

FAUNA

SO - YOU WANT TO KEEP A PET REPTILE DO YOU?
WELL, YOU CAN NOW!

Peter Mawson

IN late 2002 new regulations were gazetted that allowed for the keeping of a limited range of native reptiles and amphibians as pets. In March 2003 a list of approved species that can be kept was published and from that date people living in Western Australia have been able to make application to own and keep these 'new pets'. The species currently approved for keeping as pets include tree frogs, geckoes, skinks, dragons, monitors or goannas, freshwater tortoises/turtles, pythons, and a range of venomous snakes.

The regulations were developed after a three-month public consultation period, in which most of the comments received from the public were in favour of allowing some native reptiles and amphibians to be kept as pets. For those interested in the specific details of the regulations a copy can be found on the Department's Naturebase website at http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/plants_animals/reptiles/index.html.

The list of Approved Species is also available at that site, along with application forms for pet Keepers, Dealers, Farmers and what are called Takers licences. There are also answers to Frequently Asked Questions, copies of application forms for the various types of licences and Keeping Advice Sheets for each of the various types of reptile and amphibian on the list along with links to a good selection of books on reptiles and amphibians.

The pet keeping is arranged into five categories with Category 1 species being exempt from licensing. At present there are no species listed in this Category, but it is expected that species will be added to this category over time. Category 2 species are easily kept by anybody and require no prior experience, Category 3 species require more experience and can only be kept by people over the age of 18. Category 4 species require more extensive experience and Category 5 species (the dangerous species) can be kept only by those people with extensive experience who can provide high security facilities.

Category 1 No species.

Category 2

Egernia napoleonis South-Western Crevice Egernia
Gehyra variegata Tree Dtella
Heteronotia binoei Binoe's Gecko
Litoria caerulea Northern Green Tree Frog
Litoria moorei Western Green Tree Frog
Pogona minor minor Western Bearded Dragon
Strophurus ciliaris Northern Spiny-tailed Gecko
Strophurus spinigerus South-west Spiny-tailed Gecko



Tiliqua multifasciata Centralian Bluetongue
Tiliqua occipitalis Western Bluetongue
Tiliqua rugosa rugosa Bobtail

Category 3

Antaresia stimsoni Stimson's Python
Chelodina oblonga Oblong Tortoise
Ctenophorus reticulatus Western Netted Dragon
Egernia kingii King Skink
Litoria splendida Magnificent Tree Frog
Morelia spilota imbricata South-western Carpet Python
Nephrurus levis Three-lined Knob-tailed Gecko
Oedura marmorata Marbled Velvet Gecko
Underwoodisaurus milii Thick-tailed Gecko
Varanus caudolineatus Stripe-tailed Pygmy Monitor

Category 4

Aspidites melanocephalus Black-headed python
Aspidites ramsayi Woma Python
Chelodina steindachneri Flat-shelled Turtle
Chlamydosaurus kingi Frilled Lizard
Heleioporus albopunctatus Western Spotted Frog
Lophognathus longirostris Long-nosed Ta-ta Dragon
Varanus acanthurus Ridge-tailed Monitor
Varanus brevicauda Short-tailed Pygmy Monitor
Varanus tristis tristis Black-tailed Monitor

Category 5

Acanthopis antarcticus Southern Death Adder
Acanthopis pyrrhus Desert Death Adder
Acanthopis wellsi Pilbara Death Adder
Liasis olivaceus Olive Python
Notechis scutatus Tiger Snake
Pseudechis australis Mulga Snake
Pseudechis butleri Spotted Mulga Snake
Pseudonaja affinis affinis Dugite
Pseudonaja nuchalis Gwardar
Varanus gouldii Gould's Monitor
Varanus rosenbergi Southern Heath Monitor

All of the reptiles and amphibians that are approved for keeping must come from approved captive collections. It is illegal for people to help themselves to animals from the wild. No threatened species are approved for keeping,

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and exotic reptiles cannot be kept. The list of approved species currently contains only species that are native to Western Australia. The risk of species native to other parts of Australia escaping or being released into the wild are considered too great to allow them to be imported.

The Takers licence is designed to allow for controlled collection of certain species from the wild with the Department's approval. In the first few years of this new system reptiles and amphibians can only be bought and sold through licensed reptile dealers. 'Backyard' sales are currently prohibited, but it is expected that once people become familiar with what is required to keep the animals and their obligations under the licensing system these types of sales will be considered.

There is also an embargo on the importation of all pythons into Western Australia because of the risk of bringing a disease called Boid Inclusion Body Disease into the State. The disease is fatal to all native python species and is untreatable and at the moment there is no diagnostic test for the disease. All pythons kept under this new legislation will have to be captive bred or collected from the wild by a licensed reptile Taker.

At present the supply of most species on the approved list is limited and this will influence how easily people can obtain their preferred pet and also the price they might have to pay. As the weather warms up and as more animals are bred in captivity, supply should increase and the prices should go down, but the Department has no control of market forces.

So, does the idea of owning a pet reptile or frog appeal? If it does, have a look at the information on the Department's website or call in at your nearest Department office.

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