

The Lesser Known Victorian Herps
***Suta suta* The Curl Snake**

By Scott Eipper

The Curl or Myall Snake was first described in 1863 by Peters, the name "Suta" apparently means Stitched (Ehmann, 92). It is a relatively common species in some parts of its widespread range, however in Victoria; it is a fairly uncommon species. This may be due to a number of things such as its size, nocturnal nature and habits.

The habitat of this species is "deep cracking soils" and shrubs that occur with it, they are rarely found on other soil types such as soft sands (Wilson and Knowles, 88). During the day they are usually found under cover such as tin (Elliot pers. com), but at night are often seen crossing roads (pers obs).

The scale counts of *S. suta* are as follows: Midbodies 19 (rarely 21), Ventrals 150 to 170, Subcaudals all single numbering 20 to 35 and the anal scale is entire. Dorsal Colouration ranging from beige to dark brown with lighter marking around the face of the snake, A dorsal vertebral darker stripe may or may not be present, the head may or may not be a darker colour. The ventral surface is usually a creamy white but occasionally may have a yellow tinge to it (Cogger, 2000). Maximum size attained is just under 77 cm's however a length of 40 cm's is much more common.

In the wild the Curl Snake is a generalist, eating many various small vertebrates such as small mammals; Lizards including forms of agamids, geckoes, and pygopodids and skinks; Squamate eggs, snakes and frogs (Greer, 97). In captivity I have had juveniles take small fish and adults take scented pinkies while I know of others who have there's on fuzzy mice.

Suta suta are small but highly nervous snakes that thrash about when disturbed, this can make them quite hard to pick up without the aid of a hook. Their bite is extremely painful and causes some swelling which subsides in a couple of days, however the bite site tends to itch for a further 3 or 4. They are also very tenacious when they get a hold of something, chewing to inject alot of venom. They are not what I consider to be a threat to adults however if a young child was bitten it may pose as a threat.

In Captivity they are a fairly easy species to keep but due to their size and prey preference (lizards) they are not often kept. I kept juveniles and adults in appropriate sized "click- clak" containers inside other snake cages that were kept at 26 degrees Celsius.

In the wild mating has occurred in September (Greer, 97) and I have experienced mating in this species in early October. Young have been found inside snakes collected in February, April and September. (Greer, 97), litter sizes range from 1 to 7 with an average of just under 5 (Greer, 97).

References:

Cogger, H. G., 2000. Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia. New Holland, Sydney; 807 pp.

Ehmann, H., 1992. Encyclopedia of Australia Animals. Reptiles. Angus and Robertson, Sydney; 495 pp.

Greer, A. E., 1997. The Biology and Evolution of Australian Snakes; Surrey Beatty and Sons, Chipping Norton; 358 pp.

Wilson, S. K and Knowles, D. G 1988. Australia's Reptiles; a Photographic reference to the terrestrial reptiles of Australia. Collins Publishers; Sydney; 447 pp.



