

# **“Give me a Hug”**

**by Mike Tovey**

**A hug from a family member, friend or family pet is a wonderful bonding experience, unless of course, the pet is a python, boa or other large constricting snake. Then it is time to take a rain check, a very long one. Large constricting snakes are being purchased in the thousands from breeders in North America. A popular choice is the Burmese Python. This snake can grow from a hatchling, the time when it was probably aquired, to a powerful adult 8 - 10 feet long and weighing 50 lbs, in 2 years. To keep such a snake requires a very secure enclosure and considerable experience in handling large constrictor snakes. No, they are not venomous. However, careless inexperienced handling of a large constrictors can be just as deadly. If you carry the scent of the prey at feeding time, you may become the prey.**

**I am reminded of a recent news report of a pet store in a major city in the US. On display, and for sale to the public, was a 12 foot python. An interested customer asked the store owner if he could view the snake outside of its enclosure. She reached in to grasp the snake and was immediately attacked by the snake which grasped her hand in its mouth and then wrapped its coils around her body, forcing her to the ground. A store assistant had the presence of mind to force the snakes coils away from the victims neck until assistance could be summoned. It took a police officer and two firefighters to remove the snake from the store owners body. It is thought that the store owner carried the scent of other warm blooded animals which she had been handling and was perceived by the snake to be his next meal. Buyer beware!!! It can happen.**

**Venomous snakes? Even if local statutes allow you to own one, lets not go there. Owning a venomous snake is like walking around with a loaded revolver, hammer cocked, tucked down the waistband of your shorts. It may never discharge, but there is an excellent chance that one day it will.**

**Now to the welfare of the snake itself. All credit to some snake owners. They spend countless time and dollars to replicate the natural living environment of the snake of their choice. That is no small task. Snakes are unable to regulate their own temperature and require an outside source of heat, or cold, to do so. This requirement dictates that they have the freedom to move freely from a cool area to a hot, or vice versa. This requires a large enclosure with varying areas of temperature. Also, humidity has to be right. Snakes will survive in a small plastic container as many sellers will advise new owners. But, what quality of life. Supplying the perfect environment for a pet snake, with regard to its health, is very expensive and time consuming. Check it out before a commitment to purchase.**

**I love snakes. I also know my limitations. If I was a breeder, or collector, I would be content to house my reptiles in plastic containers and they would probably survive. Again, I ask, what quality of life?**

**My favourite TV show is Rob Bretl, Killer Instinct. He handles snakes in the wild. That is where they should be. Breeding snakes in captivity for the pet trade is big business. Wild captured snakes do not make good pets. Bottom line, why remove a snake from its natural environment to get sick, or die, in an artificial environment? Why remove any animal from the wild into captivity?**

**Your comments on this article, or any previous articles, are most welcome. Email me at [subsea1960@hotmail.com](mailto:subsea1960@hotmail.com)**