

The Herp Gazette

HOUSE OF REPTILES

11507 S.W. Pacific Highway
Tigard, Oregon

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PIJAC and USARK

There are two organizations you should know about that are working hard to support the rights of reptile owners.

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) is a non-profit, service oriented organization comprised of members who care about pets, the pet industry and the environment. PIJAC’s mission is to promote responsible pet ownership and animal welfare, foster environmental stewardship, and ensure the availability of pets. PIJAC membership is open to pet enthusiasts, all segments of the pet industry, and organizations affiliated

with companion animal ownership and welfare.

The United States Association of Reptile Keepers (USARK) is a science and education based advocacy for the responsible private ownership of, and trade in, reptiles. They endorse caging standards, sound husbandry, escape prevention protocols, and an integrated approach to vital conservation issues. Their goal is to facilitate cooperation between government agencies, the scientific community, and the private sector in order to

produce policy proposals that will effectively address important husbandry and conservation issues. The health of these animals, public safety, and maintaining ecological integrity are their primary concerns.

With more and more laws being passed each year to limit or prohibit the keeping of reptiles and amphibians, it is important to support organizations like these two that are working hard to sustain our rights to be herpers. Please lend your support.

Staff Updates:

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

Marshall finished his art class at Pacific Northwest College of Art. He spends his free time dating, getting more tattoos, avoiding parasites and wondering what the hell to do with himself.

Paul has been fishing a couple of times lately – has caught rock fish, ling cod, surf perch and even a spiny dogfish. He even gave us a taste! Yum!

Kim is still looking for her knight in shining armor... or a car that runs well, whichever comes first.

Marcus stays busy playing Pokémon on his Game Boy and pursuing his bowling career. He’s almost ready to hit the professional bowling circuit... as soon as he has his first game over 210.

Michelle stays busy with her Boy Scout troop work, as well as cleaning and feeding her crowd of critters at home.

Tim has kept up his exercise program and has added cleaning and feeding mice to his list of daily chores. He and wife, Shawn, are planning a trip to the Alvord Desert in

May with friends Chris and Laura.

Ex-employee and friend Liz Otis is coming back to the Pacific Northwest at the end of April for a visit. It will be good to see her.

Current volunteers include Hadley Rentz, Alena Zinck, Aislinn Kelly, Victor Soto, Moses Barton, Brian Wilson, Sara Viernum, Eleanor Rixey, Dillon Nieva, Ezibel Przybylski, Bryan Wood, Cindel Green, Tyrone Essey, Rei Barnes and Cristen Tarlow.

Quarterly Care Sheet: West African Mud Turtle (*Pelusios castaneus*)



“When startled or disturbed these turtles can produce an obnoxious odor, however captive-born or long-term captive specimens are less likely to exhibit this behavior.”

SPECIES: WEST AFRICAN MUD TURTLE (*Pelusios castaneus*). Other names include: African Mud Turtle and West African Brown Mud Turtle.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: This aquatic turtle occurs in West Africa, from Guinea and Senegal to northwestern Angola and the Central African Republic. They live in a variety of habitats including marshes, swamps, lakes, streams and slow moving rivers that have soft, muddy bottoms. These turtles can grow to seven or eight inches in carapace (top shell) length. The carapace is usually colored in some shade of brown, gray-brown or olive and the plastron (bottom shell) is typically yellow with black borders or seams. They have a strong hinge on the plastron that is characteristic of the *Pelusios* species. This is one of the many species of “side-necked” turtles that derive their name from their method of protecting the head and neck by bending them to the side instead of withdrawing them directly back into the shell as do most other turtles. Males can be distinguished from females by their long, thick tails. Females tend to have shorter tails and a broader carapace. This is a hardy turtle that, with proper care, does well in captivity.

CAPTIVE CARE: Enclosures for West African Mud Turtles should be large enough to provide them both ample water to swim in and a land area on which they can bask. Enclosures that are at least the size of a 40 gallon aquarium are recommended – however, bigger is better. As a general rule, the water in the enclosure should be about as deep as the width of the turtle’s shell. No substrate is necessary but if one is desired, sterile river rock will be relatively easy to keep clean and will provide a more natural appearance to the enclosure. Utilizing at least one appropriately sized water filter will be necessary to keep the water in the enclosure clean, which is very important. The water pH should be kept from neutral to slightly acidic, having a pH value of between 6.0 and 6.5. The water temperature should be kept between 78 and 83F, and the ambient air temperature should be as close to that range as is possible also. Additionally, a dry basking area should be provided that is heated to 85 to 90F. The basking area can be composed of flat rocks, wood, a “turtle dock” or a combination of these structures. It is generally believed that a source of UV-B light will help to ensure the health of most species of aquatic turtle. This can be accomplished by utilizing a fluorescent or incandescent bulb that is specifically made to produce this type of ultraviolet light. Any source of white light should only be left on for 12 to 14 hours per day. This turtle is omnivorous and will eat almost anything. Fish - minnows, guppies and/or other appropriately-sized tropical fish, as well insects, earthworms, snails, shrimp, commercially prepared foods and an occasional mouse or rat pinkie should be the predominant sources of food. Goldfish, if used at all, should only be used sparingly. Frozen/thawed prey have the advantage of being relatively parasite and bacteria-free and can be offered to the turtle using forceps. Food items, especially frozen/thawed ones, should be supplemented with calcium and vitamins, especially thiamin and vitamin E. Non-meat foods can include dark leafy greens, squashes, grated or sliced carrots, dandelions, apples, strawberries, bananas, mangos and blackberries. Young turtles should be fed three to four times per week and adults can be fed once or twice per week.

ADDITIONAL NOTES: Although the West African Mud Turtle is frequently found in temporary bodies of water, these water holes frequently dry up during the dry season. When that happens, these adaptive creatures simply bury themselves in the muddy bottom and wait for the next rainy season. When startled or disturbed these turtles can produce an obnoxious odor, however captive-born or long-term captive specimens are less likely to exhibit this behavior. The longevity of West African Mud Turtles in captivity is unknown.

Native Herp Spotlight: Great Basin Spadefoot Toad (*Scaphiopus intermontanus*/*Spea intermontana*)

The Great Basin Spadefoot Toad is one of three toads that are native to Oregon. This fairly small amphibian can be found in much of the eastern part of the state except the northeastern corner. It is also found in eastern California, Nevada, Utah, northern Arizona, northwestern Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, and Washington. They have been found at elevations up to 5,000 feet.

Adults grow to just over two inches and their short, compact bodies are colored in shades of gray, tan or olive with vague, irregular stripes or blotches. They also have brown or reddish spots or bumps. The belly is light gray or white. A black "spade" can be seen at the base of the first toe of each back foot. This spade

is used to aid in digging into the sandy soil where they may live for up to seven or eight months in a state of dormancy. They are most active at night, especially after seasonal rains. Breeding activity is triggered by warm temperatures combined with rain, at which time the males will make their way to nearby ponds, pools, and irrigation ditches in order to begin their search for females. Their duck-like mating calls can be heard for great distances. Females will lay up to 800 eggs in a number of small clusters in water. Because of the harsh environments in which they live, the embryos and larva have the fastest rate of development of any frog or toad in North America. Embryos will hatch after only a couple days and tadpoles will take only a few weeks to

metamorphose into adults.

The Great Basin Spadefoot Toad can be distinguished from the two native Oregon toads, the Western Toad and the Woodhouse's Toad, by the presence of a large, parotoid gland behind each eye on the other two toads.



This is an adult Great Basin Spadefoot Toad.



The dark area in this photo is the "spade" on the hind foot that this species of toad uses to dig with.

"Pet" Peeves: Don't Kiss Your Pet Reptile!

After many years of keeping and breeding reptiles and amphibians, we had our first reported case of Salmonellosis caused by a reptile.

One of our customers bought a fire skink from us and her daughter, who was the primary caretaker, contracted the disease according to the Mom. Our customer did acknowledge that there was inadequate hand washing practiced and the daughter had been kissing the lizard on occasion. Mouth to animal contact is something that is warned against by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), veterinarians and reputable pet dealers alike. Although it may be tempting

for some keepers to show their affection by kissing, that's not a good idea with reptiles. Salmonella bacteria, as well as some other bacteria and parasites, are transmitted through contact with the animal's feces. Reptiles are generally fairly clean pets and fecal matter doesn't stick to reptile scales as easily as it does to fur. But it's still not a good idea to increase the risk of bacterial infection by placing your mouth on your pet.

Let's also not forget that there have been many things that have resulted in Salmonellosis infections. In the past couple years alone, we have noted the following

sources of salmonella outbreaks: lettuce, tomatoes, jalapeno peppers, peanut butter, fruit juice, coconut, alfalfa sprouts, cantaloupe, pistachios, uncooked or undercooked eggs, poultry, meat fish and shrimp.

Practicing good hygiene with reptiles, or any live animal for that matter, is important. That is particularly true for young kids, the elderly and folks

who are immunocompromised – they are all at greater risk of contracting diseases and they have a decreased capacity for dealing with them if they do.

So practice good hygiene around uncooked food items, and always remember... **DON'T KISS YOUR PET REPTILE!**

Ask the Vet

We asked Dr. Dan O'Loughlin, who works at the Emergency Veterinary Clinic of Tualatin, about first aid tips for herps. Here's Part 1 of what he told us.

This article will help the reader divide their reptile emergencies into those that can be resolved at home and those that need professional help. With the cost of veterinary medicine going up, many owners wait until the last moment before bringing their animal in to be seen by a veterinarian. At that point it is often impossible to help the patient. Remember that reptiles get sick slowly and resolve slowly so early detection of a problem and its correction is important. HUSBANDRY is the leading cause of most reptile diseases. Therefore, prevention by providing an informed cage setup is the best first aid tool.

Historically, snakes are the least likely reptile to be presented to a veterinarian for illness which means that close attention to husbandry may make for a long and happy life for your pet.

Mites - Mild cases can be dealt with at home using over the counter products. Remember this is an environmental disease and not a pet disease, so toss all cage supplies you can. Soak the ones you cannot in bleach (¼ C to 1 gallon water). For severe cases seek professional help.

Respiratory - A cough or nasal discharge is often a sign of respiratory disease. Most of these should be seen early by the vet due to the difficulty of resolving

them. Immediate first aid involves isolating the ill snake from other snakes, heating up the patient, and washing your hands after handling. If you hear increased respiratory sounds without discharge make sure the nose is not restricted by shed skin or debris.

Poor shed - This is due to mites, low humidity, previous injury, or failing health. Look for the underlying cause first and correct it. Next take the snake and place it into a closed plastic container (with air holes) with a towel that is dampened with warm water and leave for 1-2 hours. The moisture and rough surface of the towel will assist the shed. You should rarely have to assist the skin by peeling it. Great care must be given if the spectacles (lens caps) are involved. Baths may also be used for minor problems.

Skin lumps - All need to be seen by your veterinarian and most require surgery to resolve. Reptile pus is thick and does not drain like a cat abscess when lanced, so home resolution is difficult.

Red skin – A generalized red skin on the belly or more importantly red spots needs to be seen by your vet.

Cuts - If the cut is small and shallow, clean it and apply a topical antibacterial ointment. Once these heal your snake may always have a problem with shedding at this site.

Black or dark patches - Burns, injections, or infections such as bacterial or fungal are common causes. The skin can be treated at home if the area is small. Keeping the area clean with dilute betadine (tea colored) is one treatment option. Improvement comes with shedding so be patient. If it is not getting worse, it is

probably improving. Large areas need to be seen by your veterinarian.

Cat bites - Need to be seen by your veterinarian.

Constipation – Often can be resolved with a 24 hour warm bath set up like the treatment for a poor shed described earlier. Check the cage temperature to make sure it is not too cold.

Lack of appetite - has so many causes. Here are my general rules: Most reptiles, even the tropical ones, will have a decrease in appetite from October through January. If a snake does not eat for one month, reexamine your husbandry. After three months, see your veterinarian. Temperature, even a 24 hour power outage, may signal a reptile to stop eating. Constipation is a common cause of not eating. Aggressive rodents can cause an aversion to eating. Test other colors or species of rodents. Stress can be

resolved by darkening the cage and less handling. Illness – any disease can lead to a loss of appetite. Species idiosyncrasy – some snakes such as the ball pythons are famous for not eating well. Learn your species.

Regurgitating meals - Stop handling the snake, and check your cage and food temperature. If it continues, have your veterinarian check them out.

Swollen throat or head - Needs to be seen by your veterinarian.

Red gums/mouth - See your veterinarian.

Prolapsed cloaca/hemipene - Clean and lubricate with antibiotic ointment or KY jelly. See your veterinarian.

Part 2 next issue.



Dr. Dan O'Loughlin

House of Reptiles Store News

As most of you know by now our albino Burmese python, Buttercup, died on January 1st. The necropsy that we had performed on her by the OSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab showed that she had a 6" long blood clot that caused her death. It was a sad start to the new year.

Those of you who are elementary school

teachers should know about the "Pets in the Classroom" program. This grant opportunity, provided by the Pet Care Trust, provides up to \$150 per school year for public and private elementary school teachers (kindergarten through sixth grade) if they house a classroom pet or aquarium. The on-line application process is

intended to be an easy one. If approved, teachers simply provide receipts or copies of receipts to the organization for reimbursement up to the allowed amount. The application form can be found at www.petsintheclassroom.org. The money can be used to acquire new pets

and their supplies or for the support of existing pets. Check it out!

Although it's always sad to lose one of our big constrictors, there's always another that needs a new home. Just before this newsletter went to print, we were given another Burmese python. Come check it out.

Customer & Pet Profile – Joanne Cloud

We met Joanne when she came in for earthworms to feed her turtles. She came in wearing her coast guard uniform and Tim quickly informed her that we don't sell sea turtles! She still remembers that interaction. A couple years later, she asked to volunteer at the store and we got to know her pretty well.

Joanne's love of reptiles, especially turtles, began when she was seven years

old. She was in the woods one day and found a two-legged Eastern box turtle that she named "Big Mamma". Joanne went on from there to keep two skinks, a White's tree frog and more turtles and tortoises. She is most fond of turtles because "they are amazing creatures, they live a long time and have their own personalities". She currently keeps one male ornate box turtle (Wilbur), two Eastern box

turtles (Myrtle and Sweet Pea), and three red-foot tortoises (Tomato, Basil and Sherman). Joanne has built several large enclosures for her turtles and tortoises, and keeps them in her basement. She believes that people should not buy a turtle unless they've done their research and know what's involved in their care, how long they live and how big they will get.



Joanne with "Sherman", one of her three red-foot tortoises.

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.

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!

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.house-of-reptiles.com

and join us on
Facebook.

Product Spotlight: Mercury Vapor Bulbs

There are three types of UVB bulbs that herpers have available to them – compact fluorescent, linear fluorescent, and incandescent mercury vapor. While not all reptiles need UVB, diurnal lizards do... especially those that are from arid environments and spend a good deal of time in the sun. For those kinds of animals, mercury vapor bulbs have three advantages. First, they emit

three to five times more UVB than do the other two options. Second, they emit UVB for up to two feet, versus 12 inches for the other two bulbs. And third, mercury vapor bulbs also produce heat, doing the work of two bulbs in one package. Even though these bulbs tend to be more expensive, they can be a considerable cost savings when compared to two separate bulbs and two

separate fixtures.

Not all bulbs are the same. Over the years, we've measured the UVB output of dozens of bulbs. The two brands we currently sell produce good amounts of UVB and maintain decent levels over an extended period of time. Any UVB bulb should be replaced within six months to a year of use.

Marshall's Herp Challenge for the Quarter

Last quarter we asked if you could name the other species of sea turtle that is sometimes found off the coast of Oregon. It's a true giant among reptiles. Did you find the answer? That's right... it's the leatherback sea turtle.

One of the most magnificent looking snakes we carry in the shop is the green tree python. When green tree

python (GTP) babies hatch they are usually red, yellow, or maroon. These animals hail from northern Australia and a few southern islands on the Indonesian archipelago, and are colored this way to camouflage in the rainforests they inhabit. Not only do GTP's display a wide variety of colors and patterns as babies, but they also go through an interesting color change. As

GTP's age they turn from yellow or red to green as adults, though some rare individuals hold on to their yellow coloration. This change of color, from young animal to adult, occurs throughout the animal kingdom. Some other snakes that do this are: Emerald Tree Boas, and black milksnakes. Can you name the term used to describe this color change?

About Our Organization...

House of Reptiles is owned and operated by Tim Criswell, who has over 23 years of adult experience in keeping and breeding reptiles and

amphibians. Assisting Tim are his wife, Shawn, employees Marshall Brooks, Paul Hoffman, Kim Hamblin, Marcus Glidden and Michelle

Verheyden, and several volunteers who are mentioned above in the "Meet The Staff" section.

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