

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

### Snake hook

**Name** Jason Hainke.

**Job** Reptile and invertebrate manager.

**Where** WILD LIFE Sydney Zoo.

**Why is it important?** I had my first experience with a pet snake at 10, and at 34 I am doing it for a living. The hook is at the end of a long handle, and it's used to gently pick the snake up and move it. If I need to clean a cage, or do a rescue in the wild, I use the hook to keep the head away from me, and move the animal safely. If you're used to it it's not that bad. [But] in any job you can have mishaps; you can get a paper cut as an accountant. My job is dangerous if you're not paying attention, but not if you're properly trained and your movements are deliberate.

**What do your colleagues think?** My colleagues think the snake hook is great; it keeps us alive and healthy. When you get to the stage of handling venomous snakes, you've had some practice with the hook on the non-venomous ones. [But when you are learning] your instinct is to run or throw it if it moves funny; you need to detach a little and be logical, and get rid of the emotions. If I'm instructing someone I make sure we have a chat and do a dry run first.

**Unusual moment?** Most of us who have snake hooks make our own, either because we prefer a bigger or smaller hook. I use old golf club handles. If I have a bad day on the course, I end up with a new hook!

SUE WHITE



**Handle with care ... Jason Hainke.**

Photo: Edwina Pickles