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93

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HERPTILE 10 (3)

Notes on the feeding behaviour of the Common Scaly Foot (*Pygopus lepidopus*) and Burton's Legless Lizard (*Lialis burtonis*)

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In captivity the Common Scaly Foot (*Pygopus lepidopus*) stalks its food, which consists of both animal and vegetable material; many specimens showing a strong preference for banana!

In the summer of 1981 (December) I was "night cruising" the roads near Terrey Hills, N.S.W. (lat. 33° 15', S long. 151° 15' E) primarily to capture reptiles suitable as food for baby Death Adders (*Acanthophis*) when I came upon a freshly killed, adult Scaly Foot. The stomach was later found to contain the full tail of an adult *P. lepidopus*.

That same evening, a 15 cm *Typhlina nigrescens* and an adult *lepidopus* were placed together in a large tin. A few hours later the *T. nigrescens* had vanished. Later dissection revealed that it had, in fact, been eaten by the Scaly Foot.

On other occasions *P. lepidopus* found in the Terrey Hill district have contained *Lamprophis platynota* (most frequently), *Sphenomorphus tenuis*, *Ctenotus taeniolatus* and a frog, *Ranidella signifera*.

Lialis burtonis, in contrast to *Pygopus*, appears to hunt (at least in captivity) mainly by ambushing its prey (Chapman 1981 pers. comm., Croft, 1980 pers. comm., Hoser unpubl.). These reptiles will rest in grass tussocks (if provided in their cage) for most of the time and attack prey, usually lizards, when it comes within range. In the wild this species almost certainly relies on its colouration as camouflage, useful in both defence and prey capture.

It is interesting to note that in the Sydney area, two distinct colour morphs are found. These are brick-red and steel-grey although these two forms interbreed freely intermediate colour forms do not exist.

Acanthophis antarcticus, (see Hoser - this issue) which also occurs in the Sydney region, also has a brick-red and steel-grey colour morph.

This similarity with regard to colouration between these two species may be a result of similar feeding habits or habitat selection.

Footnote

Whilst unrelated to feeding behaviour I have observed in *Pygopids* one peculiar behavioural trait. When legless lizards of the genera *Delma* , and on rarer occasions *Pygopus* , are startled by the headlights of an approaching car they may 'jump' or 'hop' across the roads on their tails!

Lialis burtonis does not appear to share this habit.

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