

A. S. H. policy on conservation"

(Reprinted from 1986 A.S.H. Newsletter (pages 39–40) with permission from John Wombey and Rick Shine. It is reprinted here because it is a clear first statement on conservation from a herpetological society and is thus of considerable historical as well as current value — editors.)

"The following document was prepared by Rick Shine and Hal Cogger, and revised after extensive discussion at the 1986 A.S.H. meeting at Charlotte Pass. That meeting agreed to endorse the document in principle, but directed that the draft should be printed in the Newsletter before final ratification, in order to allow further comments to be made by the membership (especially, those members not present at the Charlotte Pass meeting). Anyone who wishes to comment on the document should transmit their remarks, in writing, to the Secretary-Treasurer, within four weeks of publication of this newsletter. After this time, the A.S.H. Council will consider these comments; if no major objections are expressed, the document will be formally accepted as our policy on conservation.

DRAFT STATEMENT

"The membership of the Australian Society of Herpetologists, Inc. (A.S.H.) includes most of the professional scientists engaged in research on Australian amphibians and reptiles. As the only national body representing such expertise, A.S.H. believes that it has the responsibility to play an active role in advising on the conservation of the Australian herpetofauna.

"Amphibians and reptiles are an integral component of the Australian fauna, and are essential for the long-term maintenance of the survival and diversity of ecosystems. Their often high population densities and low vagility make many amphibians and reptiles uniquely suitable for the identification and monitoring of environmental problems. Studies of amphibians and reptiles are of vital importance in providing a sound basis for wildlife conservation in Australia, and this importance should be reflected in conservation priorities.

"We oppose exploitation of the herpetofauna, where such exploitation poses a serious threat to wild populations, or involves cruelty to animals. Activities which pose no real threat to wild populations, and which provide urgently needed knowledge on which to base a rational management policy, should be vigorously encouraged.

"We believe that the most effective conservation of wild populations of reptiles and amphibians is conservation of *habitats*, in concert with protection of individual specimens. The greatest threats come from habitat destruction: without adequate conservation of major habitat types, and specific habitats where appropriate, all other measures will be ineffective.

"Research on amphibians and reptiles should be encouraged, so long as it does not pose a threat to the continued existence of wild populations, and meets widely accepted standards of animal welfare and husbandry. We are committed to public education on the role and importance of amphibians and reptiles, because appreciation of these animals by the general public is essential to successful conservation efforts. For this reason, we support the idea that the study of captive reptiles and amphibians should be encouraged. Controls are needed, but these activities should not be discouraged by inappropriate legislative restrictions.

"To facilitate research in Australian herpetology, we urge that there be greater consultation between the various State and Federal authorities responsible for fauna conservation, to reduce the present complexities and need for multiple permits. We endorse the Commonwealth's current stringent legislative controls over the importation of exotic species.

"In cases where a research proposal might have a heavy impact on a herpetofaunal population, and may be seen as an issue which goes beyond regional boundaries, we encourage the authorities controlling the issue of permits for such work to examine the question at a national level, including full consultation with experts in the field. A.S.H. is willing to contribute its expertise to such situations. Our policy is to assist faunal authorities, if so requested, by providing objective advice on behalf of the Society, following consultation with relevant experts."