

The Herp Gazette

HOUSE OF REPTILES

11507 S.W. Pacific Highway
Tigard, Oregon

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Our Memorial Day Trip

Each Memorial Day we close the store and employees and adult volunteers go on a herp hunt somewhere in Oregon or Washington. This year we went to the Columbia Gorge. Friends Chris and Laura went with us to help us find our way around – Chris is an independent biologist and knows as much about native animals as anyone around. He's also a lot of fun.

The day started out overcast and even a little rainy in Portland, but by the time we got to our destination in the gorge it was beautiful. It ended up being just warm enough for the critters to be

Staff Updates:

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

Marshall continues to practice his bareback chain sawing, drinking slurpees, hanging out at random bonfires, and burning his skin with the sun.

Paul left us, just prior to the newsletter coming out, to pursue a position with ODFW working with the fisheries department. We wish him well.

Kim has spent much of the last quarter either being sick or caring for sick daughters. She's looking forward to

out and about, but not so warm as to make us uncomfortable. In no time at all, we found a gopher snake and within feet of it, a northern pacific rattlesnake. We packed lunches and stopped along the way to rest and eat, but we spent most of the day beating the bushes. There were a few gopher snakes, a lot of rattlesnakes, one ringneck snake, and dozens of alligator lizards, fence lizards and western skinks. We also found lots of scorpions and a wasp mimic that got lots of attention. Many pictures were taken and we all had a great time.

more healthy days in the future for them all.

Marcus keeps himself occupied by working on his computer, playing computer games, hiking and camping during good weather. He will be moving into the position vacated by Paul.

Michelle stays busy caring for her menagerie of animals. She also went to the Fairy Fest in Eugene, the Summer Fest in Troutdale and is on the planning committee for the annual OMSI Reptile and Amphibian Show.

Our newest employee is



Northern Pacific Rattlesnake



L - R: Bryan, Paul, Marcus, Marshall, Michelle, Eleanor, Tim, Sara, Laura & Chris.

TJ Shults. TJ has two years experience at PetSmart, where he focused on reptiles. He'll work for us part-time, as he is finishing a BS degree at PSU.

Tim and Shawn went to Oklahoma for Tim's Mom's 90th birthday celebration and then went to the Snake River to visit Shawn's Dad.

Current volunteers include Hadley Rentz, Alena Zinck, Aislinn Kelly, Sara Viernum, Eleanor Rixey, Ezibel Przybylski, Rei Barnes, Lily Steckel, Zoe Premeset, Charlotte King and Ricky Dunitz.

Quarterly Care Sheet: Ball Python (*Python regius*)



Albino ball python

“The ball python gets its common name from its tendency to coil into a tight ball as a defensive behavior.”



Normal ball python

SPECIES: BALL PYTHON (*Python regius*). Other names include: Royal Python.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: The Ball Python is native to west and central Africa. Almost all imported Ball Pythons come from Togo and Ghana, although currently many are captive bred and born in the United States. They are primarily terrestrial snakes that inhabit open forests or savanna grasslands with few trees and scattered rock outcroppings. Adults range from four to five feet in length, with rare specimens reaching six feet. They have considerable variation in both color and pattern and new “morphs” are being discovered and bred each year.

CAPTIVE CARE: Ball Pythons are powerful escape artists and should be kept in enclosures that are appropriate to house snakes securely. The minimum size enclosure for a juvenile is a 10-gallon aquarium; an adult should have an enclosure that is at least the size of a 30-gallon aquarium. If aquariums are used, they should have tight-fitting screen lids for adequate ventilation. A number of different substrates can be used, but we recommend either newspaper or the more aesthetically pleasing aspen bedding. Ball Pythons need a temperature gradient in their enclosures so that they can thermoregulate. 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 creating a basking area of 90F to 95F over 1/4 to 1/3 of the enclosure for the Ball Python. Heat can be provided below the tank, by under tank heaters or heat tape, or above the tank by black heat bulbs, red heat bulbs or ceramic heat emitters. 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 end of the enclosure can be room temperature (typically 70F to 75F). Fresh, clean water should be available at all times. Ball Pythons are typically shy snakes, so at least one hide box of an appropriate size will help them feel more safe and secure; two is even better. Other cage decorations can include branches for them to crawl on or under. In captivity Ball Pythons should 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. Hatchling and sub-adult Ball Pythons should be offered food every five to seven days; adults every seven to 10 days. Refusal to feed is the problem most commonly associated with Ball Python maintenance. To minimize or eliminate this potential problem, make sure that the snake you purchase has demonstrated that it is a good eater. Captive-born snakes make better pets in that regard than do imported ones that are typically either wild-caught or farm-raised. Also, minimize your handling of the snake until it has had ample time to adjust to its new surroundings in your home and to feed regularly and consistently. Although it is not desirable, it is helpful to know that reports of Ball Pythons fasting for up to a year before they begin feeding are not uncommon.

ADDITIONAL NOTES: The Ball Python gets its common name from its tendency to coil into a tight ball as a defensive behavior. Its scientific name means “royal python”, which is what it is called in Africa and Europe. Ball Pythons are a highly exploited species in their native countries where they are raised for food and their skin is used as a source of leather. The longest-lived snake on record is a Ball Python that lived for more than 47 years at the Philadelphia Zoo.

Native Herp Spotlight: Northwestern Ringneck Snake (*Diadophis punctatus occidentalis*)

Many Oregonians, even those who were born and raised here, are surprised to find out that we have such a beautiful native snake. Actually, Ringneck Snakes are quite abundant in Oregon if you look in the right places.

In Oregon, Ringneck Snakes are found in parts of the Columbia Gorge and in much of the Willamette Valley, from sea level to around 2500 feet. They prefer moist conditions and are typically located under debris... rocks, logs, wood, etc. They can be found in wooded areas as well as in open grasslands as long as there are structures under which they can hide. They seem to be most active from around March to November at temperatures that range from 70^o to 85^o Fahrenheit.

Ringneck Snakes are so-named because of the brilliant red-orange ring around their necks. The dorsal surface is a slate gray coloration and the head is usually slightly darker than the body. The underside of this snake is also brightly colored in the same red-orange. When threatened, the snake will curl its tail up and turn it so that the bright color underneath is exposed to its attacker. Having a brightly colored portion of the body that is used to ward off predators is called "aposimatic coloration". Since bright colors in nature commonly signal poison or venom, some animals make use of that condition in an attempt to protect themselves from predators, even though they are not poisonous or venomous themselves.

Their preferred diet consists of salamanders and lizards, but they will also eat small frogs, slugs, earthworms and insects if necessary. Their saliva is mildly toxic and is intended to paralyze their prey. It is not harmful to humans.

Females usually attain sexual maturity by their third spring and will lay a clutch of eggs in early July that averages around three or four eggs. Eggs are only about 25mm (not quite one inch) long and are typically laid in rotting logs. In the fall, they return to the same den site for the winter oftentimes sharing the den site with several other snakes.

Ringneck Snakes can live for around 15 years.



This is the underside of an adult Ringneck Snake that was found in the Willamette Valley near Corvallis.



Top side of an adult Ringneck Snake.

“Pet” Peeves: Taking Native Reptiles Home from the Wild

Every summer, we get lots of calls and many people who come in to the store who have taken a native reptile out of the wild and brought it home. It's usually from a camping trip or a hiking trip, but we've even known of self-proclaimed "herpers" who feel compelled to take them home. The herpers, in particular, should know better. Unless there's a scientifically supported reason for doing so and it's supported by the proper permits (if necessary), it's almost always a bad idea to remove animals from their native habitats.

First, there are a number of native species that are protected. That means it's

against the law to have them in your possession. That designation is usually reserved for species whose native populations are believed to be struggling for one reason or another. There are twelve species of salamanders, eight species of frogs and toads, both native species of turtles, four species of lizards and four species of snakes that are protected in Oregon.

Another reason that it's a bad idea to remove native animals from the wild is that many people are not prepared to care for them properly. Reptiles are usually not animals that can simply be brought home, put in any available container and fed bugs out

of the garden. Some of these animals need UV-B light; others need specialized diets; some have parasites that make the transition to captivity especially difficult for them.

One example of an animal that is particularly problematic is the short-horned lizard. Not only are they protected, they also need a diet of ants in order to survive longer than a few weeks. We've had a number of people who've made the mistake of bringing one of them home, only to watch in horror as it slowly died. One family even wrote a story about their mistake that we posted on our bulletin board at their request.

Most of the animals that we hear about that were brought home from the wild die fairly soon. Many of the rest eventually manage to adapt, but not always well or smoothly.

The modern adage, "Take only photographs and leave only footprints" is a good one to remember when it comes to finding herps in the wild. Other options besides bringing these animals home include sketching them and "life-listing" – making a list of every herp that one encounters throughout that person's lifetime. Families can have a great time making a running list of animals encountered in their trips to the wild!

Ask the Vet

We asked Dr. Dan O'Loughlin, who works at the Emergency Veterinary Clinic of Tualatin, about first aid tips for herps. In our April edition, we gave you Part 1 of what he told us. Here, then, is Part 2.

"Lizards are commonly seen for medical conditions. They have many of the same injuries as snakes (discussed in the last newsletter) and can be treated in a similar fashion. Here, I will list some common areas where they differ.

Picky Eater – Although this is not a disease, it will often lead to illness. Aggressive crickets may turn them off to crickets. Try a different insect for a while. Lizards fed fruits and vegetables often develop a preference for only one item. Chop the food small so each bite has a variety or use their favorite food such as banana or strawberry to smear across leafy greens. Be patient and persistent. In addition to the above mentioned snake remedies for lack of appetite, you can also use a red bowl to feed them from. Red seems to stimulate many lizards and turtles.

Lack of appetite – Along with the before mentioned causes in snakes, it is a possibility that the lizard is gravid (often December – April). Remember, like chickens, some reptiles can become gravid without a male present. If the lizard is gravid but eggs are not laid, you may need to see your veterinarian. Growing lizards also get metabolic bone disease (MBD, nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism). A

rubbery jaw or "U-shaped" elbow or knees may be your hint. If husbandry changes don't stimulate appetite, the animal may need to be seen by your veterinarian.

Broken backs and legs – need to be seen by your veterinarian. Do not attempt to bandage before taking to the vet; simply place the patient into a dark container to transport. Traumatic fractures have a better chance to recover than MBD fractures.

Loss of tail – It is very common to see a damaged tail in lizards. Some lizards have tails that are meant to fall off easily to escape a predator and they cannot be sutured back on. Clean the stump and take them to your veterinarian.

Black toe – Often due to poor shed or rug fibers caught around the toe. That toe will dry up and fall off. Some veterinarians like to remove these toes.

Swallowing a foreign object – Many of these need to be surgically removed.

Constipation – is no different than with snakes, except that lizards are notorious for eating their substrate which can lead to impactions. If warm water baths do not resolve these, you may need your vet to give an enema. Also change your substrate to a solid flooring at least until the issue is resolved.

Turtles have their own traumas they go through. Many turtle problems need to involve the veterinarian. They can be picky eaters like the lizards and stress can be an cause of their decreased appetite.

Swollen ears – Ear infections are common and need to be

dealt with by your veterinarian.

Overgrown beaks and nails – If you are comfortable with trimming these you can use a Dremel to accomplish the task. (Editor's note: Or you can bring them to **House of Reptiles** for a beak or nail trimming.)

Broken shell – Dog and car injuries lead to fractured shells. Many of these turtles do well. First aid involves getting them to a veterinarian to clean and fix the shell.

Mauled leg – Dogs often damage a turtle's leg. Clean the leg then transport to your veterinarian.

After reading this article you may have noticed that your first aid kit does not need many items. Minor issues can be taken care of at home yet many problems require antibiotics or other medicine. The most common cause of any illness in a reptile is HUSBANDRY! This may make up 90% of the cases. So pay attention to the cage, temperature, lighting, food, and

cleaning. When it costs you \$100 or more to be seen and treated at your veterinarian, the specialty light bulb does not seem all that bad. When you bring in your pet to the vet they will start by asking about your cage set up. Remember to give honest answers for a better diagnosis. Unlike dog and cat owners, reptile owners are commonly asked to tube feed, give enemas, give injections, and change bandages. So be prepared to get involved and enjoy your scaly friends."



Dr. Dan O'Loughlin

House of Reptiles Store News

Our new Burmese python seems to be adjusting to her new home. She shed shortly after she came to us, and has now eaten several times. She's still recovering from a respiratory infection and is still a little testy - but that would make sense given what she's probably been through. Our "Name the Python" contest in April

resulted in her new name, "Lilith". Thanks to Chris Gilmore for the winning entry and to all who participated. Let's all keep our fingers crossed that she continues to recover.

We've given some serious thought to opening a Venomous Reptile Museum next door to the store. We've got enough critters and cages to start it, but

need some startup capital to renovate the space and to get us down the road a couple months with expenses. If anyone knows of a herp fancier who might want to be a Sugar Daddy (or Momma) for this project, have them get in touch with Tim!

Speaking of venomous reptiles - if you're looking

for something to do over the Labor Day weekend, come see our venomous reptiles presentation at OMSI. We'll be giving three of them the afternoon of Labor Day - Monday, September 5th. It's always a good time!

Continued thanks to Chris Karr for his generous supply of edible goodies for our critters.

Customer & Pet Profile – Bryan Wood

Bryan discovered us on line and has been a friend of the store ever since. He's been a fan of herps since he was seven years old when he found a garter snake in a rhubarb patch. He was intrigued by the movement of the snake and was hooked! He grew up in Idaho and spent many hours catching garter snakes in his backyard. The first herp that he actually kept as a pet was an iguana named "Samson" that Bryan had when he was

15. For several years, he found himself keeping other iguanas as well as several species of native herps for short periods of time.

Bryan likes the fact that herps have their own personalities and that pet snakes, in particular, can be used to help people get over their fears of snakes. Bryan currently keeps two snakes: a male snow corn snake named "Zissou" and a female sand boa named

"Inez".

Bryan wants prospective reptile owners to be sure to research animals well before making a purchase. When field herping, it's best to watch and respect animals in their native environments rather than taking them home.

He hopes to someday own a blue eyed leucistic ball python.



Bryan, "Zissou" and "Inez".



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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10am to 7pm
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10am to 6pm
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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.house-of-reptiles.com

and join us on
Facebook.

Product Spotlight: ExoTerra Terrariums

We've carried Hagen's ExoTerra line of cages for years – we've used them in the store and sold lots of them. They are good, sturdy glass cages that have a number of nice features to them: they are all glass with screened tops; they have double doors that make it easier to get into the cage without having an escape; they have a unique ventilation system that allows air to enter under the

front doors; the cages are lockable (the lock is sold separately); they have a waterproof bottom and will hold a few inches of water safely; and they have cut-outs in the back to allow for wiring and/or tubing to pass through.

In the past couple years ExoTerra has added a couple sizes to their array of cages and they now offer twelve different size cages

(plus two cages designed specifically for turtles).

The smallest, 8" x 8" x 8", is suitable for small frogs, tarantulas or very small lizards like viper geckos. The largest, 36" x 18" x 24", is suitable for some of the larger lizards like water dragons and frilled dragons, and even some mid-sized boas and pythons.

Come check them out!

Marshall's Herp Challenge for the Quarter

Last quarter we asked if you could name the term used to describe the color change that some animals go through from their baby/juvenile phase to their adult coloration. Did you find it? The color changing behavior is referred to as an ontogenic or ontogenetic color change. It occurs most famously in green tree pythons.

Oregon is surprisingly rich

About Our Organization...

House of Reptiles is owned and operated by Tim Criswell, who has over 24 years of adult experience in keeping and breeding reptiles and

in reptile and amphibian diversity. The above mentioned ringneck snake just barely scratches the surface of the many kinds of cold blooded wild life that our state has to offer. From turtles and rattlesnakes to horned lizards and a variety of salamanders, there are plenty of animals to keep your local field herper more than busy!

Part of the reason for this is the wide array of habitats

amphibians. Assisting Tim are his wife, Shawn, Assistant Manager Marshall Brooks, employees Kim Hamblin, Marcus Glidden, Michelle

that Oregon boasts. The various climates offered by the Willamette Valley, Pacific Coast and Cascade Range allow for many different kinds of amphibians and reptiles. Even Eastern Oregon's dry climate enables a few species that normally live in the southwestern U.S. to range into southeast Oregon. Given the above discussion, how many snake species do you think occur in our state?

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

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