01/03/2012

**Rare sea snake slid under the radar**
Age, 01/03/12, General News, Page 3
By: Bridle Smith And

29/02/2012

**New sea snake species discovered**
Western Cape Bulletin, 29/02/12, General News, Page 1
By: None

24/02/2012

**Big barra willing to bite**
Townsville Bulletin, 24/02/12, General News, Page 62
By: None
Scientists spot slippery new sea snake species
Courier Mail, 23/02/12, General News, Page 18
By: Brian Williams

Scientist charmed by sea snake discovery
Cairns Post, 22/02/12, General News, Page 3
By: None

ABC Far North (Cairns)
06:30 News - 22/02/2012 6:34 AM
Newsreader

Scientists say they have found a new venomous snake in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Bryan Fry from the University of Qld says it was found in waters where fishing trawlers do not operate.

Interviewees: Bryan Fry, Scientist, University of Qld
Duration: 0.39
Summary ID: W00047585188
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Shorey plays an interview with Bryan Fry from the University of Qld about the rough-scaled sea snake, which has been discovered by scientists in the Gulf of Carpentaria in an area where fishing trawlers don't normally operate. Fry describes what the snake looks like and says he wants to do further research on it. Fry notes it has very potent venom, and he says there are many more sea snakes out there than scientists realise. He thinks the environment needs to be conserved because of its importance in medical research; he notes high blood pressure medication is based on a modified snake toxin, and he says it's a 'multi-billion dollar wonder drug' which has saved countless lives. He adds painkillers and diabetes treatments have also been derived from animals. Fry believes some animals are going extinct before they can be discovered by science.

**Interviewees:** Bryan Fry, Scientist, University of Qld  
**Duration:** 3.23  
**Summary ID:** W00047585277  
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**Triple J (Melbourne)**  
**07:00 News - 22/02/2012 7:02 AM**  
**Newsreader**

Scientists say they have discovered a new venomous snake in the far north Qld.

**Interviewees:** Bryan Fry, Scientist, University of Qld  
**Duration:** 0.25  
**Summary ID:** W00047584586  
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**ABC 936 Hobart (Hobart)**  
**07:00 News - 22/02/2012 7:06 AM**  
**Newsreader**

Scientists have discovered a new venomous snake off Far North Qld.

**Interviewees:** Bryan Fry, University of Qld  
**Duration:** 0.37  
**Summary ID:** W00047583897  
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Researchers from the University of Queensland have discovered a new sea snake on the Gulf of Carpentaria, which they believe will play a pivotal role in the development of medicine. Bryan Fry, associate professor, University of Queensland, it could provide developments for pain killers and diabetes.

**Interviewees:** Bryan Fry, Associate Professor, University of Queensland  
**Duration:** 0.47  
**Summary ID:** W00047584775

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ABC North and West SA (Port Pirie), ABC Riverland SA (Renmark), ABC South East SA (Mt Gambier), ABC West Coast SA (Port Lincoln), Radio National (Adelaide)
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Scientists say the discovery of a new sea snake in the Gulf of Carpentaria could lead to new medical treatments. Associate Professor Bryan Fry from the University of Qld says the rough-scaled sea snake is one of three found in waters not plied by trawlers. He says venom could potentially lead to life-saving medications.

**Interviewees:** Associate Professor Bryan Fry, University of Qld  
**Duration:** 0.44  
**Summary ID:** W00047586310
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Scientists have discovered a new venomous snake off Far North Qld, prompting hope that the revelation may lead to new medical treatments.

**Interviewees:** Bryan Fry, Associate Professor, University of Qld  
**Duration:** 0.41  
**Summary ID:** W00047585526
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Scientists say they have discovered a new venomous snake living in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Bryan Fry, Spokesman, University of Qld says it could result in important medical breakthroughs.

Interviewees: Bryan Fry, Spokesman, University of Qld
Duration: 0.37
Summary ID: W00047589779
This program or part thereof is syndicated to the following 1 station(s):
ABC North West Qld (Mt Isa)
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Interview with Associate Professor Bryan Fry, University of Queensland. Scientists have discovered a new venomous snake in the Gulf of Carpentaria off far north Queensland. The species has been dubbed the rough-scaled sea snake because of its unique raised scales. Fry explains how the snakes were discovered in waters off Weipa. Fry says two more species of sea snakes were found Weipa. Fry talks about using venom in medicine.

Interviewees: Associate Professor Bryan Fry, University of Queensland
Duration: 5.11
Summary ID: L00047592637
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Scientists say the discovery of a new sea snake in the Gulf of Carpentaria could lead to new medical treatments. Associate Professor Bryan Fry from the University of Qld says venom could potentially lead to life-saving medications.

Interviewees: Associate Professor Bryan Fry, University of Qld
Duration: 0.37
Summary ID: W00047592760
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Scientists have discovered a new species of venomous snake on the Gulf of Carpentaria. Bryan Fry, spokesperson, University of Qld, says the discovery may result in significant medical breakthroughs.

Interviewees: Bryan Fry, spokesperson, University of Qld
Duration: 0.37
Summary ID: W00047594725

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Interviewees: Associated Professor Bryan Fry, School of Biological Sciences, University of Qld.
Duration: 8.23
Summary ID: W00047597342

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Rare sea snake slid under the radar

By BRIDIE SMITH
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REPORTER

A sea snake with unique raised scales has been discovered in the Gulf of Carpentaria’s remote estuaries, giving scientists hope the find might provide some important clues about evolution.

The discovery has also raised the prospects of finding new venom, which could have future spinoffs in medical research.

Bryan Fry from Queensland University’s school of biological sciences first found the snake in 2000. But despite believing it to be new, it took years to confirm the snake as a new species.

“As soon as it hit the deck I knew it was new and it was a glorious, tingly feeling,” he said.

“But we had to make sure it was airtight.”

Working with researchers from Adelaide University, the team conducted anatomical studies and analysed the sea snake’s DNA to confirm it was genetically distinct before comparing the results with other documented species.

The snake grows up to one metre long and has been named the “rough-scaled sea snake”. Its scientific name of Hydrophis donaldii is a tribute to Associate Professor Fry’s long-time boat captain David Donald. “We would not have found this snake without Dave’s unique knowledge of the area,” he said.

Professor Fry said while it was exciting to discover a new species, there was much more at stake. Snake venom has already been used in treatments for conditions ranging from high blood pressure to diabetes. Most studied snake venom comes from land snakes, as they are easier to catch.

However, Professor Fry has identified a powerful anticoagulant in sea snake venom with the potential to treat coronary conditions. “They are a bio-resource,” he said. “This is a great illustration that there are still creatures out there that we are unaware of.”

The rough-scaled sea snake appears to be very rare. Since 2000, Professor Fry has seen just nine in the wild out of 100,000 other sea snakes observed in the Weipa area.

However, despite a crash in sea snake populations due to commercial fishing, this snake appears to have slipped under the radar as it preferred rocky estuarine habitats which were poorly surveyed and not targeted by commercial fishing.

“Here you have a unique habitat that other snakes might not be able to exploit because they would be cut to ribbons,” Professor Fry said.

“These scales are very rough . . . so I imagine they’ve evolved that way to protect themselves against the rocks.”

The rough-scaled sea snake is described in the current issue of the journal Zootaxa.
A NEW species of sea snake discovered by scientists in the Gulf of Carpentaria has been given the scientific name *Hydrophis donaldii* in honour of Weipa fishing guru, Dave Donald.

University of Queensland Associate Professor Bryan Fry said the discovery would not have been possible without the assistance of his long-time boat captain.

"Quite simply we would not have found this snake without Dave's unique knowledge of the area. I told him we wanted to survey as many distinct types of habitat as possible and he guided us to the perfect spots," Dr Fry said.
New sea snake species discovered

The Western Cape Bulletin spoke to Dave Donald following the publishing of Dr Fry’s findings and he said he was honoured to have the new species named after him.

“Bryan and I have been working together for years and have appeared in many sea snake documentaries, including The Snake Wranglers series by National Geographic. “Over the years we have covered the entire year and found snakes every time, catching up to 200 per night on some nights in a couple of hours,” Dave said.

Dave developed special nets to capture the snakes using spotlights at night.

“Sea snakes don’t come to the surface very much during the day because it makes them vulnerable to capture by sea eagles and osprey,” he said.

Dave said Dr Fry was accidently bitten by a deadly Horned Sea Snake at the boat ramp when they returned from one of their nights collecting snakes, and became the first person to be treated with the antivenom that he had only just developed.

“Sea snake venom is extremely toxic and works by dissolving muscle fibre. Bryan exhibited a marked loss in muscle tone for over six months after the bite,” Dave said.

“I routinely carried a pouch for Bryan containing adrenalin and phenergan in case Bryan was bitten out in the boat, even after he received the bite, as an anaphilactic reaction was always a possibility,” he said.
ANGLERS are loathe to talk about anything other than barra it seems, such is the quality of the barramundi fishing since the opening of the 2012 season just a few weeks ago.

Big fish are being regarded as common place and it is certainly that way when anglers choose to fish with any of the local fishing guides.

Andrew Mead of Aussie Barra Charters says there are plenty of big barras around and they’re willing to bite.

Mead recently tied Matthew Wilkie to a fat fish of well over a metre long and he backed that up last week when Bob Skuza used Mead’s experience to cradle a thumping 124cm fish for a photograph before being dutifully released.

Ryan Moody continues to have little trouble finding the big barras in the Hinchinbrook Channel with fish better than the 120cm maximum legal size a regular catch for clients.

I haven’t found any 120cm models for clients so far this season (the ones that fall off don’t count) however most trips usually result in enough barras to keep everyone happy and a couple over that magic metre mark.

**Muddie hotspots**

MUDCRABS are plentiful in local waters with anglers claiming fine bags of the crustaceans when traps are set along estuarine foreshores.

Long Beach and Red Rock Bay shallows inside Cape Cleveland yielded a bunch of quality crabs last week according to shy sources while traps set within Cocoa and Crocodile Creek also claimed good crabs.

The Bohle River and Black River on the northern fringes of the city proved muddie hotspots early last week with plenty of fully buck crabs being measured by gob smacked anglers.

Anglers might have to spread their pots well this weekend with some of the bigger crabs likely to be making their way back up the creeks with the more gentle tides and lack of freshwater influence.

**Fingermark break**

FINGERMARK or golden snapper remain a priority target for inshore bluewater anglers, however lumpy seas predicted for Townsville waters this weekend are likely to hand the species a much needed reprieve from devotees of the species.

Catches of big fish have become a regular occurrence and trophy fish, once well hidden from a good majority of anglers, are now being found and caught with the unprecedented aid of new technology. Side imaging sonars allowing anglers to view terrain and fish for considerable distance either side of their vessel and integrated electric motors with GPS technology that are used to hold anglers over the discovered fish, structure and are proving a deadly combination for the fingermark. Never before have so many fingermark or golden snapper been so easily accessed by a large number of anglers and I doubt it will be long before populations of the popular and species plummet near major centers like Townsville.

Slow growing and accordingly slow to mature, an 8-10 kilo fish might be anywhere between 30 and 40 years old and it disturbs me that so many are being taken during the last few years and coincidentally so, since this new technology has been available to the wider fishing public.

Sadly, fingermark do not release well at all and it seems only fish caught and given their freedom in the shallower of waters have any reasonable chance of survival.

**Breaming with pride**

AN unseasonal catch of yellowfin and big pikey bream in Morrissey’s Creek interrupted the barra hunting tactics of Raymond Seiger and wife Christine early this week. The pair had set small live mullet baits at a favourite barra spot near the mouth of the system and it is certainly that way when anglers choose to fish with any of the local fishing guides.

Andrew Mead of Aussie Barra Charters says there are plenty of big barras around and they’re willing to bite.

Mead recently tied Matthew Wilkie to a fat fish of well over a metre long and he backed that up last week when Bob Skuza used Mead’s experience to cradle a thumping 124cm fish for a photograph before being dutifully released.

Ryan Moody continues to have little trouble finding the big barras in the Hinchinbrook Channel with fish better than the 120cm maximum legal size a regular catch for clients.

I haven’t found any 120cm models for clients so far this season (the ones that fall off don’t count) however most trips usually result in enough barras to keep everyone happy and a couple over that magic metre mark.

**Rare honour**

MY old mate and Weipa fishing guide Dave Donald has had the rare distinction of having a newly discovered species of snake named after him. Hydrophis donaldii – common-name; rough-scaled sea snake – was named in honour of Donald according to Associate Professor Bryan Fry from the University of Queensland’s School of Biological Sciences.

“Quite simply we would not have found this snake without Dave’s unique knowledge of the area,” Associate Prof Fry said recently in *Zootaxa*, a scientific journal for animal taxonomists.

Donald, Fry’s long-time boat captain and guide, helped the Associate Professor to the exciting discovery of the rare snake within estuarine habitats on the western flank of Cape York.
Matthew Wilkie caught this thumping barra while fishing with Aussie Barra Charters.

Bob Skuza released this barramundi when it measured better than the legal size.
Scientists spot slippery new sea snake species

Brian Williams
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

A NEW species of sea snake has been discovered near Weipa in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Associate Professor Bryan Fry from the University of Queensland said the rough-scaled snake had evaded discovery because it lived mostly in estuarine habitats that were poorly surveyed and not targeted by commercial fisheries.

“Weipa really is one of the last sea snake Serengetis,” Prof Fry said. “We can see over 200 sea snakes in a single night’s hunting, whereas sea snake populations have crashed elsewhere through over-fishing, removing their prey and the snakes drowning in trawling nets.”

Nine specimens of the snake had been caught, with the largest at 85cm. It was not yet known what their range might be, nor why they had such unusually rough scales and what role the scales played in their evolution.

Prof Fry said hundreds of venomous sea snakes came to the surface in the area just after dark. They also were accompanied by sharks and large crocodiles.

“You find there’s not a lot of people out at night in the gulf looking for snakes,” he said. “Scientists might be crazy but we’re not suicidal. We shine lights out of the boat and cruise along slowly. We scoop up snakes in nets.

“It’s astounding how many bull sharks are around the boat. I can tell you the bull shark population is very healthy. We’ve also seen crocs bigger than our 5m boat. Snakes are really cool and they are an important bio-resource.

“Venomous animals … have provided sources of many life-saving medications, such as treatments for high-blood pressure and diabetes.

“This reinforces why we need to conserve all of nature as the next billion-dollar wonder drug may come from as unlikely a source as sea snake venom.”

The snake has been given the scientific name hydrophis donaldii to honour Prof Fry’s long-time local boat skipper Dave Donald.

“Quite simply, we would not have found this snake without Dave’s unique knowledge of the area,” he said.

The findings have been published in Zootaxa.

‘Weipa really is one of the last sea snake Serengetis. We can see over 200 sea snakes in a single night’s hunting.’

UQ Professor Bryan Fry
WEIPA has been described as one of the last sea snake “serengetis”.

And it has delivered a new sea snake that could provide fresh clues to evolution and life-saving medications.

Scientists have named the snake, which has unique raised scales, Hydrophis donaldii, with a common-name of “rough-scaled sea snake.”

“Weipa really is one of the last sea snake serengetis,” Associate Prof Bryan Fry from the University of Queensland’s School of Biological Sciences said.

“We can see over 200 sea snakes in a single night’s hunting, whereas sea snake populations have really crashed elsewhere through over-fishing, removing their prey and also drowning in trawling nets.”

His comments and findings were published yesterday in Zootaxa, a scientific journal for animal taxonomists.

Associate Prof Fry said Hydrophis donaldii had evaded earlier discovery as it preferred estuarine habitats which were poorly surveyed and not targeted by commercial fisheries. The findings extended beyond simply discovering a rare animal.

“All venomous animals are bio-resources and have provided sources of many life-saving medications, such as treatments for high blood pressure and diabetes,” he said.

“This reinforces why we need to conserve all of nature as the next billion dollar wonder drug may come from as unlikely a source as sea snake venom.”

The snake’s scientific name Hydrophis donaldii honours Associate Prof Fry’s long-time boat captain David Donald.

“Quite simply we would not have found this snake without Dave’s unique knowledge of the area,” Associate Prof Fry said.