

## Mid North Pygmy Bluetongue Lizards in Attenborough documentary

Endangered Pygmy Bluetongue Lizards from the Mid North of South Australia feature in Sir David Attenborough's latest nature documentary series, *Life in Cold Blood*, which explores the evolution and habits of amphibians and reptiles around the world.

The episode featuring the Pygmy Bluetongue Lizards, "Dragons of the dry", is scheduled to air on Channel Nine at 7.30 pm on Monday 28 April 2008.

Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) threatened fauna ecologist Julie Schofield, who works to conserve Pygmy Bluetongue Lizards in the Mid North, said the episode is the result of a David Attenborough visit to Burra in 2006.

"Sir David visited Burra a few years ago to film the endangered Pygmy Bluetongue Lizards," Julie said.

"It was a real honour for the staff here to meet Sir David. We're all very passionate about conserving South Australia's native animals and plants, so it was great to meet one of the pioneers of nature conservation.

"*Life in Cold Blood* is the first nature documentary to show footage of Pygmy Bluetongue Lizards down their burrows, including mothers and their young.

"The fact that the Pygmy Bluetongue young share the burrows with their mothers was the main reason they were included in *Life in Cold Blood*.

"This level of parental care is considered unusual in reptiles," Julie said.

The Pygmy Bluetongue Lizard is a small brown skink about 10 centimetres long. The head of the lizard is quite large and has scales that make the head appear armour-plated.

Surprisingly, Pygmy Bluetongue Lizards do not have blue tongues. Instead, their tongues are rose pink.

"For many years, Pygmy Bluetongues were thought to be extinct," Julie said.

"Then, in 1992, a Pygmy Bluetongue was found dead in the stomach of a brown snake.

"This find prompted a search of surrounding areas, and several small colonies of Pygmy Bluetongues were subsequently found across the Mid North.

"To date, 24 colonies of Pygmy Bluetongues have been found in the Mid North, from Peterborough down to Auburn.

"DEH is helping to conserve the Pygmy Bluetongue by searching for new populations, monitoring known populations, and studying the ecology of the lizard.

"Each of the known Pygmy Bluetongue colonies is on private property, so the survival of the lizard depends on the goodwill and hard work of local landholders.

"We encourage landholders to adopt and maintain conservative grazing regimes, allow research to occur on their properties, and avoid activities that disturb the earth in areas where there are Pygmy Bluetongues," Julie said.

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