

The Herp Gazette

HOUSE OF REPTILES

11507 S.W. Pacific Highway
Tigard, Oregon

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House of Reptiles Fall "Phib" Hunt

On October 31st, the staff at **House of Reptiles** went on our annual fall amphibian hunt led by store friend, local herping expert and biologist, Chris. Two of our troop even honored the day by coming dressed in their Halloween costumes... Marcus was a pirate and Paul was a mad scientist/butcher/bad doctor! The weather cooperated with us as the evening was cool but not cold, and only slightly rainy off and on. We went to several places in the Columbia Gorge and found eight different species of amphibians - Pacific giant salamanders (larval and adult form), Cope's giant

salamanders, Larch Mountain salamanders (only found in a very small area), Cascade torrent salamanders, Dunn's salamanders, tailed frogs (tadpole and adult), red-legged frogs, and the non-native American bullfrog. We also found lots of bugs and Marcus even caught a salmon bare-handed (it was dying). We ate lots of Chris' candy and chips, drank his coffee and tea and took turns blinding each other with his high-powered LED flashlight. Needless to say, we all had a good time.



Some of our catch for the evening.



The gang, L to R: Shawn, Laura, Tim, Marshall, Marcus, Paul and Liz.

Staff Updates:

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

Marshall will be taking an art class for the first time this month. Most of you may not know that he has been an artist for quite a while now and really likes drawing caricatures.

Paul is still busy being a home-owner and taking care of his menagerie of critters. He went hunting a couple times this fall, but came back empty-handed.

Kim has been nursing a bum ankle, but has kept busy this quarter despite the physical challenges.

Liz had to leave us to return to Colorado so that she could attend to some health issues. She's been a real help around here and was a joy to work with. We will miss her. Maybe some day she'll be back.

Marcus has decided to take a break from school to focus on his bowling, getting more tattoos and going to more concerts. It's tough work and requires a lot of energy!

Michelle Verheyden is our newest employee. Michelle has been around reptiles for several years and has even managed

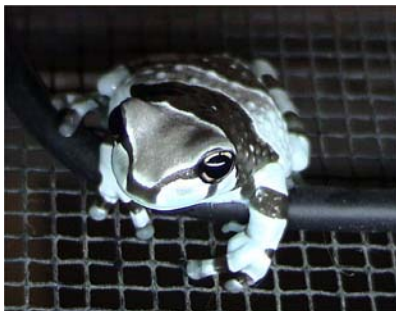
her own reptile rescue effort. She will be working part-time and will be a welcome addition to the staff.

Tim and Shawn took a short trip back to Oklahoma in December to see Tim's Mom. It was good to see her again and to visit old stomping grounds.

Current volunteers include Hadley Rentz, Alena Zinck, Aislinn Kelly, Victor Soto, Moses Barton, Tyrone Esser, Brian Wilson, Joanne Cloud and Eleanor Rixey.

Quarterly Care Sheet: Amazon Milk Frog (*Trachycephalus resinifictrix*)

Other names include: Blue Milk Frog and Mission Golden-Eyed Tree Frog.



“These frogs were not available to hobbyists for a long time because their breeding requirements had not been discovered.”

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: In the wild, Amazon Milk Frogs are found in South America throughout much of the Amazon Basin. They were first discovered along the Maracana River in Brazil. This frog lives primarily in humid, tropical rainforests. These frogs reach a SVL (snout to vent length) of two and a half to four inches. Females are slightly larger than males. Juvenile Amazon Milk Frogs are banded in black and white. As they mature, the contrasting black and white coloration fades to shades of gray and brown. The skin of mature frogs also takes on a bumpy texture. Wild populations of this amphibian are declining due to habitat loss and the chytrid fungus that is affecting frog populations world-wide.

CAPTIVE CARE: Amazon Milk Frogs are primarily arboreal and nocturnal. Maintaining these 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 these frogs like to climb, their enclosures should provide as much vertical space as is possible (e.g., a 20 gallon HIGH aquarium is better than a 20 gallon long). Cage temperatures of 75 to 85F are optimal. If necessary, the daytime temperatures can be achieved by using a low-wattage full-spectrum incandescent – if a white light is used, it should only be left on for 12 to 14 hours a day; black or red bulbs can be left on 24 hours per day. To maintain desired humidity levels, it is important to mist the enclosure at least once daily. Because they are arboreal, placing several horizontal climbing structures in the enclosure will give the frogs multiple options for climbing. The substrate for their habitat can be a commercially made soil and moss mixture, cypress mulch, orchid bark, coconut fiber or a premium potting soil (lacking perlite or vermiculite). Maintaining these 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 Amazon Milk Frogs to thrive. Their dietary requirements may be met by feeding a variety of the following insects: appropriately sized crickets, mealworms, grasshoppers, earthworms, waxworms, silkworms and houseflies. Adult frogs should be fed three times per week; younger frogs should be fed every day 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 use and recommend Miner-All).

ADDITIONAL NOTES: All frogs living in the same habitat should be the same relative size or the smaller ones may be eaten by their larger cage-mates. These frogs were not available to hobbyists for a long time because their breeding requirements had not been discovered. One of the main requirements for them is the opportunity to breed inside tree hollows and once this was discovered, breeders began to experience success in captivity. Their common name refers to the milky white substance they can secrete through their skin when they feel threatened.

Native Herp Spotlight: Olive Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

Although they are a rarity in our waters, the Olive Ridley Sea Turtle is occasionally encountered off the shores of Oregon and Washington. This species of sea turtle occurs primarily in the tropical waters of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and is the species that Shawn, Marshall, Paul and Tim got to study while on their recent trip to Mexico.

This is one of the smallest species of sea turtle, reaching lengths of up to two and a half feet and weighing 80 to 100 pounds. As their common name would suggest, their smooth carapace (top shell) is an olive color and the plastron (bottom shell) is a light green or yellow color.

This turtle is omnivorous and feeds on a variety of

foods including crabs, shrimp, lobster, seaweed, mollusks, algae and many species of fish.

Females do not return to the beaches on which they were hatched to lay their first clutch until their eighth year. They will lay between 30 and 150 eggs per nest and can lay up to three nests per breeding season. Most will not return to lay eggs again for another two to three years thereafter. That process is repeated throughout their breeding lives.

The Olive Ridley is listed as a Federally Threatened species across most of its range and is listed as Endangered for the populations that nest along the Pacific side of Mexico. There they face not only

predators and the natural obstacles for young animals, but a fair amount of poaching as well. It is estimated that for the Mexican populations, only one baby in 1000 will make it to adulthood. Of the 1600 babies we released one evening on our trip, only one or two will live full lives – a sad fact we had a difficult time getting used to.



Marshall and Paul getting ready to release this tub of 1600 baby Olive Ridley Sea Turtles.



A female Olive Ridley in the process of laying eggs. This female laid 92 eggs in this particular nest.

“Pet” Peeves: Crocodilian Law – Unnecessary Regulation

As of January 1st, 2011 it is now illegal to own any species of crocodilian in Oregon without a permit, and no new permits will be issued. If you don't already have a permit, you can't get one. If you have a crocodilian and didn't already get your permit, you're in violation of the law.

SB 391 was passed into law on June 26th, 2010. This revision to the “Dangerous and Exotic Animal Act” is intended to phase out the keeping of all large exotic pets in Oregon. The law has been in effect for years, but crocodilians were just added to it through this modification. Although this change was touted as being for the safety of Oregonians, there have

never been ANY deaths in Oregon due to any species of crocodilian. This is largely more effort on the part of the Humane Society of the United States, Defenders of Wildlife, PETA and other radical animal rights groups to take away our opportunities to have pets of any kind.

As far as we are concerned, the only GOOD this law will do is to protect crocodilians from leading the miserable lives they typically do when purchased by uninformed, unprepared people who cannot adequately care for them. Having rescued more than a few gators over the years, we've seen this dynamic played out time and time again. When the

gators reach three to four feet, their owners can no longer care for them for a multitude of reasons... the landlord says it must go, the gator bites or scares someone, or its size and demanding care requirements make the gator virtually impossible to care for. So the hapless animals end up at **House of Reptiles**, or at one of our local humane societies, or simply being released into the wild to suffer a slow death. It's a sad and avoidable fate for such a majestic animal. We've never sold them and we've gone out of our way to try to educate people against buying them. Despite our efforts, there are always unethical stores that sell

them and uneducated people who buy them.

But... we don't think more governmental regulation is the answer. The better solution is to require proper care for ALL animals that are sold or kept as pets, as well as responsibility for any harm caused due to improper supervision by their owners.

Where does this kind of unnecessary regulation end? If we prohibit animals based on actual harm caused to people each year, then we should prohibit several species of dogs, as well as horses and cattle. Shall we limit opportunity or require responsibility?

Ask the Vet

We asked Dr. Bethany Groves who works at the Frontier Veterinary Hospital in Hillsboro about mouth rot. Here's what she had to say.

For many reptile owners, the term "mouth rot" is familiar vocabulary. More formally referred to as necrotizing or ulcerative stomatitis, snakes, lizards, turtles and tortoises – even crocodiles – can become victims of this common disease.

While "mouth rot" conjures a fairly accurate visual picture of this disease, the term broadly refers to infection and inflammation of the mouth. Mild cases may show redness, sores, and extra saliva in the mouth, whereas more severe cases can involve abscesses, pus, bleeding ulcers, and even rotting flesh and bone infections (aka, osteomyelitis) – OUCH, right? This makes it easy to understand why many snakes and lizards with this disease may drool, have difficulty swallowing, and even stop eating. Some lose teeth or even develop tongue paralysis. In cases that aren't appropriately or effectively treated, this infection in the mouth can spread into the lungs to cause pneumonia or to the bloodstream leading to overwhelming infection and potentially death.

Although infection plays a large role in this disease, ulcerative stomatitis is generally not contagious. It requires underlying disease or other cause for immunosuppression to allow such an infection to take hold. In fact, many of the bacteria commonly identified in reptiles with ulcerative

stomatitis are also found in the mouths of healthy reptiles; however, these bacteria rapidly overgrow and cause damage when the reptile's immune system is overworked or not functioning well. While certain parasites, cancer, and even genetics can sometimes play a role, the NUMBER ONE cause of a "sub-par" immune system is stress! In our captive pets, stress is frequently the result of inappropriate set-up and/or diet at home. Temperature, humidity, enclosure size and type, method of hydration, diet (i.e., type of food, how it's stored and prepared, how it's fed), and opportunity to hide are all very important factors. (Keep in mind these are all very specific to a given species of reptile, too!) Additionally, ulcerative stomatitis can start following an injury to the mouth, such as from feeding live prey, repeatedly running into the walls of the enclosure, or an owner forcing the mouth open. Without the proper set-up and care, a reptile is put at great risk over the years for ulcerative stomatitis, among many other diseases.

If your reptile shows any of the signs mentioned above, get him/her to a reptile veterinarian immediately. Depending on the severity of your pet's illness, a veterinarian will generally recommend collecting samples (either a swab or lung wash) to determine what type of infection is present. In many cases a culture is necessary to determine the most appropriate antibiotic and to avoid resistant infections that fail to respond to treatment. Treatment may require mouth rinses, topical antibiotic creams, and oral or injectable antibiotics. Severe cases require surgery to take

biopsies or remove dead tissue in the mouth.

The BEST treatment, like many diseases in reptiles, is PREVENTION. Setting your reptile up with most appropriate species-specific care, providing a properly formulated and prepared diet, and minimizing stress will greatly reduce the risk of this disease and many others in you scaly friends!

(Editor's note: To further emphasize Dr. Groves' point regarding prevention, proper husbandry to prevent stomatitis includes 1) keeping the cage clean; 2) providing the proper basking and ambient temperatures for that species; 3) providing a good, balanced diet appropriate for that species; 4) the use of UVB light where needed; and 5)

minimizing sources of environmental stress (too much handling, being subjected to other pets in the house, etc.). An ounce of prevention will save much heartache and many dollars when it comes to reptiles.)



Dr. Bethany Groves

House of Reptiles Store News

Our annual fall amphibian hunt is detailed at the top of the newsletter. That was loads of fun and we found lots of little critters.

Through customer and staff donations as well as the contribution of the store, we were able to donate \$750 to the Platanitos Sea Turtle Conservation Camp in Mexico (where some of the

House of Reptiles staff visited in October 2010). Being there for a short visit confirmed for us how useful our donation will be and those of you who helped make that donation 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.

We recently purchased a pair of viper geckos for breeding purposes. We bred them a couple years ago but they were so prolific, we stopped.

Then we couldn't find them anymore, so we decided to return to breeding them so that we can be assured of their availability.

Continued thanks to Chris Karr for his generous donations of vegetables, dandelion greens and edible flowers for our animals.

Customer & Pet Profile – Brian Wilson and Sydney Rappaport

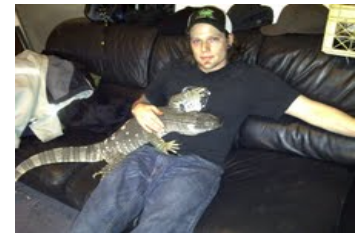
Brian first got interested in reptiles when he was 10 and kept an iguana. Sydney has always been fascinated by them and used to get scolded by her Mom for playing with the snakes and bugs. Brian and Sydney have been together for three years and from the beginning of their relationship, reptiles have figured prominently. They have a soft spot in their hearts for animals that need new homes and currently share their home with four

leopard geckos, two house geckos, a bearded dragon, an Asian water dragon, a black-throated monitor, a rosy boa and a corn snake. Brian says that the novelty and the "Wow" factor is part of why he is attracted to herps. He finds them "way more beautiful than mammals" and is fascinated by the different stories they all have. Snakes are relatively easy to care for which makes them a little easier. The

challenges to keeping herps for Brian and Sydney include the daily maintenance, especially of the lizards.



Sydney with Zilla and Precious.



Brian and Smokey, chillin' at home.

Brian says that regardless of how beautiful and interesting you think a particular animal might be, you should be sure to do your research before you get a live animal. Patience and research are key to being a good herper.

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

Product Spotlight: NutriBAC df Probiotic

Although probiotics are widely used in veterinary medicine for treating dogs and cats, they have seldom been used with reptiles. Little is known about their actual effectiveness and there is almost no scientific research done on them. However, the vets we've spoken with about them claim that at worst, probiotics will not harm the animal and may even provide some benefit.

At the risk of oversimplifying things, there are "good" bacteria and "bad" bacteria in the gut of all animals. Sometimes things like stress or the use of antibiotics can upset the balance of gut bacteria and the "bad" bacteria will overpopulate the gut and flourish. Probiotics are viable or living microorganisms that encourage a healthy

environment in the digestive tract of the host and can return the balance of bacteria back to something that is healthier for the animal, thereby aiding in the digestion of nutrients. Probiotics have no known side-effects.

NutriBAC df is the only patented supplemental probiotic for reptiles and amphibians.

Marshall's Herp Challenge for the Quarter

Last quarter we asked if you could name the distant relative of the horned lizard that shares the bizarre trait of being able to squirt blood out of its eyes. Did you find the answer? It's the Thorny Devil from Australia, and though they are similar looking they are not closely related to the Horned Lizards of North America.

Sea Turtles are some of

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

the most majestic animals in the reptile kingdom. It was a real treat to see and release a whole bunch of these critters down in Mexico, my first hands on experience with turtles.

The Olive Ridley Turtle is one of the smaller species of sea turtles that migrates up and down the west coast. But occasionally the waters off the Oregon coast experience the presence of a true behemoth of the

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

chelonian world (chelonian is a sub-order of reptiles that includes turtles, tortoises and sea turtles). It has out lived the dinosaurs, however its currently the only living member of its genus.

This turtle is one of the largest reptiles in the world. It can reach lengths of over 8 feet and weigh nearly 2,000 lbs. Can you name this turtle?

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

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