

A New Papuan Python

By ERIC WORRELL.

This spectacular python was sent to Sir Edward Hallstrom in 1955. It was kept for several months in the reptile section of Taronga Zoological Park, Sydney, and then died from a head infection.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Sir Edward Hallstrom, chairman of Taronga Zoological Park Trust, gave me permission to describe the species. Mr. G. Cann, curator of reptiles at Taronga Zoological Park assisted me with the taking of photographs in life. Mr. A. Loveridge of Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts checked the first draft and offered valuable suggestions which have been incorporated in this paper. The drawings were skilfully reconstructed from photographs by Mr. J. Dwyer as the head of the type is swollen and distorted by the infection responsible for its death.

LIASIS TARONGA, sp. nov.

Type: An adult ♂ taken at Lae, Papua, by Mr. T. G. Downs, District Commissioner of Goroka, in 1955. It is now lodged in the Australian Museum, Sydney.

Diagnosis: The scalation most nearly resembles *Liasis childreni* Gray, of northern Australia. Characterized by 48 midbody scale-rows; 282 ventrals; single anal; 57 pairs of subcaudals. Yellow and black above; underside anteriorly lemon-yellow, posterior half black.

Description: Head distinct from neck, form robust. Premaxillary teeth present. Grooved rostral visible from above; internasals less than half length of anterior prefrontals which are separated from frontal by a small ovate azygous shield; frontal almost as broad as long, about as long as but wider than supraoculars; 2 pairs of parietals, posterior pair followed by border of enlarged shields; single nasal; loreal area broken into small shields; 2 preoculars; 2 postoculars; temporals broken into small scales; 8 supralabials, first to third grooved, fifth and sixth enter eye; 14 infralabials, third to seventh deeply pitted. Total length 246 cm. or 8 ft. 2 in.; tail 25 cm. or 10 inches.

Colour: Above, blue black, a yellow spot inside each nostril, labials posteriorly edged with yellow; flanks with yellow diagonal stripes that merge into the belly colouring. Below, anteriorly lemon yellow with black spots under head; posterior half black with occasional yellow spots.

DISCUSSION.

Liasis taronga is a much larger python than *Liasis childreni*¹. Its head is broader and snout shorter, the labial pits are differently situated and in *childreni* there is only one distinct pair of parietals. It has no close affinity with any known python.

To date only the type-specimen has been recorded. An interesting note accompanied the python from Lae and mentioned that the snake fed on "water-birds, eggs and paw-paws." Mr. George Cann fed the reptile exclusively on rats.

¹ Gray, 1842, Zool. Miscell., p. 44: northwest Australia.

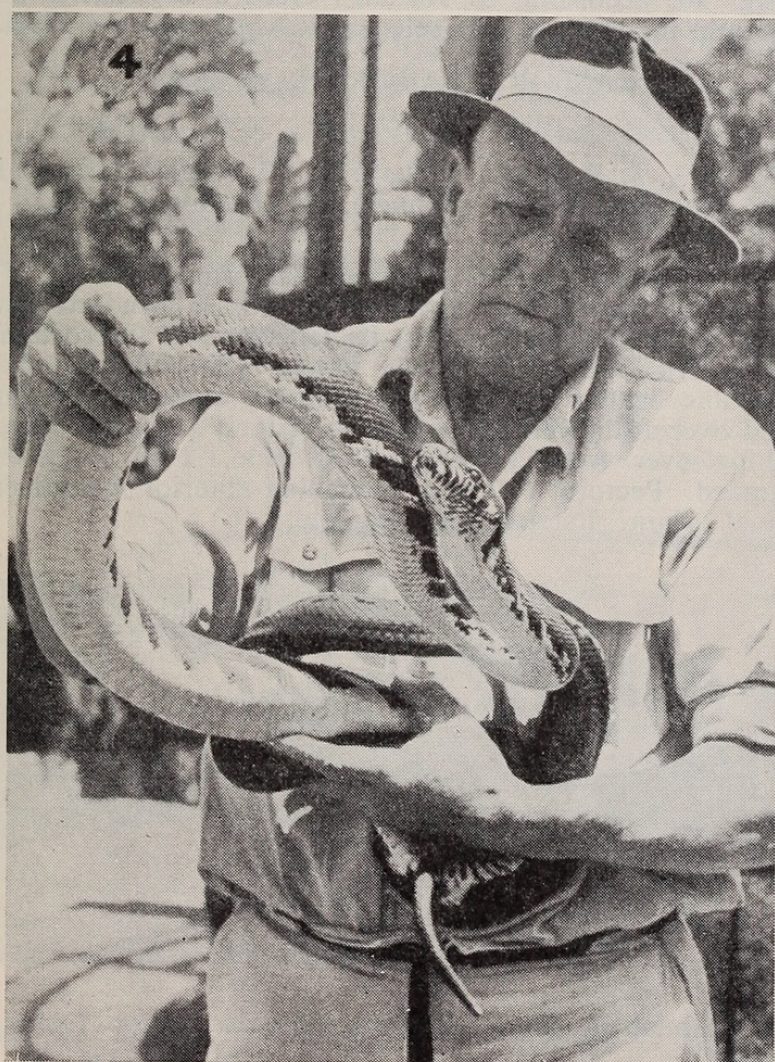
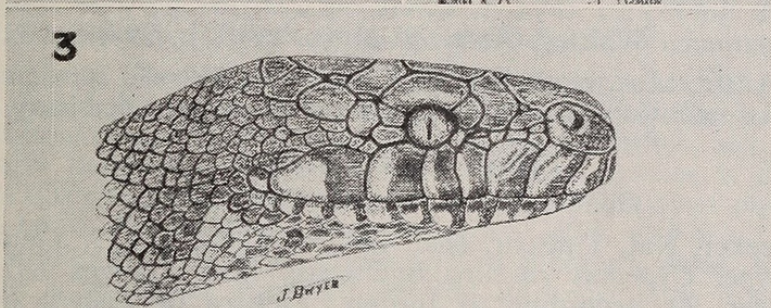
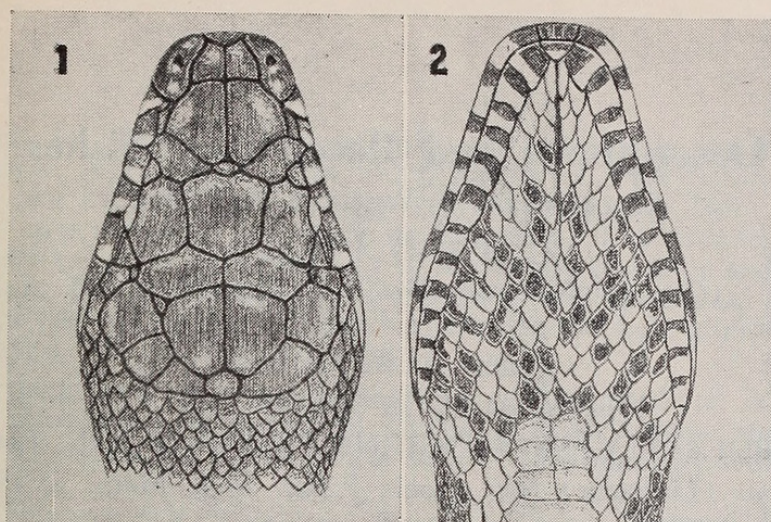
EXPLANATION OF PLATE.

Figure 1. Dorsal aspect of *Liasis taronga*.

Figure 2. Ventral aspect of *Liasis taronga*.

Figure 3. Lateral aspect of *Liasis taronga*.

Figure 4. Mr. G. Cann, curator of reptiles at Taronga Zoological Park, with *Liasis taronga* in life.





Worrell, Eric. 1958. "A new Papuan python." *Proceedings of the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales* 1956-57, 26-27.

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