

Members' Page

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE DAY ...

Wayne Gill

Isn't it supposed to be things that go bump in the night? Please read on.....

Intrigue... Recently a *Land for Wildlife* member approached me at the local Wildflower Society meeting to relate a story about 'something' in the roof of her town house. Several snippets of the story excited my herpetological bones with talk of hearing a slow sliding from within the roof cavity, the mystery creature spending hours or days even above the same spot in one room and lastly the fact that they used to have to bait for mice and haven't had to do so for the last few years. All this information, coupled with the fact that the house in question is at the base of Wireless Hill, a granite headland bound to be home to a few scaly creatures, had me thinking there was a snake of some kind practicing biological control of rodents within suburban ceilings.



Clues... Excited by the prospect of wrangling a snake, maybe even a carpet snake, in a ceiling found me handing all my contact numbers to Bev (the homeowner), on the proviso that if she heard the distinctive slow sliding noises to give me a ring. Anytime! Any day! SO, a week later I am hanging out at home with my two young boys when I get the call saying that the 'thing' is within a few metres of the man-hole and I may have a reasonable prospect of finding it. I was around there in a flash and up into the dusty, but large and open ceiling space. I didn't hear anything that day but my suspicions were confirmed by the number of reptilian seats with distinctive white spots of urea similar to that of birds. Also, the ceiling insulation seemed to have cozy nests and tunnels in and under it, similar to what a snake would make. Most pleasing was the complete lack of rodent smell and any sign of them for that matter. But, still no clear indication as to what our quarry was, but this *LFW* Officer was now on the scent. However, there was now one very nervous *LFW* member wondering who she was sharing her house with!

Resolution... Fast forward a couple of weeks to late in the day, I have just arrived home after work when I get another call from Bev saying that the 'thing' was now within a few feet of the man-hole and I should come if I could. A quick hello goodbye to the family and I was off again and back into the roof. This time she had a good idea where it was and after lifting several pieces of insulation I saw a yellow spotted tail disappear from view. I called

to Bev to relieve her anxiety "Well, it's not a snake". A minute later I was climbing down with the fattest, healthiest, if not a little upset, king skink (*Egernia kingii*). The slow sounding movements were caused by the lizard having to crawl under the insulation, pressing it hard against the ceiling and restricting its speed. I reassured Bev by telling her that I would be ecstatic to have such a large skink running security in my roof, reducing any need for poisonous baits. Still not convinced she let me leave with the lizard in a bag.

Reconciliation... I had only been home for half an hour or so when Bev called saying that she was feeling guilty about evicting her housemate and would it be okay for it to be returned to her roof. The following day I headed back around to her house where we had a few photos before releasing our grateful reptile into its grand



manor. Although Bev was happy that our captive was a skink rather than a snake, she remains convinced that the noises she heard in the past belonged to something substantially bigger.....

Photos Wayne Gill