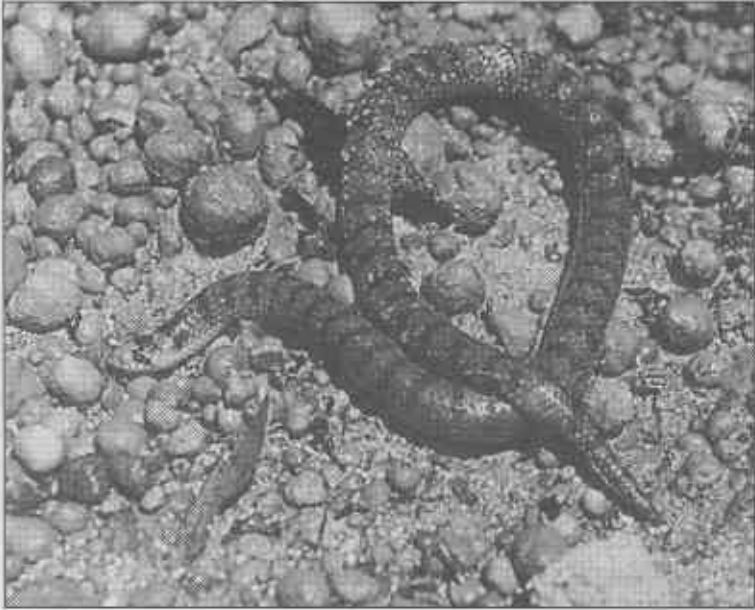


IN BRIEF

Jan's Banded Snake

By Robert Huston



Jan's banded snake. Photo: Fredrick Gillings

BRIGHT colours in small animals are usually recognised as warning colours for others to steer away from. Blue-ringed octopus and red-backed spider are well known classic examples where the colour pattern means danger. It was thus with understandable caution that Fredrick Gillings photographed an orange and black banded snake discovered on his bush block in Bindoon. The snake seemed to have danger written all over it.

What Fredrick had photographed was a Jan's banded snake (*Simoselaps bertholdi*) which, to his amazement, is not considered dangerous. The snake's distinctive colour pattern is possibly intended to discourage predators or help conceal it as it moves about hunting for burrowing skinks. Sometimes this snake is mistaken for a small tiger snake but, unlike venomous snakes, it strangles its victim much like a python. They prefer the cover of leaf litter, overhanging foliage from small shrubs and the sanctuary found amongst rocks and

fallen logs. Their rounded, wedge-shaped snout, small eyes and glossy scales make them well adapted as sand swimmers and burrowers through the leaf litter.

Fredrick's discovery may be a little special, as Jan's banded snake is generally not found in the Darling Range area. It is more commonly seen inhabiting coastal dunes to sandplain woodlands. The photograph is a clever and effective way of recording his find and is documentary evidence of the less obvious wildlife found on the 2 ha property. The find also highlights the value of preserving healthy ground cover to encourage a diverse range of fauna on your *Land for Wildlife*.

Ref: Reptiles and Frogs of the Perth Region (1995) by B. Bush, B. Maryan, R. Browne-Cooper & D. Robinson. Uni WA Press, Perth.

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