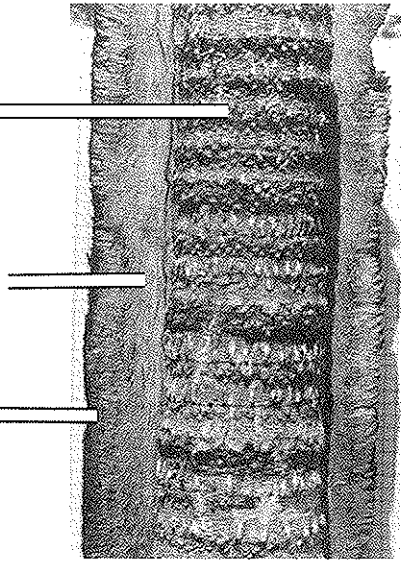


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of the plant and contribute to their great longevity.

Most of the information in this article was sourced from: Lamont, B. B. (1981). Morphometrics of the aerial roots of *Kingia australis* (Liliales). Australian Journal of Botany 29: 81-96.

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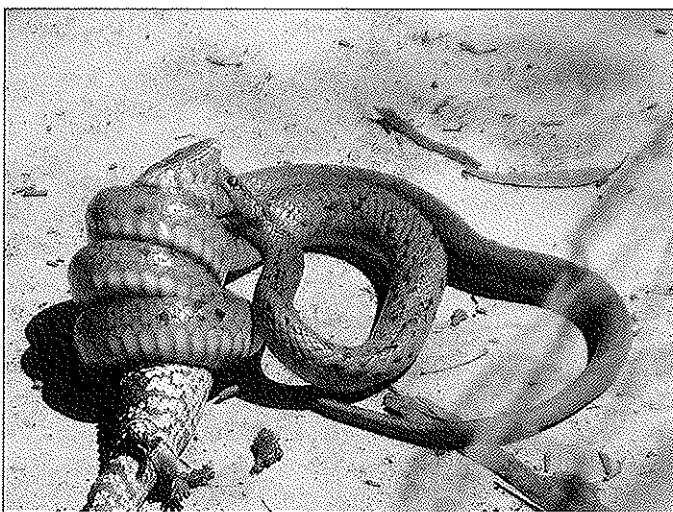
A DIFFICULT MEAL

There is a myth in the bush that bobtails keep snakes away, but Leah Manuel of Arthur River has seen otherwise. When Leah and her friends were heading out of the house one morning to say their goodbyes, they disturbed a bobtail and dugite having a stand-off on the lawn, thankfully the dugite left in a hurry. However, after the visitors had gone, Leah noticed another commotion in the carport. The dugite had wrapped itself around the bobtail! As the snake seemed fully occupied, Leah bravely went inside to get the camera and filmed the action for about ten minutes before her husband Neil arrived home and dispatched the snake.

Leah had not observed venomous snakes coiling around prey before, and had assumed they just struck and then swallowed. She asked "Is this behaviour common?" LFW asked DEC's Principal Zoologist, Peter Mawson, if he had any ideas.

Peter said snakes may coil – not to kill by constriction but to keep the prey steady while they try to get it down. "After all" he pointed out, "the snake has got a real problem here,

having, so to speak, bitten off more than it can chew – except, of course that it has no teeth to either bite or chew, nor has it hands or talons to tear off bits. Instead it has to dislocate its jaw and swallow the much bigger prey whole. To push that big head down its



throat will take quite a bit of force, so it is using its own body as a steady point."

Thanks Leah for this fascinating piece of natural history!