

The Herp Gazette

HOUSE OF REPTILES

11507 S.W. Pacific Highway
Tigard, Oregon

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Memorial Day Herping Trip

We are always trying to find interesting and educational things we can do to make House of Reptiles a fun place to spend time. Since we want to make sure that all of our employees and some of our volunteers have the opportunity to see and learn about our native herps we decided to close the store each Memorial Day and take everyone herping. And that’s just what we did!

For our first trip, we went to the EE Wilson Wildlife Area north of Corvallis. It was an overcast day, but mild temperatures - just right for hiking around looking under

Staff Updates:

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

Marshall has been paying off traffic fines and getting his car repaired after he wrecked it. He’s also a bachelor again. Don’t know if those facts are related or not.

Paul has been herping several times and trying to keep up with his lawn.

Kim got to take a trip to Idaho where she did so much horseback riding she came back bowlegged!

Liz just got back from a trip to Colorado to see her parents and then on to South Dakota

rocks and logs. The group that went on this first trip included Shawn, Marshall, Paul, Liz, Cara, John, Marcus and Tim. We spent about three hours hiking around looking for critters and even had a picnic lunch. The animals we found included 15 ringneck snakes, four gopher snakes, three common garter snakes, one racer, two long-toed salamanders, and two Pacific chorus frogs. It was quite a day and we had lots of fun. We’ve included a couple of photos for your viewing pleasure.

Where to next year?

and Montana to vacation. While in South Dakota she got to visit the Reptile Gardens near Rapid City. We were all envious!

Tim and Shawn took a few days and went to Canada to visit some friends. It’s also baby snake season so Tim has been busy setting up clutches of eggs in the incubators and monitoring their progress. So far, we’ve got Borneo short-tailed python eggs and several clutches of ball python eggs incubating. More to come!

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



L to R: Liz, Marshall, Cara, John, Paul and Marcus.



L to R: Tim, Marshall, John and Marcus with a few snakes.

Sydney Rubbert, Alena Zinck, Rebecca King, Marcus Glidden, Victor Soto and Aislinn Kelly.

We have to say “goodbye” to volunteer Cara. She’s graduating from Southridge H.S. and moving on. Her departure will take her first to the Honduras where she will be doing volunteer work with Amigos de las Americas. Then in the fall she will be starting college at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia where she’ll be double majoring in biology and public health. We’re going to miss her.

Quarterly Care Sheet: California Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula californiae*)

SPECIES: CALIFORNIA KINGSNAKE (*Lampropeltis getula californiae*).



“In the wild, Kingsnakes have a preference for eating other snakes.”

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: The eight recognized subspecies of kingsnake are members of the *Colubridae* family of snakes, which includes the corn snakes, milk snakes, bull snakes, pine snakes, garter snakes, rat snakes, fox snakes, water snakes and racers. Kingsnakes are medium-sized, non-venomous constrictors that are most active around dusk in various habitats ranging from coastal forests and mountains to deserts. The California Kingsnakes range is from the tip of the Baja peninsula north to southern Oregon and from the west coast of California east to desert areas of Nevada and Arizona. Adults reach lengths of about three to four feet and are typically colored in black with white bands or brown with cream colored bands. Their relative small size, simple cage requirements, easily supplied diet, adaptability to life in captivity, and great beauty have made Kingsnakes very popular with beginning hobbyists as well as with more advanced herpetoculturists.

CAPTIVE CARE: Adult Kingsnakes can be kept in a 20-gallon long aquarium throughout their entire lives. Nothing smaller than that should be used, although slightly larger (30 gallon, etc.) would be fine also. 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. Kingsnakes can be shy, so a hide box or two of an appropriate size will help them to feel safe. Other cage decorations can include branches for them to crawl under and over. 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. Kingsnakes 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. Kingsnakes are strict carnivores and in captivity 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 and if 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 Kingsnakes can be fed one to 2 pinky mice every 5 to 7 days, yearlings can be fed 1 to 2 hopper mice every week, and adults can be fed an adult mouse every week.

ADDITIONAL NOTES: In the wild, Kingsnakes have a preference for eating other snakes. Since they are immune to rattlesnake venom, Kingsnakes will even eat rattlesnakes. If you handle other snakes, be sure to wash your hands before you handle a Kingsnake. Kingsnakes commonly live 15 to 20 years.

Native Herp Spotlight: *Ensatina* (*Ensatina eschscholtzii*)

This is one of the most widely distributed salamanders in the United States. They can be found from northern Baja California, Mexico to southern British Columbia, Canada. In Oregon, they are found in humid forests west of the Cascade Range all the way to the coast. The two Oregon subspecies are the Oregon *Ensatina* (*E.e. oregonensis*), found throughout western Oregon and the Painted *Ensatina* (*E.e. picta*), is found in the extreme southwestern part of the state.

Ensatinas are small, relatively stout bodied salamanders that reach just over four inches in total length. The word “ensatina” means “sword-like” and probably refers to the way in which this salamander holds its tail erect and uses its in defense against predators.

They are variably colored in shades of brown and usually cream or tan on the belly. On the upper surface of the base of the leg can often be found an orange or yellow patch. There are so many different color forms and variations that biologists still argue about whether they are different color forms, different subspecies or different species of *Ensatina*.

Ensatinas prefer habitat that consists of logs, piles of debris at the base of snags, firewood piles and other types of surface debris. They live underground during dry or cold weather.

These salamanders lay their eggs underground, and the eggs then hatch directly into baby salamanders. This skips the stage of metamorphosis that most all amphibians go through.

When under threat from a potential predator, their first line of defense is to remain very still. If that doesn't work, *Ensatinas* will arch their backs, sway back and forth and emit a milky poison through their skin. Finally, if under attack, *Ensatinas* can drop their tails (called “caudal autotomy”). The tail

wiggles around to keep the predator's interest, while the *Ensatina* crawls away to safety. A new tail will eventually grow back, but will not be as long as the original.



“Pet” Peeves: Put It Back Like You Found It!

Anyone who shares a love of herping and who places great emphasis on leaving the areas explored in as good a shape as they were found has been frustrated by the littering that is all too common. But for the sake of reptiles, it goes beyond just not littering... not replacing the rocks and logs that are turned over in pursuit of herps can be devastating for them as well.

The following information is reprinted from an article by Rob Goldstein in [Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Biologist](#): “When it comes to habitat destruction, startling events like oil spills and deforestation are certain to grab the headlines. Yet as a

new study in the journal *Animal Conservation* shows, sometimes habitat destruction can be so subtle that it passes under the eyes of all but the most astute scientists.”

“David Pike and fellow researchers from the University of Sydney look at the case of reptiles in outcrops and find that people moving rocks less than 30 centimeters out of place can ruin the habitat for species like the endangered broad-headed snake that shelter in narrow crevices.”

“This impact to rocky environments is widespread across the world, particularly from reptile

enthusiasts, researchers, and collectors who move rocks slightly out of place to search for their favorite species.”

“With an elaborate experimental design, Pike and his team were able to show that altering the position of rocks negatively impacts reptile habitat by modifying crevice microconditions that species prefer.”

“The study also demonstrated that the impact is easily reversible by restoring the rocks to their original position. Disturbed rocks are easily identifiable because they normally fit flush with underlying substrate (i.e.

they do not wobble when pushed) and displacement usually leaves a light colored “scar.”

“The scientists also conducted a field experiment in which they found 26 pairs of previously disturbed rocks and returned one rock from each pair to its original setting. They found the restored rocks harbored a much greater number of reptiles, showing that the impact is easily reversible.”

Help preserve the habitat for all of our creatures and the next herper to come along. When you're taking a peek underneath that rock, put it back the way it was before you found it.

Ask The Vet

These two questions were posed to Dr. Gabriella Flacke at the Murrayhill Veterinary Hospital: "What are some first aid treatments that herp keepers can use at home for minor injuries or conditions they might run into? What are the symptoms that let people know when "first-aid" is not enough and the animal should be seen by a veterinarian?"

Minor trauma is commonly seen in captive reptiles and can be sustained through a variety of (sometimes perplexing) ways. The difficult question is often how to differentiate between "minor" trauma versus an injury that requires medical attention.

In some situations the reptile should always receive immediate veterinary care - if there is a broken or dislocated bone, a laceration or wound that won't stop bleeding, any injuries that involve the eyes, puncture wounds or other trauma that expose the body cavity, and any trauma or wounds that penetrate through the shell in a turtle (either the plastron or the carapace). In turtles the most common source of shell-penetrating wounds are dog or cat bites, and although the punctures on the surface may seem small or superficial, these animals may develop severe secondary bacterial infection and/or internal abscesses. Fractures can occur when animals fall off of cage furniture, if a leg becomes wedged in a tight area in the enclosure and the animal injures itself in the struggle to get free, or if they are dropped accidentally while being handled (especially by children who may not know

how to handle the reptile properly). Pathological fractures, where the bones are abnormally brittle or rubbery due to a nutritional deficiency called "metabolic bone disease", can occur with very minor trauma or injury. Any suspected fracture, no matter what the cause, should be addressed by a veterinarian.

On the other hand, there are also many "minor" wounds and injuries that can occur with some relative frequency in captive reptiles. Certain species of lizards will not recognize the glass sides of their tank as a barrier and sustain nose or jaw injuries by "running into" the glass. Also if the animal can see their reflection in the glass they may view this as a rival animal and "attack." Although these are usually minor surface scrapes, sometimes if enough force is applied at the right angle (or if a small force is applied repeatedly) the jaw can break. Thus, it is strongly recommended that species which tend to jump at the glass walls be provided with some artificial tank amendments that make the glass walls seem like a barrier (e.g. a nice wrap-around photo of a jungle or desert scene, etc).

Other minor wounds can be sustained on cage furniture or tank decorations that are either inappropriately placed in the enclosure or have sharp edges. For climbing species, it is important to have a variety of routes to and from the top and bottom of the enclosure so the animal is at low risk of falling. Heat sources can serve as a source of burn wounds. Heat lamps placed above an enclosure can burn the top of the head of an animal that sits directly underneath the lamp for prolonged periods of time. It

is important to have several thermometers in the enclosure, including one in the hottest spot, to ensure the temperatures do not get too hot for the species. Under-cage heating, if too warm or if the animal does not have a proper thermal gradient, can lead to burn wounds on the undercarriage of an animal or lead to scale rot in snakes.

Sometimes when feeding live rodents to snakes, the rodents will bite or chew on the snake before being killed and can inflict rather serious wounds. Also, when swallowing live rodents, snakes can sustain bites or scratches in or around their mouth. Thus, it is advised to feed fresh-killed or frozen-thawed rodents to captive snakes whenever possible. If a snake will not take dead prey, then the snake must be closely supervised at all times when a live rodent or prey item is present in the enclosure until the prey item is eaten so as to avoid potential injury to the snake.

When minor superficial abrasions, scratches, burns, or cuts do occur, the best initial treatment is to clean the wound with warm running water. If a crust has formed or if dirt/cage substrate material is present in the wound, the area can be soaked for several minutes in warm water and then rubbed gently with a cotton ball or Q-tip swab to remove the debris. You can use a dilute hydrogen peroxide solution for the initial cleaning of wounds, but do not use it repeatedly as the peroxide can damage new healthy tissue as the skin heals. A better option for cleaning new wounds is dilute iodine solution (e.g., Betadine) which can be purchased at **House of Reptiles**.

Once the wound is cleaned, if it is not bleeding actively it can

be blotted dry with a cotton ball and topical antibiotic or antiseptic cream can be applied. Neosporin or triple antibiotic creams generally work well; avoid products that contain hydrocortisone, a steroid that can inhibit healing. Creams that contain lidocaine, marcaine, or other topical anesthetics can help with pain control. If the wound is on the bottom surface of an animal, keep in mind that the cage substrate can then potentially stick to the wound or the cream you have applied. Until the wound is starting to heal and is scabbed over (which can take 5-10 days), it is advisable to house the animal on paper towels, clean regular towels, cage carpet or newspaper. Clean the wound daily and apply antibiotic cream every 8-12 hours until a fresh, dry, healthy scab has formed.

Most minor wounds and superficial burns will start to heal within several days, but may take weeks before they are fully healed. Reptiles heal more slowly than mammals, so be patient. However, if the wounds are not healing, continue to seep liquid, become red or swollen, start to drain pus or have a foul odor, or the condition seems to be spreading/worsening despite your treatment, the animal may require systemic antibiotics or wound cleansing. At this point you should seek help from a veterinarian experienced with reptiles.

House of Reptiles Store News

We've done a number of things at the store during this quarter. We took out the section of discounted items and replaced it with some herp-related toys. Now there are options for kids who aren't allowed to keep herps to have some herp-related fun. We also

did some store rearranging to make room for some Asian water dragons, which we now have. We're getting rid of our last Waterland tub and it is discounted 25% until it's sold. We set up our booth at the Tigard Film Festival which will run every

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning through the month of August.

Customers who make a \$100 or greater purchase during the months of July, August, September and October will be entered into a drawing for a free pair of movie passes to the

Tigard Cinema. The winner will be called at the end of the last day of each month.

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

Customer & Pet Profile – Marcus Glidden

Marcus has been a customer of the store for about a year and a half and even started volunteering a couple months ago. He's been a big help around the store.

His interest in reptiles began just a couple years ago after he found himself attracted to his friend's corn snake. It wasn't long before he found himself with a room full of critters. Although they're not the only herps he's had, he currently shares his house with a boa constrictor ("Naomi"), a panther chameleon ("Big B"), two

armadillo lizards ("Thor" and "Loki") and four poison dart frogs (*Dendrobates auratus* – they don't have names because he can't tell them apart). Marcus likes the uniqueness of reptiles... how different they are from the typical pets that most people have. His interest in reptiles has even spurred an interest in other exotic pets, like a pot bellied pig and a kinkajou.

His future interests in reptiles include owning an Argentine black and white tegu and a large tortoise of

some kind.

Marcus is currently enrolled in the nursing program at PCC and has thought about trying to integrate his interest in reptiles with his nursing career. But at this point, he thinks it's probably best to keep them separate to ensure that his passion for reptiles remains just that... a passion and not a job.



Marcus and his boa, "Naomi".

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!

ADDRESS:

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PHONE:

(503) 722-1992

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10am to 7pm
Saturday:
10am to 6pm
Sunday:
Noon to 5pm

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.house-of-reptiles.com

Product Spotlight: Nature's Miracle Ultra Disinfectant 3 in 1 Formula

Nature's Miracle is a brand of cleaning products that is well known to dog and cat lovers. The various types of cleansers, disinfectants and stain and odor removers sold under the name Nature's Miracle have been used widely for many years. Not too long ago, they came out with a disinfectant that even kills

a common strain of Salmonella bacteria. Salmonella, of course, is the type of bacteria that is occasionally found in herps that can cause illness. Although we don't personally know anyone who has ever contracted the disease (Salmonellosis) from herps, it's still nice to know that there's a product that can be used in cage

cleaning to kill the bacteria.

Nature's Miracle should be used as directed by the manufacturer and all precautions should be closely followed to prevent inhalation of vapors or accidental ingestion.

Marshall's Herp Challenge for the Quarter

Last quarter we asked if you could identify the native snake that, as a baby or juvenile, looks similar to a gopher snake. Did you figure it out? The answer is... the Racer (*Coluber constrictor*).

To continue the pattern, this month's Herp Challenge has to do with the Oregon Ensatina (*Ensatina escholtzii*). Oregon has 19 species of

salamander, many of which may cohabitate with the Ensatina.

The Ensatina belongs to the largest family of salamanders in Oregon. This group of salamanders includes not only the Ensatina but other salamanders which are widespread in our area such as the Dunn's Salamander and the Western Redback

Salamander. This family is the most widespread family of salamanders on the west coast of North America. Can you name the family of salamanders to which the Ensatina belongs? For extra points, can you also name the distinguishing physical trait that the salamanders in this family commonly share?

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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