

MEDIA RELEASE

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Summer and snakes: Advice from Herpetologist

Warm spring days are encouraging snakes out of their winter torpor.

The most common snake in the Launceston area is the copperhead and sunny days allow these snakes to warm up and search for their favourite prey, frogs.

Launceston's flood plain history has always supported good frog populations and in turn copperhead populations. Even after European land reclamation and urbanisation, small but persistent copperhead populations persist in many areas around Launceston, which results in common sightings.

QVMAG Natural Sciences Collections Officer and Herpetologist, Simon Fearn said that snakes are content with their own company and don't seek out humans.

"Copperheads are very shy snakes, reluctant to bite even if provoked and have never been documented to have claimed a human life anywhere in Australia"

"The fact that snakes will be around shouldn't deter people from enjoying the outdoors. The most important thing to avoid a snake bite is to leave snakes alone. Take a common sense approach, wear sensible footwear and thick socks. Don't reach into hollow logs, holes and other places a snakes might live."

Snakes will often hear humans and flee before being seen, but if snakes and humans do come into contact, Simon suggests it's best to 'freeze'.

"By not moving you become another large inanimate object in the landscape and the snake will simply carry on with its original activity."

Around the home is another matter and it can be concerning to find that a snake wants to share the garden. To reduce the risk of snakes around the home, Simon recommends an approach similar to a bushfire plan.

"Fires need fuel and snakes need cover, often these are one and the same. Reducing the fire threat also removes the snake habitat. Snakes are very secretive creatures and avoid open spaces, so a buffer of clear land around the house will greatly reduce the risk of snakes being close to the home."

Interview and snake handling photo opportunity:

Simon Fearn will be available at 1.30pm today at Queen Victoria Museum, Inveresk.

Simon will be bringing in a live Copperhead snake.