

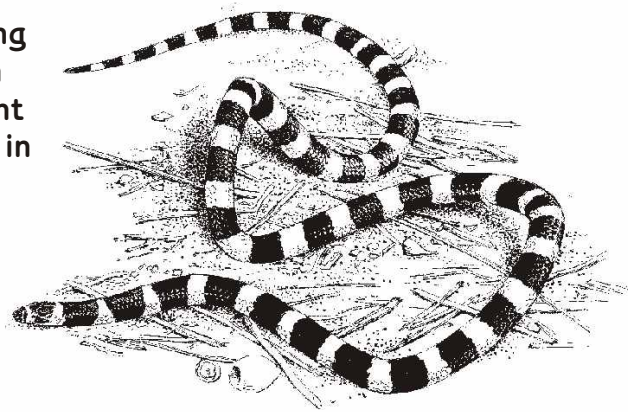
# Nature Notes

**Junior Ranger**

## **BEAUTY IN BLACK & WHITE**

Bandy-bandys (*Vermicella spp.*) are fascinating black and white banded snakes which live in most parts of Australia. There are five different species of Bandy-bandy and four of them live in the Northern Territory!

They are amazing not only because of their unique appearance, but also because of their interesting behaviour.



## **GIVE YOUR FOES THE FLICK!**

Being black and white has its advantages! A Bandy-bandy will slowly move its body up and down in loops which creates an illusion that the snake is going one way, then it quickly escapes in the opposite direction.

The movement of the black and white bands confuses the Bandy-bandy's attackers. The same method of escape is used by Zebras in a herd (group) situation.

Apart from this method Bandy-bandys has little means of defence against predators. This confusing trick is called 'flicker fusion.'

### **SCIENCE SNIPPET**

The spp. which follows the scientific name *Vermicella*, tells you that there is more than one species of Bandy-bandy.

## **BANDY-BANDYS . . . .**

Can swallow prey (food) almost as large as their own body!

Are nocturnal & often seen on the road at night - especially after rain.

Eat blind snakes for breakfast, lunch & dinner.

Young are born from soft-shelled eggs.

Live in sub-terranean (underground) habitats.

Flick their bodies around to confuse predators about which way they are going!

Are only as long as two rulers put together.

Don't all have the same number and widths of bands.

Belong to the same family as Australia's deadliest snakes. They have venom glands, however they produce very little venom & are unlikely to bite humans.

## A BLIND MEAL FOR A BANDY-BANDY!

Did you know that there is a group of snakes that are blind, live underground and only feed on ant eggs and termites?

Blind snakes have a worm like body and a forked tongue. They are not totally blind, as their name suggests, but can probably only tell the difference between light and dark.

There are many species of blind snake. They are non-venomous, harmless to humans and you might see them above ground in your garden after rain.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Herpetologists (people who study reptiles) believe that Bandy-bandys only eat blind snakes!

## FEATURES OF A BLIND SNAKE

A nasty smell caused by an oil released by the snake when threatened, turns predators off their dinner - but not Bandy-bandys ... they think they're yum!

Eyes appear as small black dots

Super-sensitive forked tongue

Oil glands on the neck help them to slide through the soil

A spine on its tail helps the blind snake to anchor as it uses its snout to shovel through the soil

Smooth scales

## ARE BANDY-BANDYS 'ON THE BRINK'?

Because they are nocturnal and live underground people don't see Bandy-bandys very often. This doesn't mean they are endangered - it just means that like many other animals they have a place in the environment (a niche) that is not very obvious to people.

Bandy-bandys are another animal in the Northern Territory that are one of our best kept secrets! Learning about these creatures and spending time in the outdoors will increase your chances of sighting these amazing reptiles.

## SNAKES & LADDERS

FINISH

Use a marker to play on the Bandy-bandy.

If you land on a ladder - **go up**

& if you land on a snake - **go down!**

START

