

## GENERAL MEETING

The last meeting was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

Quinten Armstrong gave a very interesting talk about the various Boa species found world wide with some beautiful specimens for our enjoyment. Amongst others he brought with Amazon Tree Boas, Madagascan Ground Boas and several more common Boas, including Sand Boas.

Mike Perry is our guest speaker for the next meeting. We have invited members to bring their doctors along as the evening will be about snakes, snake bite and treatment.

Please ensure to diaries the annual Beauty pageant which will be taking place on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

The next meeting is to be held on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006. The time will be 19h30 for 20h00 as usual.



**TRANSVAAL HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION  
TRANSVAAL HERPETOLOGIESE VERENIGING**

## NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

### PRESS STATEMENT

#### NEW EZEMVELO KZN WILDLIFE POLICY IGNORES THE RIGHTS OF ANIMAL KEEPERS, NEW FORMED GROUP CLAIMS

Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (“EKZNW”) has published a far reaching draft policy on the keeping of wild animals in captivity. The period for public comment closed on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2006 with the public having been given a mere two weeks to respond to a policy that seeks to render the keeping in captivity of all but domestic animals, unlawful.

The keeping of wild animals under the policy will be permitted only under very limited circumstances. The keeping of animals of all kinds (birds, reptiles, fish and conceivably insects as the latter are broadly speaking within the animal kingdom) as pets is outlawed. “Wild animals” for the purposes of the policy include any animal anywhere in the world that exists in a wild state.

The proposed policy has drawn an angry response from animal keepers from across a broad spectrum of people that keep animals as a profession, to those that do so as a serious hobby. A group of about 15 professional and amateur animal, bird, fish and reptile keepers met on Wednesday afternoon to prepare a response to the proposed policies. The group has formed an alliance to be known as the “KwaZulu-Natal Animal Interest Alliance” or “KZNAIA”. The Mission of KZNAIA is “to promote the welfare of animals, to strengthen human-animal bonds, and to safeguard the rights and interests of responsible animal owners and professionals through research, public education and the development of sound public policy.”

The group has challenged the legal process adopted in the development of the policy and has threatened legal action if the process is not halted. The group objects to the attempt by EKZNW to use a policy process to circumvent the usual procedures for the passing of legislation by parliament. The group claims that this is an infringement of their constitutional rights and has had a damaging effect on the businesses of some.

The proposed policy will effectively put pet shop owners, bird parks, Bird of Prey Display Centres, private breeding facilities and crocodile farms out of business. The use of wild animals in films and commercials will not be permitted. Wildlife refuges and private sanctuaries that take in injured creatures of all kinds with a view to their rehabilitation and return to the wild will not be permitted unless “conservation is the foremost and demonstrable purpose” for which they exist. The purported justification for this is found in the statement in the background document that states: “Modern best-practice obviates against the use of wild animals as pets or for entertainment to perform in circuses/films or as working animals”. The meaning of “modern best-practice” in the context in which it is used is unclear and is challenged by the group.

The group has stated clearly in its response that it is not against the development of appropriate policies and laws to regulate the keeping of animals, but contends that the proposed policy is inappropriate. It attempts a “one size fits all” policy for very diverse needs, existing circumstances, conservation, and animal welfare issues. It is “fatally flawed” both as to the process followed and its content according to the group.

The policy began as a response to the urgent need to deal with so-called “problem primates”, specifically vervet monkeys and to develop “norms and standards” for “primate centres and captive vervet monkeys”. Various stakeholder meetings that included only a few members of the group were held where the focus was on the “monkey problem”. Progress was made on the development of standards and norms for captive vervet monkeys but when the “umbrella policy” included the “Ex situ Wild Animal Management Policy” which has not been subjected to any meaningful stakeholder engagement appeared, members of the group were taken completely by surprise. Furthermore, the draft documents that did have limited distribution were very different to those presented in final draft but did not include reference to the submissions that had been made.

The group has invited EKZNW to halt the process and to withdraw the policy or it will take appropriate legal action. The group has insisted that the legal framework within which the policy is to be developed, its ultimate purpose and proper plan for a consultative process be disclosed before the process proceeds any further.

The Kwazulu Natal Animal Interest Alliance ( KZNAIA) has been formed by a wide interest group of concerned stakeholders in response to the recent draft policy published by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife ( EKZNW) which seeks to render unlawful the keeping in captivity of all but domestic animals by anyone other than a registered zoo or a game farm.

This has massive implications as per the definition of 'wild animal' in the draft document it would include birds, reptiles, fish and even insects  
WILD ANIMAL "All species of animal or bird whether the naturally occurring range be within SA or not. Thus wild animals in this Policy include both exotic and indigenous species. This excludes all domestic species (cows, horses etc)"

The KZNAI A has aligned itself with the principles of the American National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA [www.naiaonline.org/](http://www.naiaonline.org/)) which is an association of business, agricultural, scientific and recreational interests dedicated to promoting animal welfare, supporting responsible animal use and strengthening the bond between humans and animals. Members are pet owners, dog and cat clubs, obedience clubs and rescue groups as well as breeders, trainers, veterinarians, research scientists, farmers, fisherman, hunters and wildlife biologists. The membership roster of NAIA includes some of America's most respected animal professionals, advocates and enthusiasts and they have developed policy positions on all types of animal keeping and sustainable use.

"The mission of the KZNAIA is to promote the welfare of animals. To strengthen the human-animal bonds, and to safeguard the rights and interests of responsible animal owners and professionals through research, public education and the development of sound public policy"  
Stakeholders affected by the draft policy have objected to the lack of transparency of this draft and the very short notice period of only 2 weeks that they were given to comment on the draft.

The KZN Film Industry immediately voiced serious concerns about the draft Policy and have been asked for urgent clarification from international colleagues following damaging reports already filtering into the film industry overseas with regards pending and future film projects in SA as a direct result of the draft Policy.

The SA Pet Industry issued an immediate objection to what in effect could force pet stores to close down.

The Avicultural Industry is represented by the KZNAIA and has reacted strongly as the draft will effect everyone from large scale breeders to Mrs. Jones with a single African Grey kept as a companion animal  
The Reptile Industry was equally shocked at the draft Policy and has representation on the KZNAIA. Thousands of reptile enthusiasts from commercial breeders right through to a boy keeping a snake in a terrarium will be affected.

Insect breeders which supply the pet trade with beetles, moths, larvae etc will be affected. Will your kid be allowed to keep silkworms?  
The Draft Policy is unworkable as it is. EKZNW have been requested to immediately stop the process and make public notice to this effect. They must then invite all concerned and interested parties to take part in the formulation of the draft so that input is received from all Stakeholders.

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## NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

### Mass hysteria after snake kill

07/09/2006 22:48 - (SA)

Kathmandu - Dozens of children have fainted, apparently because of mass hysteria, after school authorities in Nepal killed a snake, considered as sacred by many Hindus, witnesses said on Thursday. At least 67 pupils - aged between nine and 16 years - have had fainting fits since Tuesday in the mainly Hindu country, they said. "Children suddenly scream, cry and faint," Rishikesh Baral, assistant headmaster of the school, told Reuters by phone. "Some recover after a couple of hours while others are yet to fully recover. We apologise for killing the snake." Authorities in the Laxmi Secondary School near the resort town of Pokhara, 125km west of Kathmandu, organised priests to perform religious rites on Thursday to exorcise the "evil spirit" of the snake killed by school officials last week. Doctors told school officials it was a case of hysteria caused by fear of divine retribution for the snake's death. Hindus regard snakes as sacred and Lord Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction, is shown wearing a serpent as a garland. A local journalist said priests scattered rice and sprinkled holy water in classrooms to drive away the snake's "spirit".

[http://www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0,,2-10-1462\\_1995155,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0,,2-10-1462_1995155,00.html)

### Snakes go on rampage in Nigeria

01/09/2006 21:31 - (SA)

Lagos - Snakes have bitten at least six people daily in Kaltungo town in Nigeria's northern Bauchi State, said the state health commissioner, according to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Thursday. The commissioner, Mohammed Umar, a physician, said that Kaltungo, popularly referred to as the home of snakes, is one of the towns within the snake belt region in the northern part of the country. At least six snakebite victims were admitted at the Kaltungo state hospital in the past three months, apart from cases that were not officially reported, said NAN. He said that he had no figures of those who died from snakebites, but added that May to August was the peak period for snake attacks.

The period, he said, coincided with the peak period for farming and animal rearing, hence the high incidence of snakebites.

"Unfortunately, the carpet viper, a species of the rampaging snakes, is not easy to eradicate as they reproduce in hundreds during their breeding season," said Umar.

The government had intensified efforts at creating awareness on self-protection and also ensuring the availability of anti-snake drugs at all time.

Umar said that the federal government has designated the Kaltungo state hospital as a national centre for snakebite research.

[http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447\\_1991805,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447_1991805,00.html)

### Croc leads cops on Nile chase

20/09/2006 16:58 - (SA)

Cairo - Egyptian police were searching the waters of the Nile on Wednesday for a crocodile, which plunged into the river after fleeing from a tourist complex, said a security source.

Three crocodiles escaped from the riverside Pharaoh Village tourist attraction while they were being transferred between cages on Tuesday.

Two were recaptured by river police, but a third, about 1.2m long, was still eluding police after disappearing into the depths of the Nile.

The tourist village had been keeping the reptiles illegally.

[http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,6119,2-11-1447\\_2001506,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,6119,2-11-1447_2001506,00.html)

## BIRTHDAYS

On behalf of the THA we would like to wish you all a happy birthday.

## OCTOBER

- 1 – Drieka Botha
- 6 – Kathy Potgieter
- 8 – Sean Le Roux
- 15 – Quinten Armstrong
- 22 – Mair Swartz
- 25 – Darin Flemming
- 25 – Mike Perry

## SARCA VIRTUAL MUSEUM COMPETITION

Dear SARCALites

Here is an important announcement that will also go onto the SARCA website. PARTICIPATE AND ENJOY!!

### SARCA VIRTUAL MUSEUM COMPETITION

Start: 1 September 2006

End: 15 March 2007

Draw: 31 March 2007

It's simple! Submit records of southern African reptiles photographed in the period 1 September 2006 to 15 March 2007, as per the instructions in the SARCA website ([www.reptiles.sanbi.org](http://www.reptiles.sanbi.org)). Each record will count as one entry into the competition. The more records you submit, the better your chances of winning one of the following prizes:

- R500 for the person who submits the most records during the competition period.
- R500 for a lucky SARCA number drawn from all the records in the period.
- "A Complete Guide to the Snakes of Southern Africa" by Johan Marais – two books to be won by two lucky SARCA numbers, drawn from the period.
- "Field Guide to Snakes and other Reptiles of Southern Africa" by Bill Branch - two books to be won by two lucky SARCA numbers, drawn from the period.
- "Atlas and Red Data Book of the Frogs of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland" – two books to be won by the two observers who submit the greatest variety of different species.
- Gerber Suspension multitool – for a lucky SARCA number drawn from the period.

### SPONSORS:

The R1000 prize money was donated by SA Reptiles ([www.sareptiles.co.za](http://www.sareptiles.co.za)).

The two frog atlases were donated by the Avian Demography Unit, ([www.aviandemographyunit.org](http://www.aviandemographyunit.org)), and the other books by SARCA

([www.reptiles.sanbi.org](http://www.reptiles.sanbi.org)). The Gerber multitool was kindly donated by Dave Honiball, "Python Man" of Naboomspruit.

The records that you submit to the SARCA Virtual Museum are an important resource for improving our knowledge of the distributions of southern African reptiles. The winning recipe is to get records of as many species from as many localities in the SARCA region (South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland), as possible. All records will be plotted in the new Red Data Book for reptiles, scheduled for publication in 2009. So this is your opportunity to make a real contribution to the conservation of our reptile fauna.

GO FOR IT!!

The SARCA Team

## IN MEMORY OF STEVE IRWIN

Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin has been killed in a stingray attack near Cairns on Australia's far north coast.



It was believed Irwin had been swimming off the coast of Cairns when he was stung. It is understood he was killed by a stingray barb that went through his chest, Brisbane's Courier Mail reported this afternoon. Irwin's wife Terri was believed to be trekking on Tasmania's Cradle Mountain, Sky News reported. Stingray attacks are extremely rare. There have only been two similar deaths reported in Australia. Irwin once told the Animal Planet website he had had "many, many close calls - too numerous to mention really." Irwin was best known for his documentary series "The Crocodile Hunter".

He was born in Victoria and found his love of animals after following in his father's footsteps, volunteering his services to the Queensland Government's East Coast Crocodile Management program.

He spent years living on his own in the mosquito infested creeks, rivers and mangroves of North Queensland, catching huge crocodiles single-handed. In June 1992, he married American Terri Raines after they met when she visited Irwin's Australia Zoo.

The 44-year-old is survived by his wife and two children, Bindi and Robert. Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of The Nationals, Mark Vaile, said Australians will be saddened and shocked by the sudden death of Mr Irwin. I was a tremendous fan of Steve Irwin because of his larger than life personality and his ability to highlight wildlife conservation in a way that people from all walks of life could identify with, Mr Vaile said. Steve was an amazing Australian.

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/060904/23/10ebv.html>

Irwin pulled stingray barb from his chest  
Ian Gerard and Tony Koch - September 05, 2006

A LIFE-long friend of Steve Irwin today told how the Crocodile Hunter pulled a deadly stingray barb from his own chest before losing consciousness and dying. Friend John Stainton said he had viewed footage of his friend's last moments and the images were "shocking". It's a very hard thing to watch because you're actually witnessing somebody die ... and it's terrible, he said.

It shows that Steve came over the top of the ray and the tail came up, and spiked him here (in the chest), and he pulled it out and the next minute he's gone. That was it. The cameraman had to shut down.

The footage of the fatal attack on the Great Barrier Reef has been handed to Queensland police as fans worldwide come to grips with the "freak" death. Irwin, 44, was killed almost instantly when the stingray stabbed him in the heart with its poisonous 20cm barb as he snorkelled off Port Douglas, in north Queensland, yesterday morning. As tributes and salutes poured in from around the world, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie said Irwin would get a state funeral if that's what his family wanted.

On the election campaign trail in Hervey Bay, Mr Beattie said the Governemnt was considering the possibility of naming a national park after the flamboyant naturalist.

We want to make certain that ... there's a fitting long-term tribute to Steve Irwin and it may well be we can do all sorts of things like name a national park, we could have particular awards, all sorts of things, the Premier said.

Irwin's American-born wife, Terri, was trekking in Tasmania's Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair National Park when the news broke of her husband's death and last night flew back to Queensland with her two children Bindi, 8, and Bob, 2.

The diveboat's owner Peter West also saw the footage. There was no blood in the water, it was not that obvious ... something happened with this animal that made it rear and he was at the wrong position at the wrong time and if it hit him anywhere else we would not be talking about a fatality, said Mr West.

Irwin was shooting a documentary on dangerous marine life, in shallow water at Batt Reef, about 32 nautical miles offshore, at about 11am. Tributes poured in from around the world for Irwin, a renowned environmentalist who was estimated to be earning more than \$4million a year from his Queensland reptile park, Australia Zoo.

Footage of the attack shows Irwin swimming above a 2.5m stingray before it turns on him and sends a poisonous barb through his heart. Irwin was pulled from the water by a cameraman and a crewman, put on an inflatable tender and taken to a support boat about 500m away. Crewmembers say he was barely conscious in the minutes after the sting and died as his production team rushed him to his vessel, Croc One, and to a nearby island for emergency treatment.

A charter dive boat crew desperately tried to revive him on the beach, but were unsuccessful and he was pronounced dead shortly afterwards by Queensland Rescue Service officers, who had flown to the area by helicopter. Irwin's body was last night flown to Cairns where a post-mortem examination this morning confirmed Irwin was killed when the poisonous barb on the stingray's tail pierced his chest. Police have seized all available evidence and interviewed witnesses in order to prepare a report for the Coroner. A coronial inquest is expected.

Producer, director and life-long friend John Stainton yesterday said Irwin did not provoke the stingray and was simply swimming above it when he was attacked. He came over the top of a stingray and the stingray barb went up and into his chest and into his heart, Stainton said. It's likely that he possibly died instantly when the barb hit him, and I hope he felt no pain.

One of Irwin's contemporaries, internationally known cameraman and spearfisherman Ben Cropp, was in his own boat off Port Douglas when Irwin was killed.

I have just spoken to a cameraman friend who was there and has seen the footage, Mr Cropp told The Australian last night. He was up in the shallow water, probably 1.5m to 2m deep, following a bull ray which was about a metre across the body - probably weighing about 100kg, and it had quite a large spine. The cameraman was filming in the water." Mr Cropp said the stingray was spooked and went into defensive mood. It probably felt threatened because Steve was alongside and there was the cameraman ahead, and it felt there was danger and it balked.

It stopped and went into a defensive mode and swung its tail with the spike. Steve unfortunately was in a bad position and copped it. I have had that happen to me, and I can visualise it - when a ray goes into defensive, you get out of the way. Steve was so close he could not get away, so if you can imagine it - being right beside the ray and it swinging its spine upwards from underneath Steve - and it hit him.

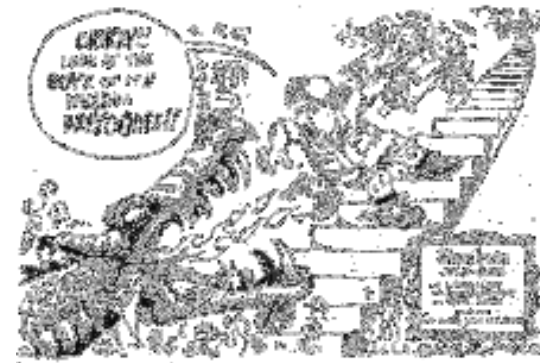
I have seen that sort of reaction with rays - with their tail breaking the water, such is the force." Internationally renowned jellyfish sting expert Jamie Seymour was on board Irwin's boat at the time. Irwin had decided yesterday morning to shoot a segment of film on stingrays for a new television program that will be hosted by his daughter, Bindi. Surf Lifesavers national marine stinger adviser Lisa-Ann Gershwin said there had only been 17 fatal stingray attacks worldwide. I think it's just an extraordinary freak accident that has happened to his heart, she said.

A lot of people will be afraid by this, but they need to keep in mind that this was a freak accident, it was a terrible tragedy but it is not common. Dr Gershwin said stingray stings to the legs or arms were common and, while painful, were not normally considered dangerous. She said there were many different types of stingrays, with barbs on their tails up to 30cm long, and they poisoned victims with a range of toxins. Mr West said the barb was like a "very rough knife" and while fatal stingray stings had been known to occur, filming and swimming alongside the animal was commonplace among marine filmmakers.

Mr Cropp said he was told that the strike was "close to the heart and Steve had a cardiac arrest". At first they treated him as being wounded, but he didn't survive unfortunately, he said. The second boat in attendance raced in to give assistance and they radioed for help. They went into Low Isle and met the chopper which took Steve's body out."

In September 2004, Mr Cropp was attacked by a tiger shark on Bott Reef. "The rays in Australia and particularly in the north are not like those on the Cayman Islands, which are very quiet and allow people to ride on their backs," he said. At this time of the year they are on the lookout for tiger sharks and are very frisky. They are not aggressive. In fact they are very timid, but they defend themselves by throwing their tail spine upwards, and there is a spike on the tip about eight inches long which they can use like a dagger."

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,20355112-601,00.html>



## EDITORS NOTE

Thank you to those who submitted articles. We would like to request original articles, which have been written by members.

Please visit our website [www.tha.co.za](http://www.tha.co.za). We are open to any suggestions to improve the website. There will be some exciting changes in the near future, which will include a discussion forum and a news page.



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