Members' page

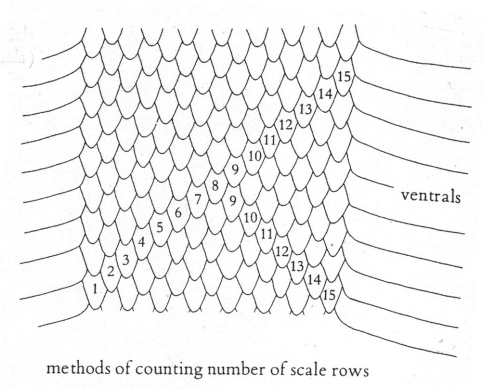
SNAKES IN THE ROOF!

Jane and Marcus Dyke love living next door to their 72 hectares of bushland at Narrogin and occasionally see a snake, but when they recently replaced the roof on their house, they were shocked to find 35 shed snake skins! .

The house was originally roofed in tin, but as the tin began to sag, the previous owners pitched another tile roof directly over the top leaving the 'sags' as nice warm spaces. It was in these spaces that the roofing carpenters collected the sloughs (shed skins) in this photograph. The carpenters were not impressed, saying that if they came across a live snake, the Dykes would have to finish the roof themselves!

The Dykes were curious as to which snake had shed its skin, how many snakes were living in the roof and if they should be concerned for the safety of their young family.

Snakes can be easily classified into non venomous carpet pythons, or the common venomous species such as gwardar, dugite or tiger snakes by counting the scales at mid body. Carpet pythons have 40 to 65 scales in a row whereas the common venomous snakes in the region have around 17 to 19 scales.



methods of counting number of scale rows

Using this method these skins were identified as the non-venomous carpet python. Was it one snake or many? Hard to tell as a carpet python can live for 25 to 30 years and can shed its skin a couple of times a year if conditions are favourable.

This is an amazing collection of skins and shows that snakes have an unnecessarily bad reputation. The snake/s had probably been controlling rodents within the ceiling for years while the owners were blissfully unaware of it/their presence.

Avril Baxter

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Tar spot

- The tar spot fungus is host specific, i.e. there is a different species of tar spot fungus on each species of hakea.
- The tar spot fungus spores are splash dispersed by rain, and only have limited ability to spread from a diseased to a healthy population.

We were not able to test these assumptions, which would have taken much more time and money than was available to us. Careful observation, however, may indicate whether burning is effective at reducing tar spot disease. If you have badly affected hakeas on your property and these are burnt in a hazard reduction burn, just check the amount of tar spot on regenerating shoots in subsequent years. Taking close up photos would be a good way to document what was there before the burn, and follow the health of the new shoots.

Acknowledgements

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