

MEMBERS' PAGE

NATURE RED IN TOOTH AND CLAW!

STEVE DAVIES took this photo on his verandah during autumn this year. He and his wife Val have a property near Albany, which their revegetation efforts have recently lifted from "interim" to "full" registration. At night, the verandah lights attract many insects, making it a good hunting ground for frogs. Here, a Motorbike Frog (*Littoria moorei*) has caught a very large moth. It started to swallow it head first and, within a couple of minutes, the whole lot had gone in.

We asked Matt Williams of CALM's Science Division, if he could identify the moth. He said: "It



is a swift moth, in the family Hepialidae, probably *Abantiades* sp. The 'watermark' pattern on the wings is a fairly distinctive feature of these moths, but to be certain of the genus, the antennae need to be examined - something not possible with that unfortunate specimen! The Hepialids are very large, showy moths that often emerge after rains in late summer and autumn and they are strongly attracted to light. The larvae are usually subterranean, feeding on tree roots. The pupal cases are sometimes found protruding from the ground."

GOULD'S MONITOR - THE HUNTER!

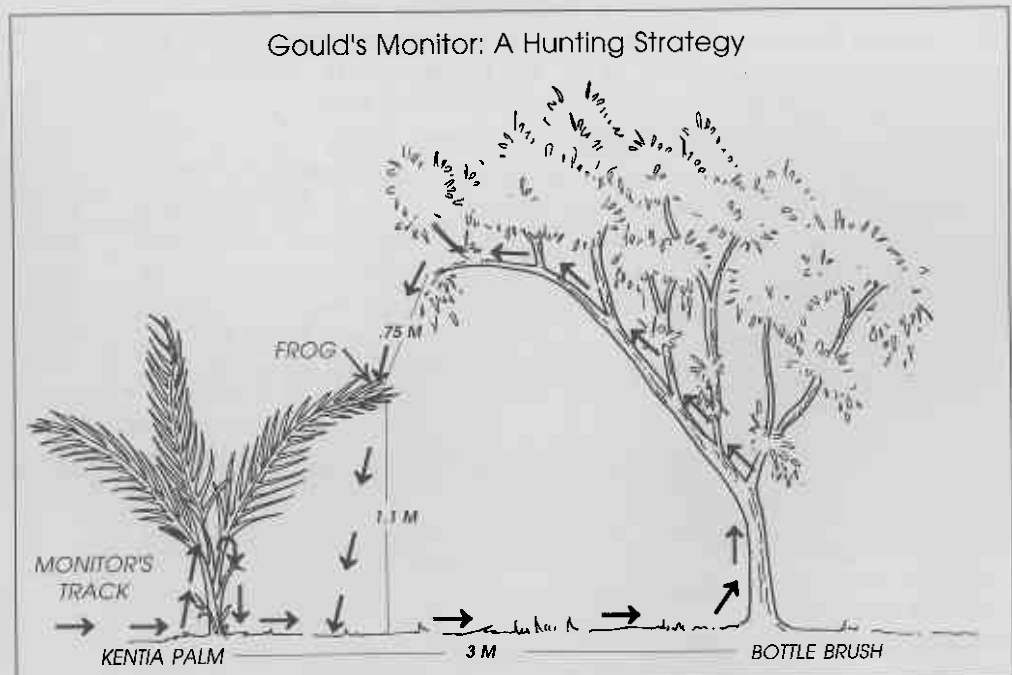
I thought all reptiles found their prey more by chance than by design, after all, as ground dwellers they wouldn't be able to see very far in the grass and surface litter, their vision adapted to and limited by their environment - and no powers of mental thought. That is, until one hot February afternoon when I watched a monitor from the patio

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It was trying to climb the smooth bark of a kentia palm. Abandoning this effort, it marched on to a Kings Park bottlebrush about 3m away, shinned up it and onto a branch above the palm frond.

Without much hesitation it leapt through space onto the frond and crashed to the ground - with a screaming frog in its jaws!

Only then did I realise what I had witnessed!

This monitor would have spotted the frog from the ground - ie good



eyesight. Its first plan of attack failed. Plan two must have taken quite some thought "That frog would make quite a tasty snack, can't give up too easily! There's that tree with a branch hanging over the palm. Can I climb it? Can I leap the gap, catch the frog and crash to

the ground all in one movement? Is it worth the risk of injury?"

The monitor's strategy worked perfectly and I have changed my mind - reptiles, especially monitors, can think and work out a plan of attack to catch their next meal.

Robert Harrington, Oakford.