

The Herp Gazette

HOUSE OF REPTILES

11507 S.W. Pacific Highway
Tigard, Oregon

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Herp Hunting in Southwest Utah

Tim and wife Shawn got to take a rare vacation in June to southwestern Utah to visit the Bryce Canyon National Park and Zion National Park. They are truly awe-inspiring and beautiful places and, although the weather wasn't as



cooperative as had been hoped for, plenty of interesting herps were still found on the numerous walks that were taken. Found in abundance were yellowback spiny lizards, eastern fence lizards, northern sagebrush lizards, side-blotched lizards, western whiptails, Great Basin skinks, Great Basin spadefoot toads, southwestern toads, and canyon tree frogs. The non-herps that were seen included pronghorn antelope, mule deer, turkey, turkey buzzards,



and the endangered Utah prairie dog.

Whether you get to travel out of state or not, there are plenty of wonderful places to go and lots of critters to find in the wild if you are persistent and patient. You just have to look.

Staff Updates:

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

Marshall graduated high school and is adjusting to life as an "adult". He and girlfriend, Whitney, are looking for an apartment together and hope to move in soon. Since he has more free time, he's picked up a few hours at the store for the summer. Marshall will start school at PCC in the fall.

Paul finally moved into his new home in Keizer. This is the first house he's ever owned and he's quite excited about it. Although he's only beginning to understand

what a big responsibility home ownership is, it does offer him opportunities like...he finally gets to have his own herp and fish room!

Kim continues her photography, karate, being a Mom to her two daughters and helping us out on occasion.

Tim and wife, Shawn, took a trip to Bryce and Zion parks in southwestern Utah to do some herping and sightseeing. It was Tim's first vacation in about three years. You can read about it in the opening article above. It was such fun that they're

now talking about a trip to Mexico this fall to help a sea turtle rescue organization.

Current volunteers include Hadley Rentz, Cara Sandels, John Czarnecki and Emma Venne.

Quarterly Care Sheet: Corn Snake (*Pantherophis guttatus*)

SPECIES: CORN SNAKE (*Pantherophis guttatus*).



“Corn Snakes commonly live 15 to 20 years, although the longest documented record of Corn Snake longevity is just over 32 years.”

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: The Corn Snake is a member of the *Colubridae* family of snakes, which includes the kingsnakes, milksnakes, bull snakes, pine snakes, garter snakes, rat snakes, fox snakes, water snakes and racers. Corn Snakes are medium-sized, non-venomous constrictors that are most active around dusk in habitats ranging from open fields to woodlands and farming areas. Their range includes the southern and eastern central United States. Adults reach a length of about four to five feet, and have now been captively bred in a variety of colors and patterns. Because of their varied and attractive appearances, docile nature, convenient size for handling, reproductive successes in captivity, and relative ease of care Corn Snakes are easily the most commonly kept snake in existence.

CAPTIVE CARE: Adult Corn Snakes can be kept in a 20-gallon long aquarium throughout their entire lives. Nothing smaller than that should be used, although slightly bigger (30 to 40 gallon, etc.) would be even better. The lid should be well ventilated and secure, and should preferably have some sort of locking mechanism on it. Either newspaper or the more aesthetically pleasing aspen bedding can be used for a substrate. Fresh, clean water should be available at all times. Corn Snakes can be shy, so a hide box of an appropriate size will help them to feel safe. Other cage decorations can include branches or rocks for them to crawl under. Care must be taken that none of the decorations in the cage can fall over or be pulled over on the snake. In order for snakes to thrive, they have to be able to thermo-regulate. Thermoregulation is the process by which animals purposely move in and out of areas of higher or lower heat to optimize their body temperatures. In nature, direct and indirect sunlight provides animals the opportunity to achieve this. In captivity, it is accomplished by having a temperature gradient in the enclosure. Corn Snakes should have a temperature gradient of approximately 70 to 88 degrees Fahrenheit. The heat can be provided below the tank, by under tank heaters or heat tape, or above the tank, by blue heat bulbs, red heat bulbs or ceramic heaters. In order to ensure that the correct temperature has been achieved, the temperature must be measured by a reliable temperature gauge that is placed on the substrate immediately above or below the heat source. The other side of the enclosure can be kept at room temperature. Corn Snakes are strict carnivores and in the wild they eat a diet that consists of frogs, lizards and rodents. In captivity they can be fed appropriately sized rodents for their entire lives. The rule of thumb for selecting appropriately-sized rodents is to select rodents that are no more than one and a half times as thick as the snake's girth at mid-body. It is safest for the snake if they are fed frozen/thawed rodents. If they are fed live rodents, care must be taken to remove the rodent within a few minutes if the snake does not appear to be interested in feeding. There are many, sad tales of snake keepers who left live rodents unattended in the cages of their snakes, only to later discover an injured or dead snake. Hatchling Corn Snakes can be fed one pinky mouse every five days to seven days; yearlings can be fed one hopper mouse every week, and adults can be fed an adult or jumbo mouse every week to 10 days.

ADDITIONAL NOTES: The common name for this snake is believed to come from either the resemblance of the colors and pattern on their ventral scales to the appearance of Indian corn, or from their habit of frequenting the vicinities of storage structures for holding corn where they find their rodent prey. Corn Snakes commonly live 15 to 20 years, although the longest documented record of Corn Snake longevity is just over 32 years.

Native Herp Spotlight: Western Fence Lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*)

This is a very common, medium-sized lizard that can be found over much of Oregon. Ranging from central Washington south through Oregon, they can also be found in southwest Idaho and western Utah south all the way to northern Baja California. In Oregon, they can be found everywhere except the coastal areas north of Coos County, the Cascades above 5000 feet and the very north central portion of eastern Oregon.

Western Fence Lizards can reach lengths of up to eight inches, although around six inches is more common. They have a base coloration that ranges from brown to dark gray or even black. Their large dorsal scales are strongly keeled and end in a point. Males are

distinguished from females by turquoise flecking on the back and upper base of the tail. Males also sport bright blue patches on each side of the abdomen and throat. Females usually have some slight blue coloration in those areas, but it is not nearly as vivid as it is in males. The blue abdomen has led to these lizards sometimes being referred to as "blue bellies". Their quickness contributes to them also being called "swifts".

Western Fence Lizards tend to avoid flat valleys as well as humid forests. They prefer areas that provide them an opportunity to climb the stumps, rocks, fences, log piles and other perches that they are fond of. They can be found in a large

variety of habitats – from grasslands, broken chaparral, sagebrush and woodlands to open forests and even farmlands. They feed primarily on insects, spiders and other small invertebrates.

These native lizards typically emerge from hibernation in March and April, with males emerging first in order to establish territories. Males will attempt to intimidate each other by bobbing up and down and tilting their sides at each other to display their blue bellies. Breeding follows and eggs are laid from late May through early July. Clutches range from three to around 15 eggs, and the babies hatch in August or September.

If these lizards are encountered on a tree trunk,

they will circle the tree like a squirrel does in an attempt to avoid being seen.

"Pet" Peeves: Oregon Adds More Regulations

As of January 1st, 2010, Oregon has modified the existing dangerous animal act to include all species of crocodylians (SB391). Sen. Mark Hass, D- Beaverton, co-sponsored the bill. The new law will allow people who currently own alligators to keep them, as long as they have a state-issued permit from the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

This new law allows those who can obtain a permit prior to or within 90 days of Jan. 1, to keep the animals they already own. It also allows someone who purchases a crocodylian before Jan. 1, and can prove that the animal is kept in the manner

required by law, to get a permit within one year. Owners will have up to a year to renew their permits, and then on January 1st, 2011, the state would discontinue issuing them altogether.

We don't sell crocodylians and we discourage people from buying them. However, we are opposed to laws being enacted that are unnecessary and largely unenforceable. There have never been any deaths in the state that are attributable to crocodylians, so there is no valid reason to add crocodylians to a dangerous animal act for public safety reasons. If we're going to add

animals to the list based on human deaths they've caused, we need to start with dogs, cattle and horses.

There was little to no input from interested parties who keep big exotics regarding the crafting of this bill. Each time another animal is unnecessarily added to a list like this, it paves the way for the next one. With groups like the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) on the hunt to exclude more and more animals from private ownership, these kinds of laws are dangerous...

now and for what they lead towards in the future.

We think that regulatory laws should be aimed at providing consequences for irresponsible owners, instead of limiting what anyone... even responsible people, can own.

By the way, the two bills being proposed in Washington D.C. that we discussed in the last issue (**H.R. 669** and **S. 373**) have currently been sent back to their subcommittees for review and revision. Unfortunately, they'll probably be back this fall.

For more info, go to http://pijac.org/i4a/pages/ind_ex.cfm?pageid=504.

International Herp News

The father and son research team of Mike and Greg Warner have teamed up to report an amazing discovery. After 23 years of research they claim to have discovered a relative of the anaconda, long referred to by locals as a "black boa" or "Yacumama". This giant constrictor is believed to be over 133 feet in length and over six feet in

diameter. The Warners claim to have found the giant constrictor in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon and even got a photo of it. They intend to return to the region this October with a film crew from the National Geographic Society to try to capture more footage of this incredible creature. We can't wait to see THAT show on Nat Geo!

Researchers have recently discovered a snake that changes color. Named the Kapuas Mud snake this species, found on the island of Borneo, has defied discovery until now and does something that is virtually unheard of in the world of snakes. It can go from brown to virtually all white, and back again in just a few minutes!

National/Pacific Northwest Herp News

"This years annual Joint Meeting of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists will be held in Portland, July 22nd through 29th, 2009."

This years annual Joint Meeting of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists will be held in Portland, July 22nd through 29th, 2009. This will be a rare opportunity to hear some nationally known speakers and rub elbows with researchers and scientists who are conducting some fascinating research regarding these animals.

Store friend Chris Rombough has been conducting local amphibian research and tells us that many of Oregon's wild amphibian populations remain free of the dreaded chytrid fungus. However, he has found it in many of the captive amphibians he's examined – including captive bred animals. He

also informs us that species widely bred for the pet trade, including White's treefrogs and horned frogs, may carry the fungus without showing symptoms. He encourages us to be responsible pet owners and NEVER release captive amphibians, or dump water from cages outside. Good advice!

House of Reptiles Store News

Many thanks to store friends Judd and Danielle for taking some of our aquatic turtles on a road trip to Arkansas. On the way there, they stopped in Boise, Idaho, the Arches National Park in Moab, Utah, the Mesa Verde National Park in southwestern Colorado and briefly in Amarillo, Texas. Those are probably some of the best-traveled turtles in the United States! When they all arrived in Arkansas the turtles were placed in a five-acre private pond and will now be able to live out their lives in a state to which they are native and

in a protected and relatively safe environment. All were prohibited species here in Oregon so this was a real win/win situation. Bravo!

Although we sent our big gator to Florida in April, we already have a new one – in fact, he's been staying at Paul's house for the past several months until it was safe for him to come to the store tub. Well, he's here and he's a real cutie. And no, he's not for sale.

We just received a pair of Caiman lizards at the store. These are rare and expensive lizards that are

native to South America. They are fascinating creatures. Be sure to come check them out.

Our venomous display animal for July will be "Elvis", our northern Pacific rattlesnake. We know you'll want to come check him out – he's a local treat!

Continued thanks to Natasha and Gabe Buel, Chris Karr and Dani Bredeson for their generous donations of vegetables, fruits, dandelions and greens for our critters (and fresh basil for Tim).

"Our venomous display animal for July will be "Elvis", our northern Pacific rattlesnake."

Customer & Pet Profile – Chloe Watts

Our customer and pet profile for this quarter is 10 year old Chloe Watts and her bearded dragon, "Firebolt". Chloe has had her beardy since December 26, 2007. Her love affair with herps began when she was six years old after having attended a reptile show at the Multnomah County library where she got to touch a "banana snake" (albino Burmese python). She started talking about owning a reptile from then on. Although she wanted a snake, she ended up deciding that she couldn't feed it the live mice that she thought they required. So she ended up with a bearded dragon for her Christmas present in 2007.

Chloe says that Firebolt has a great personality – "he's very active and he thinks he's the king of the hill since he's the only one in his cage". He's a good eater and his favorite food is crickets. Chloe's friends think that Firebolt is pretty cool too.

Chloe thinks that she may someday get another bearded dragon or maybe even a chameleon. She says she likes chameleons because of their "poofy"

eyes.

Chloe's Dad, David, reports that Chloe is a very attentive herp owner. She spends lots of time holding Firebolt and, when weather permits, takes him outside for some sunshine.

Chloe says that for her first job she'd like to work at the **House of Reptiles**. We think she'd be good at it! She's thought about being a veterinarian, but isn't sure about having to dissect things.

Chloe wants prospective bearded dragon owners to know that they need to hold their beardies so that they stay happy, healthy and remain friendly.

If you or your child would like to be featured in our "Customer & Pet Profile" in future editions of **The Herp Gazette**, bring or send in a photo of that person with their pet(s), as well as a little biographical information about them. If you'd prefer, you can let one of the **House of Reptiles** staff interview you and we'll put the bio together for you and then let you review it before it goes to print.



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>.

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 and Beaverton's rules prohibit the keeping of crocodylians.

You can read about the results of the vote on Oregon SB391 regarding whether or not it will be legal to keep crocodylians in Oregon in the "Pet Peeves" section of this newsletter .



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

New Product Spotlight: Halogen Bulbs

A relatively new option for heat production in the world of reptiles is the halogen lamp. These incandescent bulbs are quite different than the other standard bulbs that are more commonly used to heat part of a reptile enclosure. Halogen lamps only produce white light, so cannot be used in an application where the heat source needs to stay

on 24 hours a day. However, halogen lamps produce more heat than do standard white light bulbs and they can last over twice as long – up to 3000 hours or nearly a year or more before going out. They produce more UVA rays (although humans don't see the UVA portion of the spectrum, reptiles do), which is believed to be

important for general health, food acquisition and even breeding.

Halogen bulbs come in 50, 75, 100 and 150-watt versions.

The main precaution in using halogen bulbs is that they get quite hot. You have to be careful in setting them up.

Marshall's Herp Challenge for the Quarter

Last quarter we asked if you could tell us the name of the large amphibian that is neotenic (does not metamorphose), has been to outer space, has been extensively studied for its ability to regenerate limbs and is named for an Aztec god. Did you figure it out? It's the **axolotl**. The name "axolotl" actually means "water dog".

This month our herp challenge has to do with a lizard who is a smaller member of the genus *Sceloporus* (meaning spiny lizard), and cousin of the Western Fence Lizard. It is also an Oregon native, although its native range covers most of the west coast of the United States and even into Baja California. It can be found at elevations from 500 to

10,500 ft., much higher than the Western Fence Lizard. This lizard is named after a type of bush that it commonly uses as refuge from predators and the hot summer sun. It's also listed as a Federal Species of Concern. Can you name this lizard?

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 and

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

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