

FROM THE AUTHOR

Snakes are just like any other animal. They want to go about their business without getting scared or attacked by people, dogs and cats, or caught in bird netting or alcohol and soft drink cans. These are the most common reason snakes need help and need to see the vet. Every year people who look after injured snakes spend thousands of hours and thousands of dollars looking after them.

Sometimes they need expensive operations and medicines. Sometimes they need to be put down because they're very badly hurt. And the people who love these snakes are absolutely heartbroken.

We love them so much we want to see them happy and healthy and back out in the wild having all-you-can-eat buffets and sun baking.

Snakes want to live in peace far away from the things mentioned above. The problem is, people are moving further and further out into the bush. We have to be patient and understanding when snakes come into our yard or home. They don't know they're not allowed. They don't know your dog is going to have a go at them. They don't know how scared of them most people are.

**Next time you to see a snake say g'day and walk away.
And tell them The Snakelady says hi!**



MORE ADVICE

WHAT IF I SEE A SNAKE OUTSIDE?

If you see a snake around your home, ask yourself...

... do I need a snake catcher? Or can I move inside and wait for the snake to pass through?

Often snakes go on their way never to be seen again. This can be a good option if you are close to the bush or water, and don't have close neighbours or a busy road nearby.

We recommend keeping pets inside for at least 48 hours after spotting a snake around your home. Have them on a lead or in their harness when taking them outside to toilet and don't let them sniff anywhere a snake could be, like in under shrubs or places that are easy to hide in... Snakes are absolute ninjas and can appear and disappear in half a second. Have a look around before you take them out.

Don't let your pet go poking about! Actually, don't you go poking about either!

If it's safe, move kids and pets away from the area where the snake is. However, if you really would like it relocated, keep your local snake catcher's number in your mobile phone so you can keep an eye on the snake from a safe distance while you call them.



WHAT IF I SEE A SNAKE INSIDE?

If the snake's in a laundry or similar with a door to the outside, it can be a bit easier. They may just go back out after sticky-beaking around unless there is a mouse nest under your washing machine! If you feel comfortable doing so, tightly squish a towel under the door to prevent it moving into the rest of the house, and then open the outside door-from the outside! If you can watch the snake from somewhere safe, you'll know when it's moved on.

In another room? If you can close the door and put a towel under it, it'll stop them being able to travel into another room and you losing track of it while you're moving pets or kids away from the area.

If you have an open planned home, it can get a bit trickier, but remember your safety comes first- please don't interact with the snake in any way. Some are happy to cruise about and poke their noses in everything, some are going to be totally lost and freaked out.

The most important thing to remember is that kids and pets will take their cue from you. If you're cool calm and collected, they will be too. Even if you're crapping your dacks on the inside, don't panic! If they're freaked out, be calm. You can put pets in the car (in the shade of course) and even call a cool-headed neighbour to help wrangle everyone if necessary.

And another thing. If you have a snake inside at 3am, don't worry about the time. Watch it from a safe distance and call the catcher.

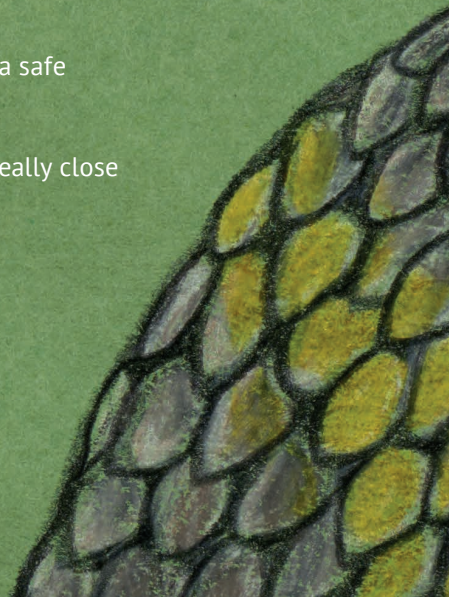
We have a rhyme we teach kids when we go to schools, and grown-ups can use it too. If you're really close to a snake and you're a bit (or a lot!) scared it can help you stay focused and calm.

REMEMBER

Be a statue.

Be a tree.

**Stand really, really still
and the snake won't see me.**



WILL THE SNAKE REALLY NOT SEE ME?

Technically no, the snake will still be able to see you. Not moving won't make you invisible! All the same, keeping still (and knowing why) is really important.

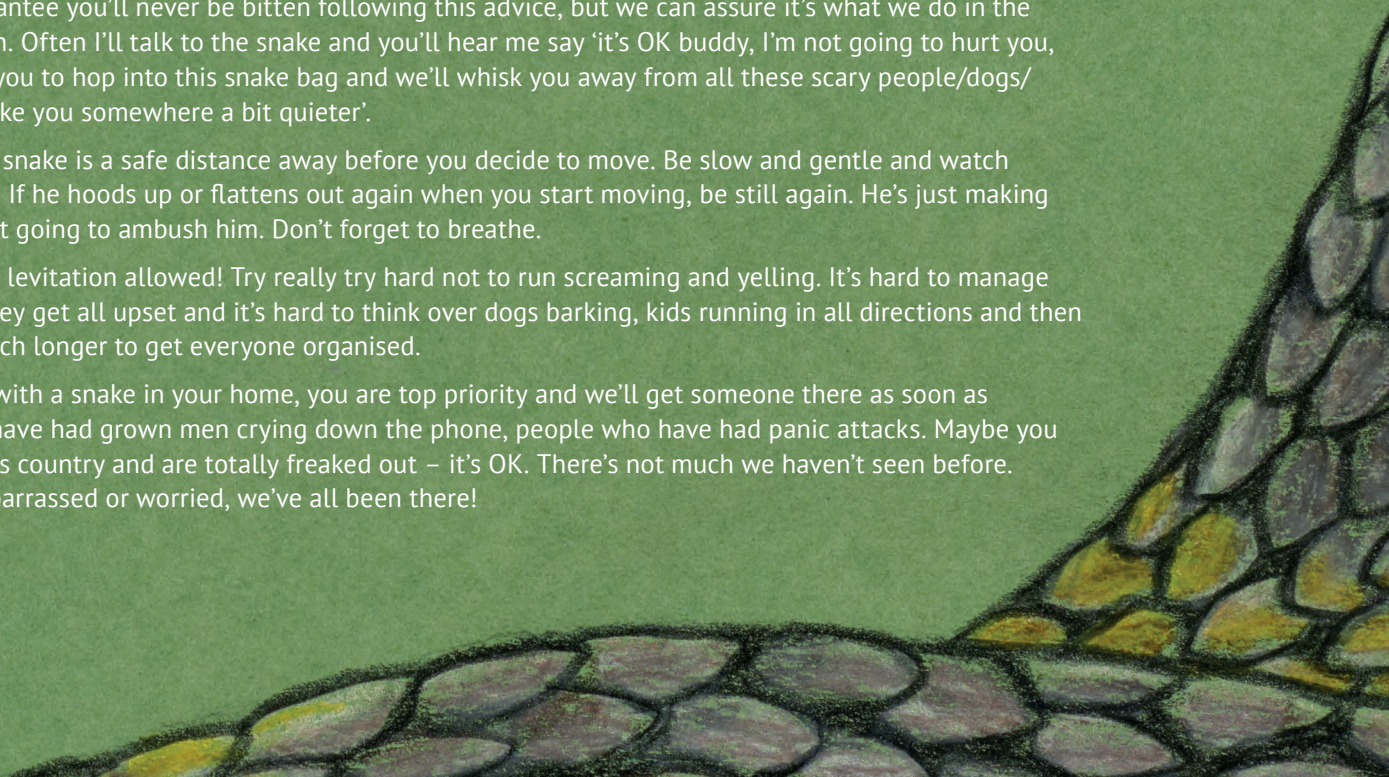
Snakes see movement as one of two things; Food or a Predator. They feel threatened when they realise that the movement does not mean food. You certainly don't smell like food...You're WAAAAY too big to eat. To a snake, this means YOU are the predator and they're the food. And then they panic. By staying still you are giving the snake a chance to realise that it's safe for it to move away. Sometimes they can get confused and go toward you. If this happens, stay absolutely still. I've had snakes go over my feet, and go between my feet. Because I've stayed absolutely still they've just gone on their way. You can do it!!

We can't guarantee you'll never be bitten following this advice, but we can assure it's what we do in the same situation. Often I'll talk to the snake and you'll hear me say 'it's OK buddy, I'm not going to hurt you, we just need you to hop into this snake bag and we'll whisk you away from all these scary people/dogs/chooks and take you somewhere a bit quieter'.

Wait until the snake is a safe distance away before you decide to move. Be slow and gentle and watch where it goes. If he hoods up or flattens out again when you start moving, be still again. He's just making sure you're not going to ambush him. Don't forget to breathe.

No dancing or levitation allowed! Try really try hard not to run screaming and yelling. It's hard to manage everyone if they get all upset and it's hard to think over dogs barking, kids running in all directions and then it takes so much longer to get everyone organised.

If you call us with a snake in your home, you are top priority and we'll get someone there as soon as possible. We have had grown men crying down the phone, people who have had panic attacks. Maybe you are new to this country and are totally freaked out – it's OK. There's not much we haven't seen before. Don't get embarrassed or worried, we've all been there!





FIRST AID

KEEP UP TO DATE AND PREPARED

First aid kits can get outdated. Because of this, you must make sure you are up to date with current snake-bite first aid. It's like insurance; you hope you never need it but it's there just in case.

Practicing with your bandage until you're really good at it. And the kids too. Practicing on each other and yourselves. Can you bandage yourself effectively without moving the bitten limb? Show the kids how to use a mobile phone to call triple zero. Make sure your kids know what an emergency is! Being too tired to walk home from the swimming hole isn't an emergency but if their friend/sibling has been bitten by a snake or conked themselves out having fallen over – that's an emergency!

Role play can be great. Run through the questions the operator asks and help them learn their address or how to describe where they are. For example, we live at such and such a place and we're down at the dam.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE IS BITTEN?

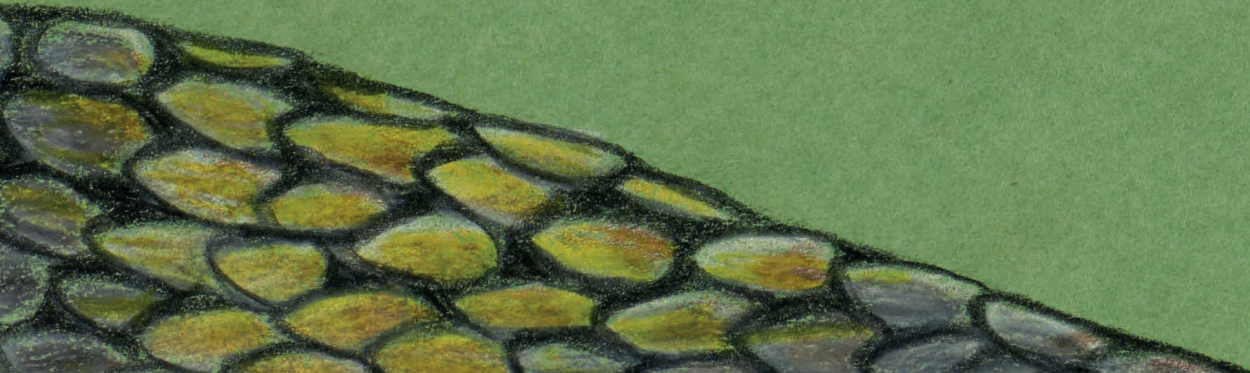
The biggest thing to do is stay calm. The chances of you dying from a snakebite are incredibly small.

Stay still, call triple zero, put them on speakerphone if possible while bandaging the limb with a wide bandage. If you've been bitten into a vein, the venom will travel much faster. It's rare, but it does happen. Venom usually travels through the lymphatic system. The more you move, the faster the venom moves. We want to slow it down as much as possible. So, **STAY STILL**. We use and recommend Setopress bandages. They are pretty much panic proof, and the clearly printed rectangles that stretch into squares take the guesswork out of applying them at the correct pressure. **SO** simple! It's really easy to see if you're stretched it too far or not enough. Read the instructions and practice!

Next, wait for the ambulance to come to you. Don't hang up on the ambulance. Stay on the phone, follow their instructions and answer their questions as best as you can. You don't even need to worry about what kind of snake it was that bit you, because Tiger snake anti-venom also works for Tassie's other snakes, so don't bother trying to catch it for identification.

Treat all snakebites as life threatening, because they are.

Stay still. Use the most updated first aid and call emergency services.





NOT QUITE SNAKES

BLOTCHED BLUE-TONGUE SKINKS

Tiliqua nigrolutea

Pronounced Til-eeek-wa nigh-grow-loo-tee-a

Blueys are our largest skink and are often uncovered curled up tightly under mulch. They LOVE strawberries and things like snails and spiders and slugs. They will also eat mice and baby rats, so they are fabulous in the garden. You will often see them with ticks behind their arms, legs or on their heads. Some people use tweezers and pull the ticks off. Diurnal and omnivorous... No I'm not telling you, you have to look those up!

SHEOAK SKINKS

Cyclodomorphus casurinae

Pronounced Sigh-klo-do-morfus kas-you-in-ay

Sheoaks are very clever and pretend to be snakes! They fold back their arms and legs and move sinuously through the garden, and even flick their tongues like snakes! They have very long tails and teeny little ear holes and come in lots of different colours. I've seen them plain grey, black, pinkish or apricot, kinda greenish bronze and some are even patterned with bright colours underneath! Again, they are great in the garden, eating all the pests that eat the veggies and fruit. Not many people see these, they are really shy! Endemic and viviparous (Google those words!).

Both these lizards are often mistaken for snakes in the garden, despite having visible limbs and ear holes. Did you know snakes don't have ear holes?? You do now!



NOT QUITE SNAKES CONTINUED

MOUNTAIN DRAGONS

Rankinia Dimensis

Pronounced Ran-keenia dye-men-sis

I love these guys. If you have dragons in your garden, or on your property you are very lucky! These are Tasmania's only Agamid and they are very social. This means they love to hang out in groups. They eat just about anything that fits in their mouths, including caterpillars, and they love those little black ants too.

There are 17 species of skinks in Tasmania! Seven are endemic. Some are spotty, some are stripy and some others look like they're wearing leopard print! Which ones do you see in your garden?

MYTHS & LEGENDS

Where do I even start! These are just the more common ones we hear:

If you have Blue-tongue lizards you won't have snakes.

Not true. I have photographic evidence!

If you put a saucer of milk out the snake will come to it.

Milk isn't something that snakes usually come across in the wild – and no they DO NOT drink milk from cows!! If they're really thirsty they'll investigate, but they won't come zooming out for a cup of your Pyengana Dairy milk... the neighbourhood cat might though.

If you get between a mother snake and her babies, she'll attack.

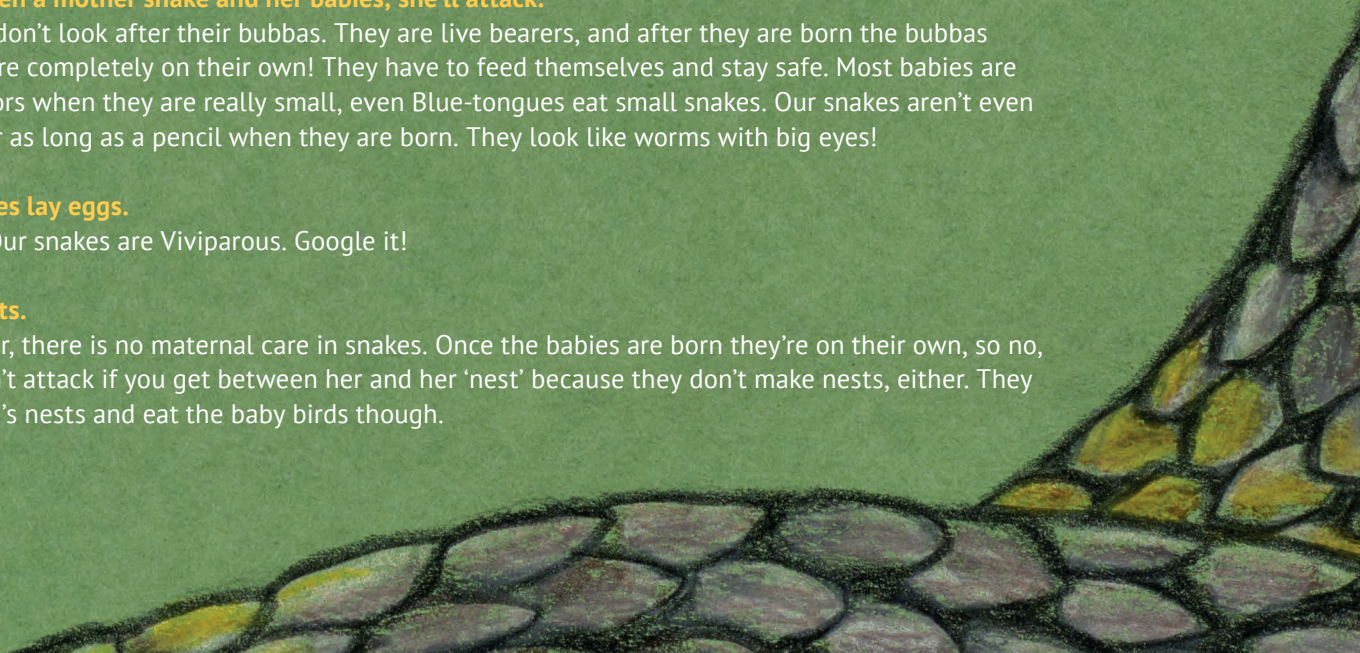
Mumma snakes don't look after their bubbas. They are live bearers, and after they are born the bubbas wiggle off and are completely on their own! They have to feed themselves and stay safe. Most babies are eaten by predators when they are really small, even Blue-tongues eat small snakes. Our snakes aren't even as thick round or as long as a pencil when they are born. They look like worms with big eyes!

Tasmanian Snakes lay eggs.

No, they don't. Our snakes are Viviparous. Google it!

Snakes have nests.

Nope! Remember, there is no maternal care in snakes. Once the babies are born they're on their own, so no, Mum snakes don't attack if you get between her and her 'nest' because they don't make nests, either. They will get into bird's nests and eat the baby birds though.



MYTHS & LEGENDS CONTINUED

Snakes are aggressive.

No, they're not. They are, however, terrified of people. When snakes huff and hood up and carry on, it's because they are really, really scared. It's a fear response. They're not 'more' aggressive in the mating season. In fact, they're not aggressive at all. Scientists say they don't have the frontal lobe development for aggression.

Snakes chase people.

Short answer: No they don't. Long answer: Sometimes snakes will get confused and panic when they feel threatened. They want to run to their safe spot and hide. If you happen to be in front of their safe space- they will keep trying to get there. It's really easy to feel scared when a snake is coming toward you – it's happened to me more than once. And yes, I've been scared even when I knew what they were trying to do. If you turn around and run, look back and see a snake coming along the path behind you, the first thing we think is he's chasing me! But they're just trying to scare you away. Some snakes are learning that movement TOWARDS a predator is just as effective as staying still, and I'm finding that sometimes snakes will do a rush toward me and then veer off around me. Sometimes they'll rush at me, stop, and then beat a hasty retreat off somewhere else.

Snakes won't cross gravel, rope, sulphur or sand.

Yes they will. There are lots of videos on YouTube that debunk these kinds of myths.

Snakes love hot weather

Snakes can't regulate their own temperature. This means they get their temperature from their environment. They're Ectothermic. Another one to look up! Essentially, snakes and other reptiles can die in hot weather extremely easily. ESPECIALLY if they are caught in netting. It's like leaving your dog inside a car on a hot day; they can't escape, overheat and die. This is the reason snakes seek out cooler areas when it's hot.



MYTHS & LEGENDS CONTINUED

Snake repellents work.

We get call-outs every year to places with snake repellents. The team at *Snakes Alive Tasmania* did their own testing and recorded it. You can find it on our Facebook page @SnakeCatcherTasmania if you want to watch it yourself. Guess what? The snakes didn't care one bit. Gordon got frightened when he saw Jen in the box though, it was really funny! But go see for yourself. Some people say essential oil sprays work too, but people who keep snakes have tested them, and they don't.

Believe me, if I found a tried and true snake repellent I would shout it from the rooftops! I would much rather be sitting down to dinner with my family, or kayaking on the river than rummaging around in your garden, getting sticks in my hair and spiders down my shirt in 35°C heat!

Snakes can't climb.

Snakes can't swim.

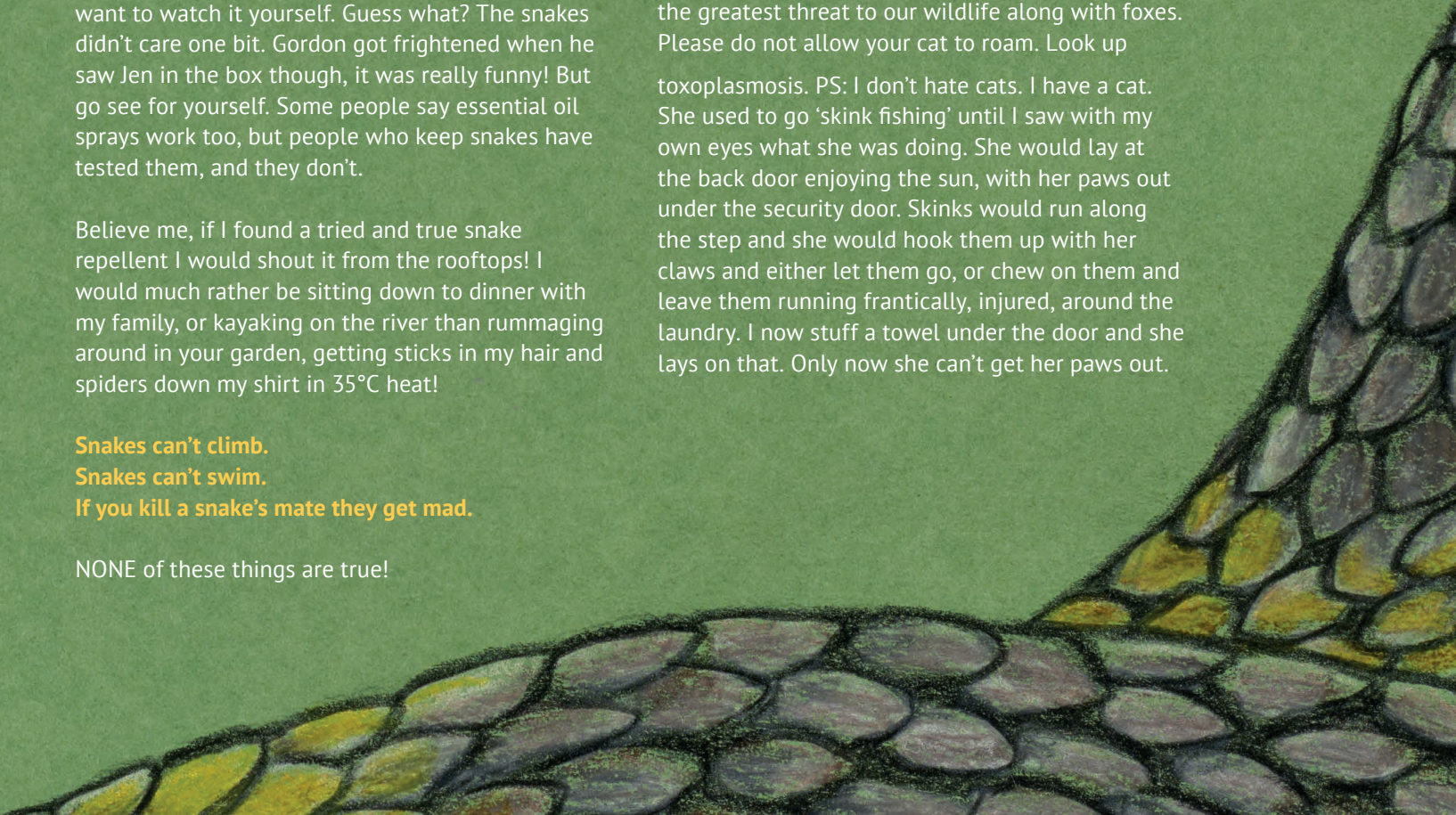
If you kill a snake's mate they get mad.

NONE of these things are true!

A WORD ABOUT CATS

Cats are predators. No matter what we think about our beautiful cat sitting on our lap getting pats and purring and loving us – when they go outside they kill animals. LOTS of animals. They are arguably the greatest threat to our wildlife along with foxes. Please do not allow your cat to roam. Look up

toxoplasmosis. PS: I don't hate cats. I have a cat. She used to go 'skink fishing' until I saw with my own eyes what she was doing. She would lay at the back door enjoying the sun, with her paws out under the security door. Skinks would run along the step and she would hook them up with her claws and either let them go, or chew on them and leave them running frantically, injured, around the laundry. I now stuff a towel under the door and she lays on that. Only now she can't get her paws out.



FOR MORE INFORMATION



Snake Catcher Tasmania-Snakes Alive

email: tassiesnakelady@gmail.com

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Text and illustrations © Veronika Ross 2020

Illustrations by Sonia Strong

ISBN 978-0-6489727-0-9

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Published by Forty South Publishing Pty Ltd, fortysouth.com.au