

Press Release
2 November 2009

Snakes alive – not dead says SPCA

The Cape of Good Hope (CoGH) SPCA has issued an appeal to Capetonians who come across snakes to first seek assistance rather than killing them.

“Summer time means snake time, as these cold blooded or ectothermic reptiles come out in warmer weather to forage and reproduce”, says SPCA Wildlife trainee inspector Brett Glasby who rescued another two snakes on Friday. The first snake, a non venomous mole snake, was removed from a residential property in Grassy Park brought to the SPCA by the SAPS in a dustbin. Soon after it was released at Rondevlei Nature Reserve.

Shortly thereafter Brett received another report of a snake, reported to be a puff adder, at a property in Mitchell’s Plain. On arrival he identified it as a common rhombic egg eater snake. The owner of the property had bravely managed to put in into a clean dust bin and immediately sought the help of the SPCA.

“We are very pleased that in both incidences the owners sought help rather than resorting to killing the snakes”, said Brett. “We respect that for many it is very scary to encounter a snake. The egg eater resembles a night adder or puff adder (both venomous) and whilst completely harmless, as a protection tactic, they will open their mouths and strike to warn off predators, however they cannot bite”, he said.

According to Glasby, who has 15 years experience working with snakes, the egg eater was an above-average sized individual (measured 1.02 metres), making it the largest seen by him and the SPCA. They are normally between 50-70 cm in length and are found throughout South Africa and feed solely on the eggs of birds and chickens. The snake was also released at the Rondevlei Nature Reserve.

Should you encounter a snake, steer clear and immediately contact the SPCA Inspectorate division on 021 700 4158/59 or after hours 083 326 1604. Alternatively contact a registered snake catcher.

Ends

Notes to editor

What to do if you find a snake on your property:

- **Never try to pick a snake up (alive or dead).** Some can mimic being dead, and even a dead snake can inflict a potentially fatal bite you (a decapitated head of a snake can still bite and deliver venom for up to 30 minutes after death!

- **Never try to hit it with a stick!** That will just provoke it and force it to try to defend itself.

- **If children or pets are present,** get them to leave the area and lock up your dogs and cats.

- **Keep an eye on the snake** to ensure that you know exactly where it is when the snake catcher arrives. Most snake catchers will not come out if you don’t know

exactly where the snake is, as the chances of finding the snake again are very slim. If the snake is found indoors, close the door and put a towel under the doors and windows to prevent it from getting out until the snake catcher arrives. As each situation will be different, you will need to take further instructions from the snake catcher once you have made contact.

If you were unable to get professional assistance, try spraying it with potable water from a safe distance with a hose or opening sprinklers. This should persuade the snake to leave the area.