

MEMBERS' PAGE

SACRED KINGFISHERS

YOU may have noticed the colourful Sacred Kingfishers recently as they return from their winter "break". Fred Gillings took this photo of a juvenile Sacred Kingfisher sitting on a tree hollow on his property at Bindoon. Fred says the kingfishers have visited but have not been tempted to nest in his trees.

The Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* can be found in WA in the south-west, Pilbara, Kimberley, and offshore islands. They leave the colder regions between early February and mid-July to winter in the northern tropics and the lower west coast (including Rottnest Island), returning between late August and late October. They inhabit woodlands, and open forests, especially near water, mangroves, and seashores. They feed mainly on insects, but they will take marine animals, house mice and lizards. They will also take fish from the water surface, hence the name kingfisher. Sacred Kingfishers nest in tree hollows and sometimes burrow into termite nests in



Sacred kingfisher - Photo Fred Gillings

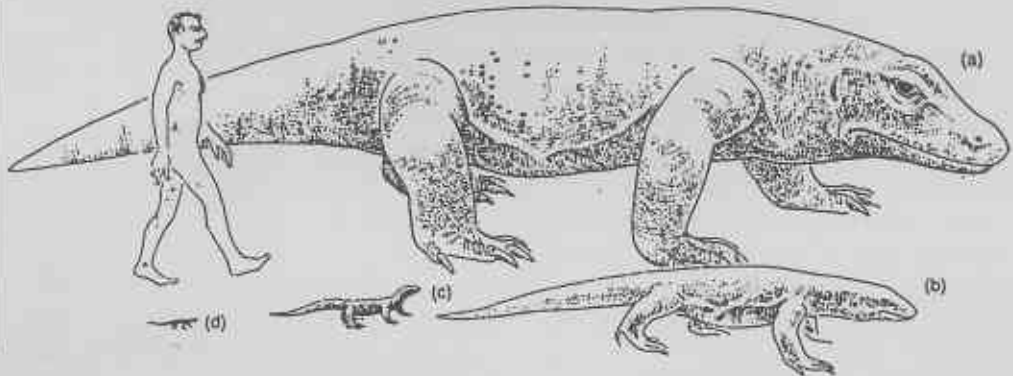
hollows or cliffs and sandbanks. A clutch of 2-6 eggs are laid from September to January in the north and October to December in the south.

Claire Hall

From a young *Land for Wildlifer* -

Q: What do snakes do after they have a fight?

A: Hiss and make up.



Relative sizes of some varanids and a human. (a) *Megalania prisca*; (b) *Varanus komodoensis*, (c) *V. rosenbergi*, (d) *V. brevicauda*

TIGER SNAKE FOR TEA!

IN December 2003, Griselda Hitchcock of Barragup near Mandurah spotted this Gould's Monitor with a Tiger Snake in its mouth! She says "It held the struggling snake by the neck for about an hour until it got dark and next morning I saw the track where it had dragged the snake off under some bushes." Truly a top predator. Goannas are surviving quite well in good bushland, where the most obvious sign of their presence is the horseshoe-shaped burrow entrance.

For lots of fascinating facts about these animals (including the fearsome Komodo Dragon) read "Goanna: the Biology of Varanid Lizards" by Brian Green and Dennis King. (1993. NSW Uni. Press.) For example, how would you like to have met *Megalania prisca*, which reached a length of 7 metres and weighed 650 kg? The first Aboriginal settlers probably did meet them - no wonder there are some pretty scary Dreamtime stories!

Penny Hussey



photo - G Hitchcock