

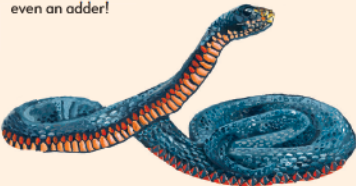
# WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF

I spent my childhood running barefoot across the fields of Wiradjuri Country and Yuin Country, clambering over rocky Dharawal Country, and exploring the red sands of Kamilaroi Country and Koorina Country, all while looking for the ultimate animal – the reptile! Whether it was a lizard, snake or turtle, I was on it.

Growing up, I learned the European names for reptiles. But as a proud Kamilaroi man I wanted to know what these reptiles were *really* called. What did my people call them before the white man came here and gave them new names that often didn't properly reflect their characteristics or the roles they play on Country?

For this book, I worked with the support and permission of Elders and Traditional Owners to use the First Nations names for all 68 reptiles included here. Perhaps you might like to ask the Elders, or the Aboriginal officer at your school, what the local names are for the animals where you live?

So why are traditional names important? Well, sometimes the English names for reptiles are **misnomers**. Take a brown snake, for example. They're not always brown! Or what about a tiger snake? They don't always have stripes! Or what about a northern death adder? They aren't even an adder!



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But it's about more than that. There were originally over 250 different First Nations Language groups across this land that is now called Australia, with 800 different dialects. But **colonisation** tried to destroy our cultures and our Languages, so that many are **endangered**, and some Languages no longer have any speakers and are considered 'sleeping'. There are now only around 123 Languages still spoken and, according to Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), 14 Languages are strong, while the remaining Languages are endangered.

For some of these Nations, this book has been part of **Language revitalisation**. Each mob has their own name for these animals and some groups have multiple names for the same **species**, for example, depending on the age or sex. However, for this book we explore 20 Language groups and use their names for the reptiles that live on their Country.

# DEADLY REPTILES!

I worked with Elders like Uncle Ted Fields to find the Gamilaraay name of the western sawshelled turtle – Ngaaybaay. This is the first time this name has been published – how cool is that? I also worked with Yuin Elder Uncle Warren Foster to create a name for the endangered broad-headed snake – Yuga-maga. Deadly, right?

First Nations Languages are now being taught in classrooms, and dictionaries are being developed. Videos on YouTube share Language in the same way our ancestors probably did around the fire. This book is part of that journey. By making these reptiles' names more widely known, we can strengthen the link to thousands of years of knowledge. And we can use the lessons of the past to better protect our species for the future.

For over 65,000 years, First Nations Peoples have cared for our animals, just like they have cared for Country. More than ever – when we are dealing with climate change and **invasive species** – we need this knowledge to help protect our reptiles. Then future generations will be able to enjoy them, just like our ancestors did.

This book contains **DEADLY** reptiles – but that's not me telling you they are dangerous (even though some of them definitely are!). You see, 'deadly' for us Blakfellas is how we describe something that's cool or awesome. And every reptile in this book is totally deadly!

Spotted a coloured word? Check out what it means in the **GLOSSARY** at the end of the book on pages 134–5!

For some mobs, these reptiles may also have a much deeper meaning. An individual or family has their own totem animal or plant, and must care for them on Country. Totems are inherited from the clan or family group, and are often respected as ancestors. My family totem is the Bigibila (echidna) so me and my family care for it on Country. We don't ever eat Bigibila and we help protect it when it's in danger.

It's about time that reptiles shared the limelight with other animals that get more attention for being 'cuter' and cuddlier. I happen to think reptiles are super cute, and I hope that through this book you will fall in love with them too.

When I was a young man, I dreamed of writing a book like this, and showing everyone how amazing reptiles are. The fact that you are now holding it in your hands proves that anything is possible when you put your mind to it.

So, what are you waiting for? Let this book inspire the deadly scientist in you to go and find your favourite reptile and chase your dreams, whatever they may be.

COREY TUTT



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## YUGA-MAGA

### English name

Broad-headed snake

### Measurements

Average length 60cm,  
maximum 90cm

### What does it look like?

Yuga-maga is black with yellow scales, and irregular bands and blotches in unique patterns. Its belly is grey to black, and its head is broad. Because of its colouring and shape it's often confused with a baby diamond python.

### What makes it DEADLY?

Yuga-maga has unique markings – stripes, patches, dots, thin lines – with no two snakes being the same.

### Favourite feeds

Yuga-maga feeds mainly on velvet geckos, and occasionally on frogs, small **mammals** and **invertebrates**. It hides under rocky sandstone outcrops to wait for its prey, then strikes with lightning speed, using both venom and constriction to kill its prey.

### Predators and prey

Yuga-maga's predators have been poorly recorded because of its low numbers.

### How does it breed?

Yuga-maga starts to breed around March through to May. Females give birth to up to 8 live young in November to January, around 90 to 120 days after mating. Females only breed every second year. We don't know why this is, but it could be because the conditions are unsuitable some years.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The Yuin name for this snake was only recently developed with Uncle Warren Foster because the original Yuin name was lost after **colonisation**. Yuga-maga means 'I don't know, is it a python?' because this snake looks like a diamond python.

### Conservation

Yuga-maga is **endangered**, with the greatest threat coming from habitat destruction. The removal of bush rock and sandstone for building development has destroyed the population that was once found across Gadigal Country, including along Warrang's (Sydney) Darling Harbour foreshore. Scientists tracking Yuga-maga take photos to identify individuals. This helps them understand how many of these snakes are out there.

