

Living with Reptiles of Bendigo





REPTILES VICTORIA INC.

RESCUE RESEARCH EDUCATION

Thank you for reading this booklet and we hope it reveals unique and helpful facts about the amazing reptiles in your region. We intend to provide a quick reference to the most likely animals you may see or come into contact within the Greater Bendigo region of Victoria, Australia.

We include information and species profiles for people who have these reptiles in their yard, farm or surrounding habitats in the hope that you have a great opportunity to connect wholeheartedly with them. Our aim is to share our treasured knowledge about them and increase the overall awareness for this group of animals is too often subject to poor levels of human awareness, respect and suffer greatly from myths, fallacies and downright untruths.

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the Goldfields region and First Nations People of the Bendigo region who are known as Dja Dja Wurr community (Jaara people) <http://www.djadjawurrung.com.au/>

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Eastern Longnecked Turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*)

Size: 25-30cm
carapace (shell).

This turtle lives in waterways around Bendigo. It occupies everything from local ornamental ponds, large lakes and river drainages. It seems equally at home in the farm dam or in small ponds in backyards. Typically, most turtles are observed after heavy rain. It is a carnivore that feeds on a range of invertebrate and vertebrates, typically insects, crustaceans, fish, tadpoles, frogs and also carrion.



Murray River Turtle (*Emdyura macquarii*)

This turtle frequents larger waterways around Bendigo. It occupies local ornamental ponds, large lakes and river drainages. It seems equally at home in the farm dams. It may be seen basking but quickly will dive back into water. They favour logs from fallen trees and shorelines. They can be seen moving after rainfalls for egg laying late in the year when they migrate and wander around away from drainage water.

Size: 30cm shell.
Females are around
3.5kg and males 1.5kg.



Freshwater Turtles FAQ

Q: What is a Penny Turtle?

A: Often referred to baby turtles which are extremely small- the size of a dollar coin but pre-decimal when compared to an old penny coin!

Q: Can I keep a turtle as a pet?

A: Yes- if you think that you will love and cherish it for 50 years. In other words, turtles live a really long time and if your children want to keep one that's the first thing you should ask yourself and the family. Most children lose interest in pets quickly and there are too many turtles looking for new homes for this reason. The waterways are competitive for turtle and adding pet turtles just makes it worse.

Q: Does a turtle feel pain when its shell is cracked like in a car hit turtle?

A: Yes, it is incredibly painful for them and all turtles hit by cars need veterinarian treatment immediately.

Q: When I see a turtle crossing the road what should I do?

A: It may be a common sight to see turtles crossing the road during warmer months of the year. As a rule of thumb if a turtle is crossing the road it has a better idea than you what it wants. You can assist it by taking it across the road in the direction it is going, especially if there's water is on the reverse side. Do not return it to a pond or lake or creek away from the direction it was heading.

Q: I found a turtle in my yard walking around, what should I do?

A: This can be a problem as there are numerous reasons a turtle can be seen in a yard. It is best to seek advice from a rescue organisation such as Wildlife Victoria or Reptiles Victoria. Check the back of this book for contact information.

Eastern Bearded Dragon (*Pogona Barbara*)

Size: 60cm rough appearance with soft spines and long tail, yellow mouth and often seen with a threat display of so called “beard”.



This sun loving dragon lizard is very familiar to Victorians. They are often seen basking on logs, fence posts, in trees or along roads sides. It is highly visible in spring months with large numbers on roads or active along roadsides or within bushland. They are frequently hit by cars and sometimes injured by dogs. Semi-arboreal in habits, this larger dragon tends to favour perching in trees. Its diet is a wide variety of plants, insects and sometimes small animals. They love evening primrose and daffodil flowers too! They lay eggs and will create a burrow and lay eggs which hatch 55-70 days later. Juveniles emerge and remain hidden in dense under growth and forage within safety of protection. These lizards have a distinctive open mouth threat they do when harassed or cornered. They typically flee into dense grass or foliage when approached, however they do get used to human presence in urban yards and rural properties after a time.

Lizards FAQ

Q: Are lizards venomous?

A: While the traditional answer was no, we now know that some lizards, like monitors, do have primitive venom glands.

Q: Do lizards all drop their tails?

A: Skinks, geckos and legless lizards can shed their tails autonomously. Blue-tongues can also have tail loss but usually under more extreme trauma like car or dog attack.

Q: Do lizards hibernate?

A: Reptiles enter a period of dormancy when weather gets cooler. Reptiles in Victoria are less active from May through to early August, but unlike true hibernation reptiles emerge to bask for small periods during winter.

Q: Blue-tongued lizards or shinglebacks can attack my children or pets?


A: While they put on a show its only meant to intimidate their way out of trouble, unless you're a tasty snail!

Q: Do blue-tongued lizards or shinglebacks keep snakes away?

A: In truth, no, most snakes just pass through and large lizards do not necessarily have an impact.

Q: How do I deter lizards from my yard?

A: This can be difficult in the case of smaller skinks, that are adapted to thriving in urban gardens. Blue-tongues love retaining walls or rock walls etc that create artificial and attractive sites for lizards. Lace monitors are drawn to yards with chicken coops and predate on the eggs in particular, so fencing off chook pens is incredibly important as they are persistent and intelligent lizards. The main rules are to keep grass short, keep gardens tidy and not overgrown can help. However, lizards will eat those pesky snails for you.




Olive Legless Lizard (*Delma inornata*)

Size: 40cm long with
12cm snout length.

This lizard is uniformly brownish and snake-like in appearance and is known as a flap footed lizard. It possesses a fleshy tongue that's not forked like a snake. It can usually be seen at dusk but sometimes you can find it basking during sunny days in spring. It can be found under rocks, debris or within grass tussocks and might give you a surprise if you're gardening! Sadly, this species is frequently captured by roaming cats. They lay eggs in summer and feed on invertebrates such as insects and spiders.

Cunningham's Skink (*Egernia cunninghami*)

Size: Stout 30cm with tail lined with spines and rugged skin.



This shy lizard has a perfect rock inhabiting physique. It is almost exclusively orientated around large tracts of rocky outcrops with predominantly medium to large rock formations. They live in colonies that can be quite large and have several family units and bask together. They retreat rapidly into deep crevices and under rocks when startled. Adults are generally omnivorous, their diet wide range of plant matter, native and introduced, vegetation such as flowers, stems, fruits and sometimes fungi and insects. Juvenile lizards are carnivorous as they need protein, then switch to more vegetable matter as they age into adults.

Size: 35-60cm,
typically striped
or banded.

Eastern (Common) Blue- Tongued Skink (*Tiliqua scincoides*)

These lizards are common across Victoria. They have adapted well to urbanisation and are regularly found around gardens, reserves and crossing roads. While omnivorous it does favour snails, invertebrates, vegetable and fruit. They give birth to live young that are fully independent in early to late summer. They are particularly prone to dog attacks and road trauma.



Shinglebacks are an incredible lizard that has become a feature across semi-arid and inland communities in southern Australia. Shinglebacks widely forage and are seen in great numbers in spring often moving along roadside, yards and within busloads. They feed on leaves, shoots, berries and stems from a wide variety of plants. They will also eat insects and scavenge roadkill. In spring males return to their partners to breed, these monogamous pairings make them highly unusual as most reptiles seem to not pair regularly and shinglebacks seem to pair for life where possible. These lizards mate and females carry developing young over spring and summer give birth to two rather large young that they will remain with for several days to a week or so. The famous threat display is most effective as a warning and the push they do have a good bite that makes most threats drop them to scurry away. In people's yards they may overwinter or raid the strawberry patch but usually lizards rarely remain for long periods. Rural properties will often have a population of resident group. Lizards will travel around 2-4 hectares during different periods of the year.

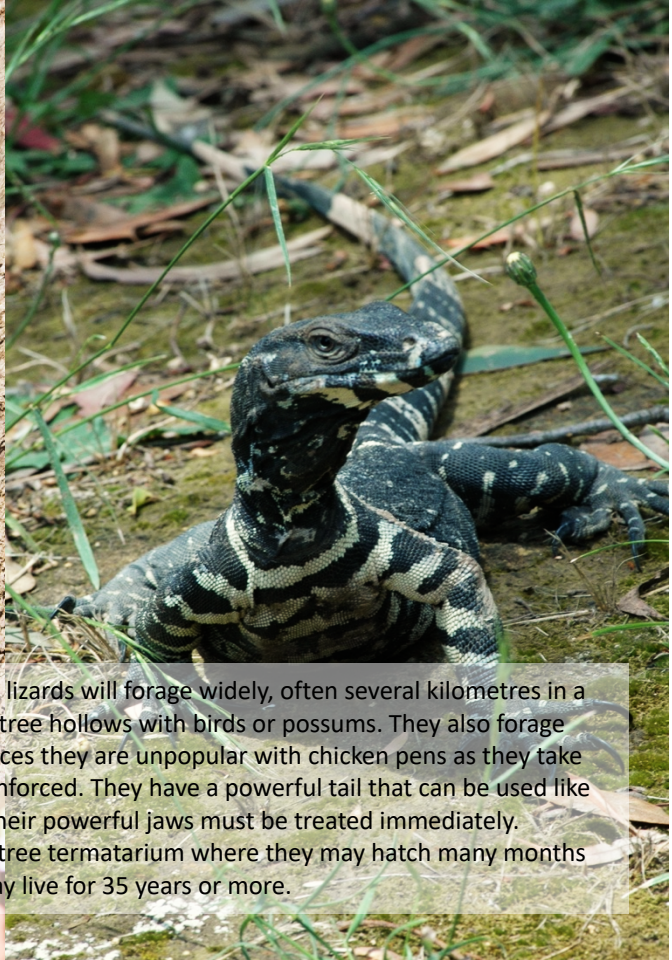


Shingleback Lizard or Stumpy-tailed Lizard (*Tiliqua rugosa aspera*)

Size: 40cm very stout body, large triangular head and short tail.

Lace Monitor (*Varanus varius*)

Size: 150cm to 2m very stout built lizards, has a forked tongue long tail.



During warm weather especially very warm days these lizards will forage widely, often several kilometres in a day, visiting rabbit warrens, rodent holes, chook pens, tree hollows with birds or possums. They also forage along the roadsides deceased animals. Around residences they are unpopular with chicken pens as they take eggs or even chickens so coops need to be strongly reinforced. They have a powerful tail that can be used like a whip, its claws are strong and sharp and bites from their powerful jaws must be treated immediately. These lizards are egg layers and lay eggs deep inside a tree termatarium where they may hatch many months later and young fend for themselves. These reptiles may live for 35 years or more.

Snakes FAQ

Q. Are snakes protected by law?

A: Yes! All native wildlife is protected in Victoria. It is an offence to kill, take, control or harm wildlife under the *Wildlife Act 1975*, even if you're scared. Severe penalties (including imprisonment and fines) apply.

Q: Are smaller or baby snakes as dangerous as adults?

A: Smaller or baby snakes can still cause envenomation but their fangs are much smaller and venom volume is lower.

Q: Do snakes build or make a nest?

A: No, most leave eggs in a burrow or under large rocks. Some snakes have live young and some are born live inside sacs.

Q. Do snakes drink milk?

A. Ummm... no. Not in any form, including with Milo!

Q. Do snakes feel pain?

A: Snakes have a complex nervous system just like most vertebrates and we know they feel pain.

Q. Are snakes usually only seen once?

A. Yes, most snakes are seen once then they disappear.

Q. If I keep my yard clean, kill off rodents and trim my garden short will I avoid snakes?

A. You will certainly make snakes extremely uncomfortable and not want to enter your clear property BUT it's not a guarantee.

Q. Do snake repellants work?

A: There is no evidence one way or the other but they do make some people feel less anxious, so whatever suits.

A Common Tiger Snake is shown coiled on the ground. The snake has a black body with prominent yellow bands. Its head is triangular and pointed towards the bottom left. The background consists of dry grass and soil.

Common Tiger Snake

Size: 100cm-120cm, often banded, has a somewhat stout appearance and triangular head. Dangerously venomous.

This somewhat infamous snake has a poorly understood nature. It always flees when disturbed or approached. If harassed or suddenly approached it will flare out its neck and body loudly hissing a warning while making an attempt to escape. Dogs and snakes do not mix, if your dog preys on lizards be extra careful. They usually enter yards only to forage for food, in particular mice, frogs and nestling birds. They will climb readily and raid nests and roof gutters. During warm conditions they can occasionally enter houses when foraging. Tiger snakes give birth to live young in late summer through to autumn months. Young are independent at birth and while a litter of 20 sounds a lot, most fall prey to kookaburras, snakes and birds.

Red Bellied Black Snake (*Pseudechis porphriacus*)

While largely associated with waterways, especially rivers and creeks, this snake can be seen in yards and areas away from water. A sun loving species, its black body allows for quick heating up and during windy conditions or after being in water, this snake can maintain a good thermoregulation all day. While foraging this snake feeds on frogs, snakes, rodents and even eels or tadpoles when in the water. Red bellied black snakes tend to be more welcome mostly due to their ability to threaten other more dangerous snakes and their venom has less potent effects on people and the seen as less dangerous. The venom causes local effects and some concern but is usually easily treatable and not life threatening like tiger or brown snake bites. These snakes mate in spring and males are combative in the form of wrestling bouts that most people mistake as mating. Females carry young in small sacs that the live young emerge from.

Size: 120cm to 200cm with unique reddish coloured belly and glossy back body.





Eastern or Common Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*)



Size: 150cm to 200cm.
While commonly a fawn to tan brown colour they can sometimes be quite dark and juveniles have the distinctive black head on a light brownish body which fades with age.
Dangerously venomous.



Eastern or Common Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*)

This snake has adapted superbly to the increase in the house mouse from agriculture and close human association. The common or eastern brown snakes will usually forage much larger areas than tiger snakes. These snakes tend to favour really warm days and while chasing their favourite food source either skins or mice within yards or paddocks. they will bask early in the day and move in and out of shade. The have fantastic eyesight for snake, this eyesight means that many potential confrontations between people and snakes never occurs. When given a chance brown snakes exit any issues with people or pets quickly. Most sightings send a snake moving two or three houses down before a phone call is even ade!
Skins, snakes, rodents tend to make the main die t for this snake, their speed allows them to chase down fast moving skins. In spring males follow females pheromone trails and often have to fight other males for the right to mate. These ritual combat bouts often mistakenly lead people to think they are mating!
Eggs are laid under rocks, rabbit or rodent

SNAKEBITE FIRST AID



1



APPLY PRESSURE BANDAGE TO BITE SITE.
DON'T CUT OFF CIRCULATION.

2



BANDAGE DOWN TO TIPS OF TOES AND UPWARD TO BODY.

3



BANDAGE AS FAR UP LIMB AS POSSIBLE.
CAN USE MORE THAN ONE BANDAGE.

4



FIND SOMETHING TO USE AS LEG SPLINT.

5



BIND THE SPLINT TO LEG TO PREVENT LIMB MOVING.



1 REMOVE JEWELLERY.

2 APPLY PRESSURE BANDAGE TO BITE SITE.

3 BANDAGE TO FINGER TIPS AND ALL THE WAY BACK UP THE ARM.



CALL 000

Living With Snakes

This may seem a difficult topic, but it remains remarkable that the incidence of snake bites in Australia are extremely low of snake. One to three people on average die from snakebite annually, arguably usually when they interfere with snakes. In Victoria, roughly every five to ten years we have a death. Remain aware and use common-sense, snakes bite usually only occur when snakes cornered or attacked, if you do not do those things your chance is incredibly low. If you do accidentally step on a snake you will be part of the 85% or so of bites where the snake does not even use venom (called dry or fright bites). If you were unwittingly hurting a snake or foolishly trying to catch or kill a snake and got a venomous bite, Australia is the leading country in snakebite and antivenom treatment if first aid is applied and medical assistance is immediately sought.

So how do we keep a balance between life in an incredible rural city and keeping our snakes happy? Snakes are solitary and usually quite mobile, though are at the mercy of weather in terms of their behaviour. They are active during the warmest months of the year so we know that during May through to July or even August snake sightings are rare! They are active after October and cease often around late April or early May.

Snakes can be forced out by fires, flooding, large scale clearing or even commercial lawn mowing activities or during large scale residential estate building. Their behaviour is usually predictable around these parameters. Residences or rural properties with high density of overgrown vegetation or extensive colonies of food like rodents or bird pens can inevitably expect a visit from a snake. This is like a McDonalds food sign for them, c'mon bring the family for a quick McRattus or have some McFroggies to go!

So- top tips. Always mow the lawn and whipper-snipper the edges, especially along fence lines or under the rural fence line and around the posts. For gardens around the house- trim the under-section and expose the base of trees and bushes, avoid high risk snake plants such as agapanthus, ivy or the creepers.

Shrubs are great but try to avoid large dense ground covers. In the vegetable garden, keep sections open and avoid over-mulching as rodent prevention. Keep your compost bin way as far away from the house as you can as they also attract rodents. Chook pens should be well reinforced with care to keep hungry reptiles out.

If you're doing some renovations and are stacking debris and storing house building materials etc, keep them on raised bricks and do not leave clumps or piles of timber, garden cuttings or bales of hay on the ground where possible. A sheet of iron is an extremely popular snake homesite, nice and warm! Ask any snake person what to do when they see a sheet of tin lying around, it's almost guaranteed a snake under it! When working the land, snake sightings are common. Wearing personal protective equipment such as gloves, sturdy boots, long thick pants and highly visible/florescent clothing all help.

Garden ponds are great features but are inviting to snakes. They often need to shed their skin and a quick soak or being around water areas like old bathtubs, garden ponds, low lying water overflow or around water tanks assists them to shed. If the water also has frogs around it's a double bonus. Elegant rock walls near garden beds, retaining walls of red gum and bluestones provide homes to a range of wildlife including snakes.

While people initially rely on snakes being removed by someone, we tend to suggest leaving them alone. They will usually move on and keep controlling mice and not seek any conflict. Translocated snakes tend to cause more problems to other people as some evidence states they try to return to their home range. This means they may enter *more* properties rather than fewer. When sighted by a predator (YOU), they tend to flee. Enacting a snake sighting plan should keep you and your pets safe for a day or two with restricted activity in the backyard. After sightings, it's good to get out here and clear the yard, especially mowing the grass shorter than usual as snakes hate noisy disturbance.

Dealing with Injured Reptiles and Snakes

Reptiles may be injured through trauma such as road accidents, lawn mowers, domestic pets like dogs or cats, gardening or during extreme weather conditions. People who come across injured reptiles can help calling Wildlife Victoria on **03 8400 7300** or WRIN on **0419 356 433**.

Their advice which may be to contain the animal, if possible to do so, and transport to nearest veterinarian. It's free to drop off wildlife to any vet and rural vets are usually very kind and knowledgeable.

Sometimes reptiles may need to be kept overnight, keep contained securely, DO NOT feed them any food but offer water.

Turtles can be kept in very shallow water but not allowed to submerge, they still breathe air.

Don't heat reptiles up with artificial lights, heat mats or place in direct sunlight or against sunny windows.

DO NOT rescue snakes, but please report to rescue or local snake catchers.

Emergency Help for the Bendigo Region

Report a dangerous situation- **000**.

Report Wildlife offences or request a contact for a snake catcher- Department of Environment and Water and Land Planning (DEWLP) **136 186**.

Shire of Bendigo customer service team

03 5434 6000

Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm

<https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/Contact>

Licensed Snake Catchers Within 1 hour of Bendigo

Callout fees may apply.

- Steve O'Connor on 0407 092 126
- Tameeka Stevens on 0481 587637 (After 4pm weekdays and weekends)
- Chris Page 0423 627 145 (call anytime)

Veterinarians

Bendigo Animal Hospital
294 Napier St, Bendigo VIC
03 5443 3322

Advice About Reptiles

Reptiles Victoria

0431 833 360

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/ReptilesVictoriaInc/>

www.reptilesvictoria.org

@reptilesvictoria

Wildlife Victoria

03 8400 7300

<https://www.facebook.com/wildlifestvictoria/>

@wildlifestvictoria

Wildlife Rescue and Information Network (WRIN)

0419 356 433

<https://www.facebook.com/wrinrescue/>

About Reptiles Victoria

We are a not-for-profit organisation with an aim to;

- promote reptile education
- rescue and rehabilitate injured reptiles
- rehome unwanted pet reptiles
- take part in vital research about Victoria's reptiles

Reptiles Victoria

PO Box 4760 Knox City, Vic 3152

Meetings at 95 Gastons Lane, Eltham

admin@reptilesvictoria.org.au

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