 5 20	19 8 15 16	25 15 21	3 1 14	20
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3 1 16 20 21 18 5	20 8 5 13	23 9 20 8 15 21 20	1			
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19 16 5 3 9 1 12	16 5 18 13 9 20	6 18 15 13	20 8 5			
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16 1 18 11 19	1 14 4	23 9 12 4 12 9 6 5				
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>				
3 15 13 13 9 19 19 9 15 14						
<input type="text"/>						

Word Hunt

Can you find these 16 words in the puzzle? The names go in all directions: across, up, down, diagonally and backwards. Cross out the letters as you go.

BITE
BLUE TONGUE
BURROWS
CAMOUFLAGE
CLIMB
DIG
DRAGONS
EGGS

GECKO
GOANNA
KING BROWN
LIZARD
MONITOR
SKINK
SWIM
TURTLE

K	I	N	K	S	D	B	I	T	E
I	D	R	S	W	I	M	A	G	U
N	R	O	U	O	G	I	A	O	G
G	A	T	U	R	T	L	E	A	N
B	G	I	S	R	F	C	D	N	O
R	O	N	T	U	R	R	O	N	T
O	N	O	O	B	A	K	A	A	E
W	S	M	L	Z	C	I	A	G	U
N	A	N	I	E	R	E	G	P	L
C	T	L	G	I	L	S	E	S	B

You should have 18 letters left over. String them together to spell two mystery words.

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

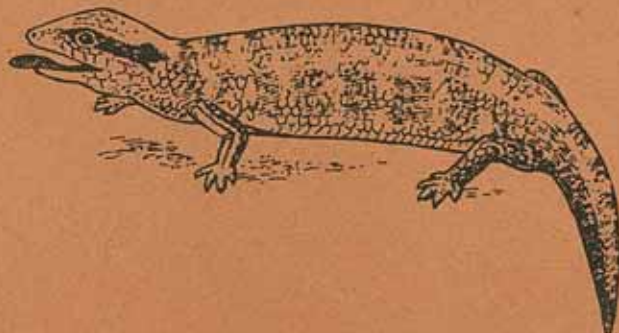
Skinks



Most skinks are skinny little lizards.
They're very common in people's gardens.

But there's one group of skinks that are big and fat. These are the Blue-tongue lizards and they are over a foot long.
They have short legs and are slow moving.

Blue-tongue lizards are quite harmless but try to look ferocious if they feel threatened. They huff and puff to make their body look bigger, hiss loudly and stick out their big blue tongue.



A Great Hunter

One of the Territory's most skilful hunters is only 10 cm long and has no trouble walking upside down on the ceiling.

The House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus* is a native of Indonesia, Malaysia, New Guinea and many Pacific islands. It is now common in Top End houses where its chuck-chuck-chuck call is a familiar sound.



Geckoes stalk their insect prey like a cat. Their big eyes can detect the slightest movement from a long way off. When they spot some likely tucker, they rush to within a short distance of it. Then, slowly, one foot at a time, the hunter closes in on the victim. Finally it lunges forward at lightning speed to grasp the insect in its jaws.

The Women's Lib Lizard

Bynoe's Gecko *Heteronotia bynoei* is a lizard like no other. In Central Australia and Western Australia there are no blokes! Males occur in the Top End but their girl cousins in the Centre lay eggs that don't need to be fertilized by male sperm.

They hatch into identical clones of their mothers.

Bynoe's Gecko lives among leaf litter, under rocks and old logs in the woodland and mulga country. It hides during the day and feeds at night on soft bodied insects.

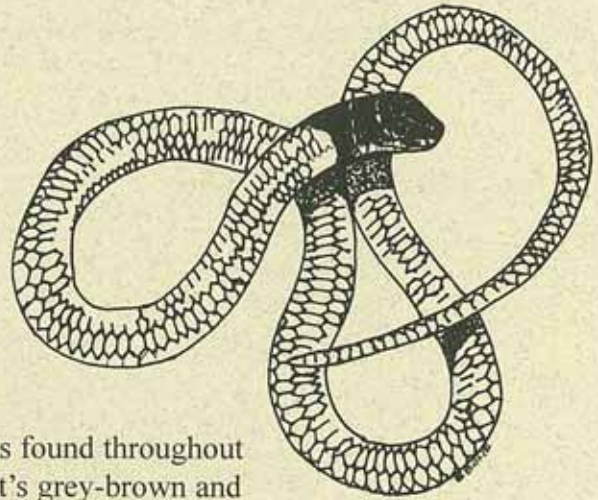


The poor legless lizards

Nature hasn't been kind to these harmless little creatures. For starters they weren't given any legs. But that's not their only problem.

Legless lizards are nocturnal creatures which hunt insects and spiders at night. You may find them under rocks or clumps of grass when you're gardening.

Unfortunately, people mistake them for snakes, freak out and kill them.

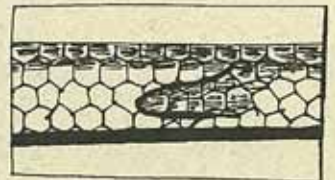


Delma tincta is found throughout the Territory. It's grey-brown and has a dark head.

Differences between snakes and legless lizards.

Believe it or not, legless lizards' closest relatives are geckoes, not snakes.

1. Legless lizards don't have a forked tongue.
2. They have two ear openings on their head. (Snakes don't have ears.)
3. Legless lizards have scaly flaps where their back legs used to be.
4. They can d _ _ _ their t _ _ _ _ like _ _ _ _ _ es
and g _ _ _ a _ _ _ _ _ .



How to find the missing letters.

Track the sentence through the letter maze. Go up, down or sideways, but not diagonally.

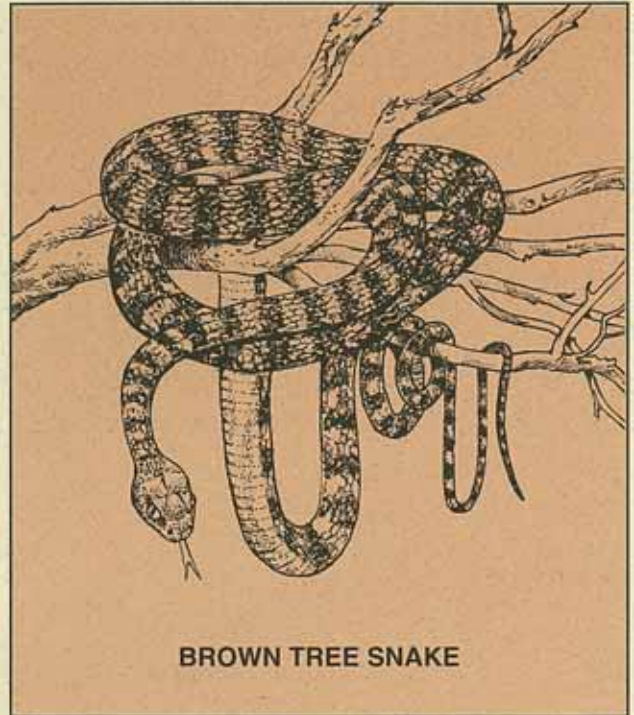


What's in a name?

Names can be very confusing. Did you know that ...

1. The dangerous **King Brown Snake** is actually a member of the black snake family.
2. The **Brown Tree Snake** is no relation at all, and it's not a danger to people.

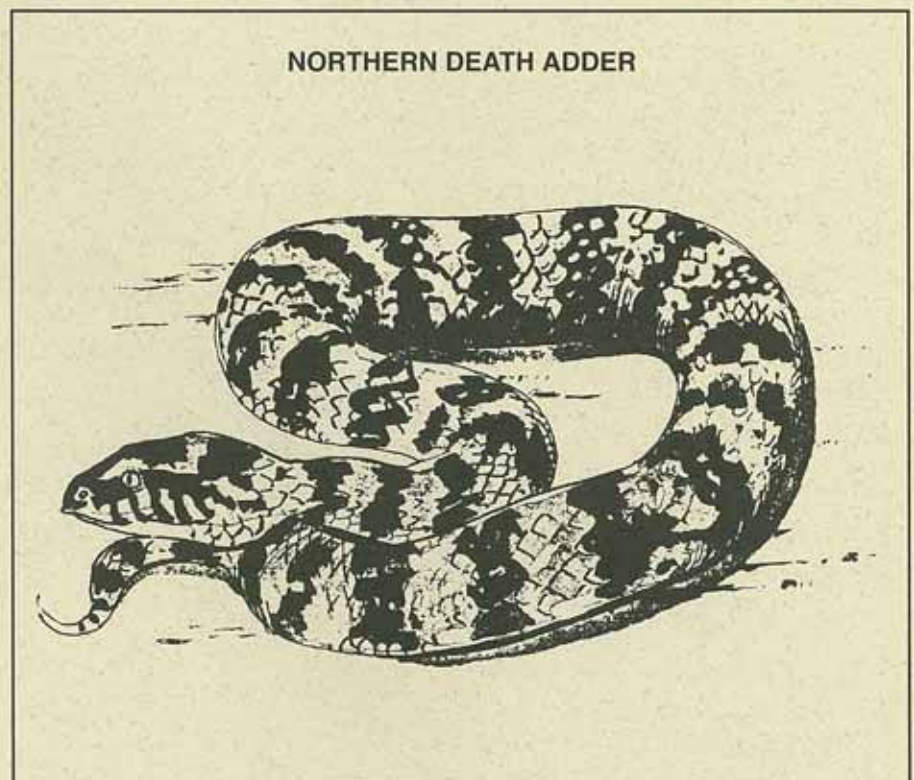
The Brown Tree Snake lives in the Top End. If you visit Cutta Cutta Caves, near Katherine, you may spot it near cave entrances. It catches bats as they leave the caves at night to feed.



3. The **Children's Python** has nothing to do with Kids! Naturalist John Gray named it in 1842 after his former boss at the British Museum, John George Children.

4. The Common Adder (or Viper) is a snake of Europe and Asia. It has a thick body, short tail and broad head.

The Territory's **Death Adders** look similar but are no relation at all!



Looking after our lizards.

To preserve our native wildlife, rangers need the help of the whole community. Do the right thing yourself and educate others about conservation.

1. Don't kill or capture lizards.

Lizards are protected animals. You can keep them as pets. But you must get them from a pet shop or licenced dealer, not from the bush.



2. Control your dog or cat.

Cats and dogs make great pets but they also kill lizards and other wildlife. Don't let your animals roam the neighbourhood or local bush.



3. Create a bush garden

Don't send leaves, twigs and grass cuttings to the dump. Put them on your garden beds so there's lots of hiding places for lizards. And plant local native trees and shrubs.



The Junior Ranger Review is produced 4 times per year by the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory. This edition was written by Stuart Traynor and Sharon Bone. Design and layout are by Darryl Heatherley. Illustrations in this edition are mostly by Bob Whiteford, with extras by Adrian Salter, and Joanne Van Os.

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