

PREFACE

Four decades ago, when I began collecting and keeping reptiles as a hobby, there were relatively few of us passionate amateurs scattered in all corners of this country. We were in contact with each other, providing support through the decades of unreasonable oppression imposed by the state governments in relation to keeping reptiles as a hobby. Those were tough times. Through dedication, many of us earned the status of professional 'reptile keepers' in the exceptionally low-paid zoo and wildlife park industry, while others ventured into their own reptile-related businesses. Many of us became lifelong friends and sadly, I am to meet many of them again only in another world.

One person had a particularly significant influence on my career, introducing me to a different aspect of herpetology in the early 1970s and affecting my decision to embark on the academic path many years later. To this day, I am grateful to the late Graham Settle of Sydney for his unintentional influence and sadly, short friendship.

The aim of this book is to visually portray snakes, their habitats, predators and prey, alongside informative text, digestible not only by reptile enthusiasts but by anyone who appreciates wildlife and natural history.

Australia's snakes have been the subject of many excellent guides to identification and there are also several works on their biology. This notwithstanding, I present new information from my own experiences along with information gathered



over many years. My photographs showcase the snakes, their habitats, predators and prey and highlight their beauty. I hope my work will enhance and inspire interest in, and admiration of, these amazing reptiles.