

A REMARKABLE INCIDENT

By: Jan Walhout, Tilburg.

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Some time ago, we had a remarkable incident at the reptiliarium *De Oliemeulen*, Tilburg, The Netherlands. A young everglades ratsnake, *Elaphe obsoleta rossaleni*, an offspring of 1990 having become about 40 cm long, ate a pinky mouse the day before the incident took place.

The next day one of our co-workers observed that the little snake had a strange attitude: it seemed to have eaten its own tail so far (about 20 cm) that half its body had been swallowed. In the terrarium just laid a kind of bracelet.

Of course I immediately tried to release the snake, but in vain: the little snake had already died. A disadvantage of my rescue attempt was that I had not had the opportunity to take any photographs of what happened.

Some times later an acquaintance of mine, André Robben, gave me an article in which one could see a photograph of a similar incident. This was an article from the magazine *Stinapa* (I admit I had never heard of it before), nr. 14, 1977. Ian MacLeod had taken a photograph of a young *Santanero* found in her garden by a certain Mrs. Beerman, Seroe, Colorado. The animal which had eaten its tail and abdomen had died just before it was found. The diameter of the cirkel formed by the animal was about 2½ cm. This story does not prove that I am speaking the truth, for everyone knows I do, but it does prove that such incidents also happen in other places than *De Oliemeulen*.

The *Stinapa* article mentioned above showed an old Greek figure: a snake about eating its own tail. The Greek were acquainted with the idea of a snake with its own tail in its mouth. This was the symbol for the merge of the beginning and the end, the cause and outcome of life.