

# The Herp Gazette

## HOUSE OF REPTILES

11507 S.W. Pacific Highway  
Tigard, Oregon

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## Paying It Forward & Giving Back

Having a pet store that is devoted to our favorite animals, reptiles and amphibians, is often fun and rewarding. The day to day enjoyment of getting to hang out with such fascinating creatures is only matched by the opportunities to share the experience with our customers. We work hard to pass along the passion and joy we have for these animals by helping to create an experience at our customers' homes that mirrors our experiences at the store.

But fortunately for us, that's really only the beginning of our opportunities to try to

### Staff Updates:

Since our last newsletter, the staff at **House of Reptiles** continue to be busy...

Marshall obtained his permit from ODFW to keep prohibited species in Oregon. Not sure they would have given it to him had they known that his nickname is "Skippynoodle"!

Paul also obtained his prohibited species permit. He and girlfriend, Katrin, are enjoying their new home and meeting the neighbors in their "interesting" little neighborhood.

Kim recently took a trip to Vegas where she won enough at blackjack to buy

make the world a little better. In addition to being as helpful and informative as we can be with our customers, we also provide mentoring opportunities to **House of Reptiles** volunteers so that young people can come and learn about what we do and how we do it. We take a lot of pride in the fact that lots of young people have spent hundreds of hours of their time here with us at the store.

Annual donations are another way that we contribute to the greater good. Every year that we've

her girls a Wii. Way to go Kim! We wonder if she got a lottery ticket that day...

Liz continues with her break from school and is adjusting to her life in the country – she moved to a house outside Newberg.

Tim and wife, Shawn, took a trip to San Diego. Shawn attended a conference for her work and Tim made the rounds to look at the pet stores in Southern California. It was quite enlightening.

Current volunteers include Hadley Rentz, Cara Sandels, John Czarnecki,

been in business, we've made an annual donation to a reptile or amphibian rescue or rehabilitation organization of our choice. To date, we've contributed well over \$4000 to these organizations. We've also made annual donations to the Doernbecher Children's Hospital here in Portland for the past two years.

There are lots of other ways that we contribute, too. It makes us feel good to know that our reach extends far beyond the store and that the good we do will last long after we are gone.

Sydney Rubbert, Alena Zinck, Rebecca King and Marcus Glidden.

We wanted to give a shout out to volunteer Hadley Rentz. Hadley is 12 years old and is a sixth grader at Conestoga Middle School. Hadley has been volunteering at the store for over three years! She says she likes to come to **House of Reptiles** because "it's fun to be here and work with the animals". She currently owns a bearded dragon named "Mushu" and a rabbit named "Snow White". Thanks for your help, Hadley!

## Quarterly Care Sheet: White's Tree Frog (*Litoria caerulea*)

Other names include: Australian Green Tree Frog, Giant Green Tree Frog and Dumpy Tree Frog.



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*“With a natural tendency towards heaviness, these tree frogs attain impressive size.”*

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION:** In the wild White's Tree Frogs are found primarily in northern and eastern Australia. Until a few years ago, they were thought to be rare. However, due to captive breeding programs these frogs are now quite popular and readily available. With a natural tendency toward heaviness these tree frogs attain impressive size. The females, slightly larger than the males, reach an SVL (snout to vent length) of up to 4.5 inches. Besides being larger, adult females of this species also tend to develop heavy folds that jut out over the eyes. Their typical coloration is jade green, although they are also found in bright green, dark green and various shades of brown. Some specimens can even have a bluish tint to their skin. They have a somewhat comical appearance and their attractive colors, calm temperament and adaptability in captivity make these popular pet frogs.

**CAPTIVE CARE:** The White's Tree Frog is one of the amphibian species that is easiest to maintain in captivity and it is considered an excellent “starter” animal. Maintaining White's Tree Frogs requires well-ventilated, escape-proof cages. Aquariums with tight-fitting screen lids make good enclosures not only because they are easy to clean, but because they also make for good visibility inside. Since they like to climb, these frogs should be kept in enclosures that provide as much vertical space as possible (e.g., a 20 gallon HIGH aquarium is better than a 20 gallon long). Daytime temperatures of 75 to 85F, and nighttime lows to 68F are optimal. If necessary, the daytime temperatures can be achieved by using a low-wattage full-spectrum incandescent light that is left on for 12 to 14 hours a day. To maintain desired humidity levels, it is important to mist the enclosure two to three times per week. These tree frogs need perches that are adequate in size to accommodate their bulky bodies and rather clumsy climbing skills. Placing several horizontal climbing structures in the enclosure will give the frogs multiple options for climbing. The substrate for their habitat can be Jungle Mix, cypress mulch, orchid bark or a premium potting soil (lacking perlite). Maintaining tree frogs also requires that they have a water dish deep enough to allow them a daily soak as they stay hydrated by absorbing water through their skin. Since they may defecate in their water dish, it will require daily cleaning. Fake or live plants that are sturdy can be used to decorate the enclosure, however live plants are more difficult to take care of and will require lighting that suits their needs. Adequate space, a source of fresh water, cleanliness, and perching areas are all your terrarium needs to have in order for White's Tree Frogs to thrive. Their dietary requirements may be met with any (or all) of the following: crickets, mealworms, pinky mice, grasshoppers, and earthworms. Adult frogs can be fed twice per week; younger frogs should be fed three times per week or every other day. In order to avoid metabolic bone disease, all foods should be dusted with a good vitamin D3/calcium powder as directed by the manufacturer (we recommend Miner-All).

**ADDITIONAL NOTES:** All White's Tree Frogs living in the same habitat should be the same relative size or the smaller ones may be eaten by their larger cage-mates. White's Tree Frogs are some of the longest-lived of the frog species, reaching life spans of 20 years or more.

## Native Herp Spotlight: Gopher Snake (*Pituophis catenifer* ssp.)

There are two subspecies of Gopher Snake that are native to Oregon. The Great Basin Gopher Snake (*Pituophis catenifer deserticola*) is found in the eastern part of the state and the Pacific Gopher Snake (*Pituophis catenifer catenifer*) is found in the western valleys.

This is a large, heavy-bodied snake that reaches adult lengths of up to six feet.

Gopher Snakes are so named because in the wild their native diet includes gophers and other small mammals, as well as birds. They will also occasionally inhabit gopher holes when seeking shelter. These are primarily diurnal snakes that are active hunters. They are found in a range of habitats from

dry, arid regions to more moist, high-elevation forests as high as 6000 feet above sea level.

Gopher Snakes have a tan, brown, cream, gray, reddish or yellowish base coloration with dark blotches down the dorsal ridge and smaller dark spots on the sides. The tail is encircled by dark rings. They also have a dark stripe that runs across the head and down through each eye. The pupils are large and round. They have strongly keeled (having a ridge down the center) dorsal scales

The Gopher Snake's appearance is somewhat reminiscent of a rattlesnake. Adding to this confusion, the Gopher Snake will even shake its tail when nervous and if the tail is touching dry

leaves or brush, it will make a rattling sound. Unfortunately, some people kill Gopher Snakes because of their mistaken identity. Female Gopher Snakes lay

up to 20 eggs in rocky crevices or rodent burrows, usually in June or July. The eggs then hatch in August or September.



This is a young Pacific Gopher Snake that was found on a herp hunt in the Columbia Gorge in March of 2010.

## “Pet” Peeves: Anthropomorphism

“Anthropomorphism” is defined as the attribution of human motivation, characteristics or behavior to inanimate objects, animals or natural phenomena. In this “Pet Peeve” of course, we are talking about attributing human motivations and characteristics to reptiles specifically.

Don't get us wrong... there's nothing we object to about a keeper's attempts to be empathetic with their pet reptile. Trying to assess how the animal would perceive elements of its environment is useful, constructive and humane.

However, reading in human emotions and needs to a pet reptile is often unnecessary,

inherently inaccurate and sometimes even potentially harmful. For instance, we get folks who come in and insist that their pet lizard is “lonely” and needs a “friend”. Much of the time, these are solitary species that are being referred to and placing two or more animals together can often result in injury to one or all. Even during breeding, when they HAVE to be together, there is the risk of injury to one or both... usually the female. Even if they don't fight, reptiles are frequently indifferent to their cage mate and may see them as competition when it comes to feeding time. Reptiles are primarily creatures of instinct and there is no evidence that they

experience anything similar to emotions that humans feel. We believe that they likely experience comfort, pain, threat, aggression in response to threat, and familiarity with their owner. They certainly “feel” hunger. Beyond that, it's probably mostly all instinct.

Another application of anthropomorphism in reptile keeping is assuming that reptiles like the same things that their human keepers like. For instance, we know herp keepers who let their reptiles sleep in bed with them because the owners believe their herps sleep better when they sleep with them. Other keepers

let their herps roam freely in the house because their animals “don't like to be in a cage”. Unfortunately, this means that the animal has less access to its basking area which is important for overall health. Having a loose reptile that may defecate/urinate and then drag it around the house may also mean that there are health risks for the humans living there.

And while we're on this subject, kissing your pet reptile is definitely NOT recommended. We know a fair number of people who've been bitten while practicing this questionable behavior and it also increases the risk of contracting Salmonellosis.

## Ask The Vet

*This is a new feature to our newsletter, where we ask one of our favorite veterinarians to answer a question about herp-related illnesses, their causes and/or treatments.*

This question was posed to Dr. Gabriella Flacke at the Murrayhill Veterinary Hospital: **How are reptile immune systems different from that of mammals and how is that information useful to owners of pet reptiles?** Immune system dysfunction is a common contributing factor in most reptile disease processes. The immune systems of mammals and reptiles are not that different as far as the components and the function of those components. For example, white blood cells, including lymphocytes, which produce antibodies, monocytes (azurophils), and neutrophils (heterophils), which destroy bacteria and infected cells, are all an integral part of a healthy immune system for both groups of animals. The bone marrow, spleen, thymus and lymph-node like tissues are all important parts of the immune system as well. Furthermore, adequate immune system function in both mammals and reptiles is highly dependent on nutritional status, age, and stress level. However, reptiles are unique in that environmental temperature also plays a vital role.

As most reptile enthusiasts are aware, reptiles are ectothermic, meaning they do not have a physiological means of producing heat on

their own and are entirely dependent on environmental temperature. Research studies have repeatedly shown that at sub-optimal environmental (and hence core body) temperatures, reptiles produce fewer antibodies and have fewer circulating white blood cells in their bloodstreams.

Conversely, reptiles housed within their preferred optimum temperature range (which varies widely depending on the species) have higher circulating antibody and white blood cell levels. However, chronic exposure to temperatures above the optimum range can cause immune system dysfunction as well.

When a reptile is sick, elevating the average tank temperature to the higher end of the optimum temperature range will help them recover faster. Unhealthy reptiles should not be encouraged to hibernate, as white blood cell levels decrease during hibernation because of colder body temperatures. Lower than ideal environmental temperatures, even by a few degrees, can result in devastating secondary infections with bacteria, yeast, and viruses that would otherwise not pose a problem to a healthy reptile. Examples include respiratory infections, bacterial pneumonia, and stomatitis (mouth rot) in boid snakes; yeast infections in aquatic turtles; septicemia (bacterial infection in the bloodstream); and overgrowth of intestinal parasites which, at optimal temperatures, are present in very low numbers and do not cause disease.

It is best to provide reptiles with a temperature gradient

rather than keeping all parts of the tank or enclosure at the same temperature. There are known “preferred optimal temperature ranges” for most reptile species commonly kept in captivity. Place at least two thermometers in the enclosure one in the coolest and one in the warmest section, and monitor temperature daily. If the temperature drops below the optimum range for even a short period of time (e.g., 24 hours), a reptile can become ill quite quickly.



Dr. Gabriella Flacke with Pago, the Argentine black and white tegu, at [House of Reptiles](#).

## House of Reptiles Store News

Through customer and staff donations (\$348.31) and the contribution of the store (\$401.69), we were able to donate \$750 to the Society for the Study of Reptiles and Amphibians for 2009. Those of you who helped make that a reality by dropping your

coins and bills into the donation bin should give yourselves a big pat on the back! Thank you. We also continued our annual donation of \$500 to the Doernbecher Children's Hospital here in Portland. Contributing to those organizations makes us

feel good and extends the reach of our efforts.

In February, **House of Reptiles** staff had our first annual Bowling and Pizza Party at Tigard Bowl and Pizza Caboose. It was a lot of fun. Paul and Cara put on a real bowling

demonstration for everyone!

Continued thanks to Natasha and Gabe Buel for their generous donations of vegetables, fruits, dandelion greens and edible flowers.

## Customer & Pet Profile – Jan, Alena and Loren Zinck

Jan has had a lifelong interest in animals. Reptiles were much easier to catch in the cornfields of Illinois where she spent her youth, so they were her first pets. There were many others, though, including dogs, cats, fish and horses.

When she got old enough to get to decide for herself what pets she could have, Jan focused on reptiles because of their beauty, ease of care, lack of hair and shedding, and, admittedly, their shock value.

Time went by and Jan had two daughters, Alena and Loren. The girls were introduced to reptiles at an early age and the family now has Nickie Noodle (Alena's corn snake), Rubeus Ribbon (Loren's corn snake) and Iris (Jan's Brazilian Rainbow Boa). The girls like their pets because they're cute, they like to play and be handled, they do funny things and they're easy to care for. Truth told, these girls LOVE their snakes!

And if you are interested,

Alena said that she'd be willing to share with you her recipe for "snake poop tacos". Yum yum!



Alena and Nickie Noodle.



Loren and Rubeus Ribbon.

## Know Your Herp Laws

We are often asked about the laws in our area that affect reptile and amphibian ownership. There are different federal, state, county and city laws that may apply. Federal laws prohibit keeping any animals that are protected by the Endangered Species Act. Those laws and related topics can be found at: <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

It is also a violation of federal law to sell any turtle that is less than four inches long, unless it is sold for scientific or educational purposes only. The list of animals that are

prohibited, non-controlled, controlled, and protected at the state level in Oregon can be found at: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/OARs/56.pdf>.

There's another set of Oregon laws pertaining to dangerous and exotic animals that, as of January 2010, includes the limitation of crocodylians. That statute can be found at: [http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/pub\\_regs\\_animals.shtml#Exotic\\_animal\\_permit](http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/pub_regs_animals.shtml#Exotic_animal_permit).

Each county and city can also have its own regulations and statutes. For instance, Multnomah County's rules are in their

"Dangerous or Exotic Animal" section and those rules prohibit any venomous or poisonous reptile, as well as any reptile of the order Crocodylia (crocodiles, alligators and caimans), or any snake of the family Pythonidae or Boinae capable of obtaining eight feet or more

in length. Those rules can be found at: <http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/dbcs/pets/guide.shtml>.

Portland's rules mirror Multnomah County's rules.



## House of Reptiles

### **Purpose Statement:**

To offer healthy animals, quality products, accurate information and on-going customer support in a friendly, clean environment.

We strive to be the Best in the Northwest!

### **ADDRESS:**

11507 S.W. Pacific Highway  
Tigard, OR 97223

### **PHONE:**

(503) 722-1992

### **STORE HOURS:**

Monday thru Friday:  
10am to 7pm  
Saturday:  
10am to 6pm  
Sunday:  
Noon to 5pm

### **E-MAIL:**

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**The Herp Gazette** is published on a quarterly basis, each January, April, July, and October.

We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.house-of-reptiles.com](http://www.house-of-reptiles.com)

## Product Spotlight: Provent-a-mite™

Over the years, we've used a number of products in attempting to eradicate snake mite populations, in our personal collections and occasionally at the store. The only product that has ever worked consistently and permanently, barring a later reintroduction of the mites, is Provent-a-mite™. It is the only patented, EPA and USDA approved product

specifically labeled for use with all reptiles, including tortoises, that has undergone more than 25 years of research, clinical testing and use. When used as directed, it will not pose any health risk to a reptile, either acutely or chronically. Unlike all other products that stop working when or soon after they dry, Provent-a-mite will bond to any treated surface and

remain effective for 30 days or longer. Once dry, Provent-a-mite™ will not wash off and can be misted, wiped or washed without eliminating the effectiveness for a month. At **House of Reptiles**, we've used this product for over 10 years and believe strongly in it. We even use it preventatively when we routinely clean our snake cages.

## Marshall's Herp Challenge for the Quarter

Last quarter we asked if you could identify the U.S. state in which the Western Pond Turtle is currently listed as "endangered". Did you find the answer? The Western Pond turtle is endangered in the state of Washington.

As stated in the above Native Herp Spotlight article, the Gopher Snake mimics a rattlesnake by appearance and its rattling

tail. There is another native snake that mimics the rattlesnake and is very similar to the Gopher Snake. However, this snake only looks similar to the Gopher Snake when it is a baby or juvenile. In Oregon, this snake has almost the exact range of the Gopher Snake, from the Willamette Valley east to Idaho, although they are not found in the Cascade Range. Like the Gopher Snake, this

snake is a non-venomous colubrid. Its adult size can range in length from two to four feet. One distinguishing pattern characteristic that this snake does not share with the Gopher is it lacks the dark stripe found underneath the Gopher Snakes eye. Can you name this snake?

### **About Our Organization...**

**House of Reptiles** is owned and operated by Tim Criswell, who has over 22 years of adult experience in keeping and

breeding reptiles and amphibians. Assisting Tim are his wife, Shawn, employees Marshall Brooks, Paul Hoffman,

Kim Hamblin and Liz Otis, and a few volunteers who are mentioned above in the "Meet The Staff" section.

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