A simple device to prevent small vertebrate animals from drowning in swimming pools.

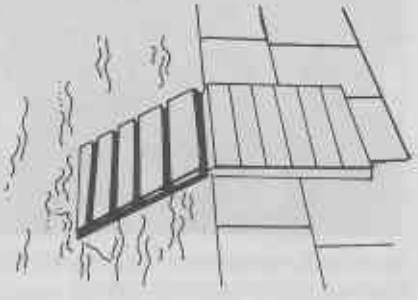
by Michael Tyler

Each summer people ring us up, distressed that animals have drowned in their swimming pool. Honey possums quite often die this way. This article is reprinted from Herpetological Review 29 (1), 1998.

This article describes a simply constructed wooden raft proven to have assisted the escape of small animals from swimming pools.

The device consists of two units comprising tongue and grooved wooden planks attached to a 4x4x50cm square section wooden frame. The two identical components are connected by a continuous brass hinge, permitting the ramp to adjust to changing water levels. The ramp is equipped with closely spaced bars to provide purchase for a creature leaving the water. To minimise the angle at which the device touches the water, an empty plastic water bottle has been atached to the undersurface by means of a plastic strap.

The positioning of the device is vital to maximise access for trapped animals. The direction of pool water flow towards the skimmer box means that a weakened animal will float towards, and often into, the skimmer box, where ultimately it will drown. The device is therefore placed over the skimmer box as shown in the diagram.



Device in position: the right-hand portion is placed directly above the skimmer box.

Undersurface of the device showing the framework upon which the boards are mounted, and the plastic water bottle in place.