

Twist in tale as snake's dinner

Story: **Gundagai Independent**
Photos: **Tony Barton**

A MAN from South Gundagai captured a fascinating incident on camera recently when a red-bellied black snake bit off a bit more than it could chew.

Tony Barton arrived home to find a large black snake, almost six feet long, in his car park, with what he thought was a stick protruding from its mouth.

Closer inspection revealed the "stick" was actually the tail of a brown snake the black snake was in the process of swallowing.

An astonished Tony asked his wife Barbara to keep an eye on the two reptiles while he went to get his camera.

She watched as the black snake finished swallowing the brown and slithered off.

Tony and Barbara then saw the snake a little later on their front lawn but this time, incredibly, the brown snake's head had started to reappear.

"The black was pretty sluggish and it opened its mouth and I saw a pair of eyes," Mr Barton said.

"Then the brown snake latched onto the black's bottom jaw and proceeded to pull itself out - it was covered in slobber."

"It must have turned around inside the black and pulled itself out."

Once the brown snake was out, the "black snake took off like a rocket".

Snake experts Janine Kovaks (WIRES) and The Snakeman, Tony Davis of Wagga, both said they had never heard of a similar incident.

"Snakes are cannibalistic and it is not unusual that one snake will swallow another, but they are usually asphyxiated," Janine said.

"It's amazing that the brown survived and came out."

While the black slithered away apparently none the worse for its experience, if the brown snake envenomated it when it latched onto the black's lower jaw, it could take up to a couple of weeks for the venom to go through its system.

• Have you got a snake story to tell? Contact Simon Chamberlain at The Leader or email images to simon.chamberlain@ruralpress.com

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ABOVE - Dinner is served: The black snake in the process of swallowing the brown snake in Tony and Barbara Barton's car park. The photo shows the brown's tail still left to swallow.

LEFT - Fresh not always best: The brown snake latches onto the black snake's lower jaw and proceeds to pull itself out.

bites back



Mission accomplished: The brown snake is out in the world again.



Free, free at last: The brown snake, covered in intestinal juices from the black snake, gathers itself before departing.