

# The Herp Gazette

## HOUSE OF REPTILES

11507 S.W. Pacific Highway  
Tigard, Oregon

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## Our Herping Trip to Mexico

One of the things we've most wanted to do is reward our employees who've been with us the longest with a memorable herping trip. This October, we did. As many of you know (because the store was closed for a week) we were gone from October 3<sup>rd</sup> through October 9<sup>th</sup> to Mexico. We landed in Puerto Vallarta and drove north three hours to San Blas. There we took a jungle tour and saw lots of wild crocodiles and did some road herping at night.

Next we drove south an hour to Playa Los Tortugas where we stayed for three days

### Staff Updates:

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

Marshall continues to be busy learning the ropes of being an Assistant Manager. He and his Mom went on a sight-seeing and herping trip to eastern Oregon. He's also looking for a roommate and stays busy herping, shooting, and hanging out with his friends.

Paul finished his bowling class this summer and stays busy taking care of his house, his girlfriend, his Great Dane and his reptiles. He's also been herping and diving a few times this

while we attended the Platanitos Sea Turtle Conservation Camp (our donation recipient for 2010). Our amazing time there included getting to do all kinds of incredible things with Olive Ridley sea turtles.

Tim will be submitting an article to Reptiles Magazine detailing the trip. If the article is accepted for publication, you'll be able to read a much more detailed account of the trip there. We'll also post some photos and videos on our Facebook page as soon as we can.

summer.

Kim continues her work with horses and trying to keep tabs on her two girls. She was also kind enough to let us have our summer House of Reptiles party at her house.

Liz has returned to school at George Fox College and doesn't have much time left for the store these days. As of this writing, she comes in one day a week to check on the bugs we're growing. We miss her.

Our newest employee is Marcus Glidden. Marcus is a student at PCC and is



L to R: Marshall, Paul, Rafael, and Tim releasing baby Olive Ridley sea turtles.



Tim is removing eggs from a nest after the female laid them.

preparing himself to enter a nursing program in the next year or so. He will be helping out part-time while he goes to school.

Tim recovered from a bout of pneumonia recently. He and wife, Shawn, were able to take a couple day trips around the state this summer and fall, including driving the "fruit loop" out of The Dalles to fetch some fresh fruit.

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

## Quarterly Care Sheet: Blue-Tongued Skink (*Tiliqua sp.*)

**SPECIES:** BLUE-TONGUED SKINK (*Tiliqua sp.*)



*“Blue-Tongued Skinks tend to be territorial animals and it is usually best to house them separately.”*

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION:** In the wild Blue-Tongued Skinks are found in Australia, Tasmania and New Guinea. Most subspecies of Blue-Tongue Skink reach a maximum length of about 24 inches, with females being heavier-bodied. The different subspecies (Northern, Irian Jaya, Halmahera, Indonesian, etc.) are colored in a variety of different browns, golds, blacks and even oranges. The Blue-Tongued Skink gets its name from the berry-blue tongue that is vividly offset against the deep pink interior of the mouth. Blue Tongues are very docile and curious lizards that tame easily with adequate care and handling.

**CAPTIVE CARE:** Blue-Tongued Skinks are fairly large lizards that need ample space. Babies can be kept in a 15 to 20 gallon aquarium, however adults need nothing less than a 40 or 55 gallon-size enclosure. In order to avoid a calcium/vitamin D3 deficiency and metabolic bone disease, these diurnal lizards require lighting that emits UV-B rays for 12 to 14 hours per day. There are both fluorescent and incandescent bulbs that will accomplish this. (NOTE: UV-B bulbs should be replaced every six to 12 months.) Additionally, a warm spot of 95 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit should be provided at one end of the enclosure by an under-tank heater and/or an overhead heat source. The overhead heat source can be an incandescent mercury vapor bulb (which also emits UV-B rays), a blue bulb, a red bulb, a full-spectrum daylight heat lamp, or one of the ceramic heat lamps. At least one heat source (not a bulb that emits white light) should be left on 24 hours per day. Blue-Tongued Skinks, like other reptiles, regulate their body temperature by moving from warmer areas to cooler ones as needed (a process called thermoregulation). The non-heated end of the enclosure can be as low as 70 degrees. A dish for drinking water will meet their hydration needs and it will need to be cleaned and re-filled regularly as the lizards will tend to defecate in it. The substrate for Blue Tongues can be recycled newspaper, aspen shavings, cypress mulch, a commercially available calcium carbonate sand, or millet. These are ground-dwelling lizards and so do not need tall branches for climbing, but they do enjoy some variety of rocks and logs placed low to the ground on which they can bask and climb. When placing decorations in the enclosure, make sure they are secure and, if moved, cannot harm your pet. They also enjoy a hiding place in which they can retreat if they feel the need. Sheds that do not come off entirely can be assisted by giving the lizard a bath in lukewarm water. This will ensure that toes do not get constricted and die from a stuck shed. The dietary requirements for Blue-Tongued Skinks can be met by feeding them a variety of foods. Since they are omnivores, their diets should be approximately 40% animal matter and 60% plant matter. Animal matter can include appropriately sized crickets, mealworms, earthworms, pinkie mice, low-fat canned dog food, cooked eggs, and cooked lean ground turkey or chicken. Plant matter can include frozen/thawed mixed vegetables, squash, sweet potatoes, and greens like kale, mustard greens, collard greens, and dandelion leaves and flowers. They also seem to enjoy a variety of fruits including berries, cherries, melons, bananas and grapes. All foods should be dusted with a high-quality vitamin/mineral supplement that contains vitamin D3 as directed by the manufacturer (we use and recommend Miner-All). Babies and juveniles should be fed daily. Subadults and adults can be fed every third day.

**ADDITIONAL NOTES:** Blue-Tongued Skinks tend to be territorial animals and it is usually best to house them separately. In cooler climates, keepers often report that Blue Tongues slow down in the winter months of their own accord. If this happens, cut back on feeding depending upon how active the skink is. Under good captive conditions, these skinks regularly live for 20 to 30 years.

## Native Herp Spotlight: Short-horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma douglasi*)

Also known as the Pygmy Short-Horned Lizard, these diminutive little creatures are native to the Pacific Northwest, from northeastern California and northwestern Nevada in the south through southern Idaho and much of eastern Oregon, to central Washington in the north. Adults top out at around two and a half inches SVL (snout to vent length) and around three and a half inches in total length. One can easily fit into the palm of an adult's hand. Colored in various shades of brown, tan and gray, they have darker colored dorsal blotches that can sometimes even be black. Short-Horned Lizards, or Horny Toads as they are sometimes called, are covered in very small spikes on the back, sides and at the edges of the very short tail. Their "horns" are not

nearly as large as their local relative, the Desert Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*) and the Short-Horned Lizard is also smaller by around two inches in overall length.

Because of its tolerance for different climates, the Short-Horned Lizard has a wide natural range. They are found as high as 6000 feet in pine forests and also in open sage brush plains at much lower elevations. They prefer habitats that have sandy, loose soils and some brush nearby to help conceal them. Although they will eat larva and some other insects, they prefer ants and are usually found near anthills dining on their favorite prey. They can be difficult to see as they bury themselves in soil up to their eyes.

These little lizards are live-

bearers and mating takes place shortly after emerging from hibernation each spring. From three to fifteen young are born between mid-July to mid-September. Newborn young are less than an inch long.

Every summer, someone comes into our store having returned from a camping trip to eastern Oregon with a Short-Horned Lizard that they caught. Although these little lizards will sometimes eat crickets for awhile, without a steady supply of ants the lizards will die within a month or so. These are animals that are best left in the wild, even though they are universally considered to be a "cute" lizard.



This is an adult Short-Horned Lizard.

## "Pet" Peeves: Ophidiophobia

"Ophidiophobia" is a particular kind of phobia... the abnormal fear of snakes. Let's make the point right away that there's a difference between a healthy caution/respect for something and an abnormal fear or phobia of it. Abnormal fears are anxiety provoking and panic inducing, and don't support our health and well-being. In fact, sometimes abnormal fears put us in harm's way.

"Glossophobia", the abnormal fear of public speaking (the most common phobia) keeps people from being in some situations they might find useful for their work or even for fun with a group of friends. The abnormal fear of strangers,

"xenophobia", keeps people from making new friends who could bring new ideas and experiences to their lives.

The fear of snakes is a learned fear. No one is born with a fear of snakes. The fear is usually instilled by getting frightened by someone who thinks its funny to scare someone with a snake, or by seeing a parent react hysterically to the presence of a snake. At a young age, children are quite impressionable and can misinterpret those situations as cause for developing an abnormal fear.

We understand the typical fear of snakes that many

people have. That fear is useful in that it can help them be cautious when they are outdoors in areas where snakes might be common. It also helps to ensure that they will stay away from snakes they don't know or aren't sure of.

The vast majority of our customers, as one would expect, are fans of reptiles even if snakes aren't their favorite herp. But some parents seem all too willing to pass along their snake phobia to their kids. We've had grown men and women come into the store and create a scene in front of their kids about how scary snakes are and how frightened they are of them. Sometimes they go on to

tell a story about a situation that frightened them "to death". We can see the wide-eyed child listening to the story and trying to figure out how to react.

If you have a snake phobia, understand it for what it is... an ABNORMAL fear.

Whether you ever decide to do anything about it or not (these days there are many effective, relatively painless treatments for phobias), at least commit to not passing it along to the children you may have influence over.

## Ask the Vet

This question was asked of Dr. Bethany Groves who works at the Frontier Veterinary Hospital in Hillsboro: What can you tell us about parasites and their relationship to reptiles?

A parasite is an animal which requires another animal (or plant) to provide shelter, food, and a livelihood. When I mention the word “parasite” to many pet-owners I usually hear, “I’ve never seen any worms in Spike’s poop.”

Most parasites, however, are microscopic, some even smaller! Some parasites live on inside of your pet, like the intestines, and are called “endoparasites”. Some live on the outside of your pet, such as mites or ticks, and are called “ectoparasites”. Regardless of where a parasite lives, not all parasites are bad. While some cause disease and illness, others are symbiotic, living on their host without causing any problems or disease.

So where does your scale-covered friend pick up a parasite to begin with? It is not uncommon to find that a new pet is already carrying parasites, despite appearing perfectly healthy on all outer appearances. Introducing a new reptile to your current collection can also introduce parasites, as can feeding fresh prey (e.g., mice, fish, crickets, earthworms). Parasites belonging to this prey may be harmless or may cause illness in your pet. Introduction of new plants, logs, dirt, and other cage accessories can also be a source. Many endoparasites are picked up by a reptile (or human!) by ingesting poop containing parasite eggs. Others, such

as hookworms however, can directly penetrate skin and crawl inside their host’s muscles, bloodstream, or organs where they set up house.

Perhaps one of the biggest misconceptions about parasites is that if you can’t see worms crawling around in the poop of your reptile, then they don’t have any.

WRONG! It’s not a bad idea to have a fecal screening to check for parasites shortly after purchasing a reptile. A fecal screen involves having your veterinarian look at a fresh fecal sample under the microscope for tiny parasite eggs. As parasites and their eggs are not necessarily passed on a constant basis, your veterinarian may recommend checking several samples over a period of time. A physical exam can also be performed at this time to look for ectoparasites and other indications of health problems. (Editor’s note: Customer friendly vets will be happy to check a fecal sample without having to see the animal at the same time. If they find something in the sample that needs to be treated, then they will want to examine the animal and weigh it to help them decide what medications to give and how much.)

There are MANY types of parasites that affect reptiles. Some only infect certain species; others may infect many species but only cause disease in certain ones. Examples of common parasites include *Coccidia* in bearded dragons, *Cryptosporidium* in snakes and lizards, tapeworms and ascarids in a variety of reptiles, and pentastomids in the lungs of snakes. Treatment generally relies on good hygiene and proper set-

up of your reptile’s enclosure, proper feeding/thawing protocols and medication specific to the parasite. Heavy numbers of most any parasite can put a lot of strain on your pet’s nutrition, immune system, and general health, not to mention their comfort. Some of these parasites can even infect you – ick!

Clearly there are many reasons to treat parasites. Believe it or not, however, we don’t always treat every parasite. While wild reptiles almost always carry a small burden of parasites, our captive pets may not handle these as well, especially if not set up appropriately. Some parasites are considered

“normal” for certain reptiles or at least are not deemed a cause of illness to your pet or yourself. Some anti-parasitic medications (like ivermectin or Fenbendazole) can carry just as many if not more risks to your pet’s health than the parasite itself. Treating parasites in a reptile is not always a simple story. Thus, having your reptile assessed and screened for parasites by a reptile veterinarian and discussing the need for treatment can be a useful part of providing your pet with the best care possible.



Dr. Bethany Groves

## House of Reptiles Store News

Other than our trip to Mexico, which occupied a good deal of our time and attention in September and October, here are some other things we've been up to...

Snake breeding season is over and this year we successfully produced several clutches of snake and lizard eggs.

In August, we rescued a western diamondback rattlesnake that is reportedly over 23 years old. That's impressive!

We made three venomous reptile presentations on Labor Day at the annual OMSI Reptile and Amphibian Show. We also loaned them a couple animals to use in their

show. The show was a big hit and we got lots of positive feedback regarding our presentations.

We've been growing our own mealworms and we're getting ready to grow our own mice as well. There's a learning curve to it, so it may be awhile before we can keep ourselves

stocked up.

Continued thanks to Natasha and Gabe Buel, and Chris Karr for their generous donations of vegetables, fruits, dandelion greens and edible flowers. Natasha and Gabe are leaving Portland for a great job opportunity in Wisconsin. We'll miss them and we wish them good luck.

## Customer & Pet Profile – Aubrey Loveland

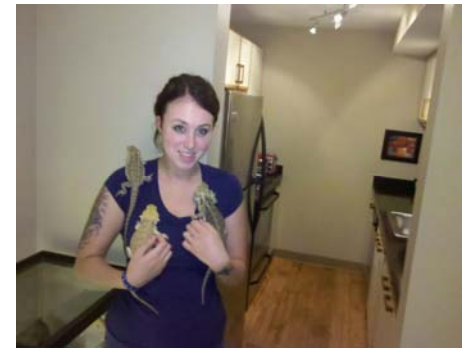
Aubrey's love of reptiles started at age 8 with her uncle's beardie. Having caught critters when camping all her life, she knew that someday she'd have to own some for herself. Her first reptiles were green anoles that she got when she was still a kid. Since then, she has owned many frogs and lizards. Her current menagerie consists of four bearded dragons: Baby, Rex, Kink, and an unnamed baby. Aubrey's reptile wish list

includes caiman lizards and black-throated monitors.

She says that she is attracted to beardies because they like attention from people and they have different personalities. Aubrey attributes some of her interest in these kinds of animals to her uncle's love of these kinds of animals. She also likes the fact that not everyone has herps and she is proud of the fact that she has

worked hard to know as much as she can about them.

Aubrey wants prospective reptile owners to be prepared: know how big the animal is truly going to be and what the correct environment for it is. And she encourages folks to weigh the advice they get. Some of it is good and some not. We agree!



Aubrey and three of her beardies, Baby, Rex and Kink.

## 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](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:**

11507 S.W. Pacific Highway  
Tigard, OR 97223

### **PHONE:**

(503) 722-1992

### **STORE HOURS:**

Monday thru Friday:  
10am to 7pm  
Saturday:  
10am to 6pm  
Sunday:  
Noon to 5pm

### **E-MAIL:**

[info@house-of-reptiles.com](mailto:info@house-of-reptiles.com)

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.house-of-reptiles.com](http://www.house-of-reptiles.com)

## Product Spotlight: Zilla Critter Cage

The company Zilla (also known as R-Zilla, formerly known as ESU) makes a terrarium that they call the "Critter Cage". These are glass terrariums that come with a sliding screen top that locks into place and are specifically made for use with herps. Although there are a couple of other brands that make similar type cages, these are the top of the line as far as we are concerned. The glass

is thicker than that used by their competitors and the component parts are better made. The sliding, locking top helps to ensure that pets don't escape and, with the addition of a mechanical lock, will also make sure that unwanted hands are kept out of the cage. We've used these cages for several years and very much like how sturdy they are compared to the other options. They come in the

following sizes: 5.5 gallon (16L x 8W x 10H), 10 gallon (20L x 10W x 12H), 15 gallon (24L x 12W x 12H), 20L gallon (30L x 12W x 12H), 20H gallon (24L x 12W x 16H), 29 gallon (30L x 12W x 18H), 30 gallon (36L x 18W x 12H), and 40 gallon (36L x 18W x 16H). Word has it that they will soon come out with a 90 gallon version.

## Marshall's Herp Challenge for the Quarter

Last quarter we asked if you could name the family of salamanders to which the *Ensatina* belongs and, for extra points, you could also name the distinguishing physical trait that the salamanders in this family commonly share. Find the answers? The family name is *Plethodontidae*. This is a family of lungless salamanders which means that these amphibians, lacking lungs,

have adapted to absorb oxygen through their skin. Cool, huh?

Convergent evolution is a process through which unrelated animals and plants independently acquire similar characteristics while evolving in separate ecosystems. This phenomenon is quite common among reptiles and amphibians. For example, the horned lizard

has a distant relative that looks very similar but inhabits the deserts in Australia. This lizard shares the same diet of ants as does the cute and spiny horned lizards. But one of the most unique traits that these lizards share is a grotesque defensive mechanism in which they shoot blood out of their eyes to ward off predators. Can you name this distant relative of the horned lizard?

### **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, Liz Otis and Marcus Glidden, and a few volunteers who are mentioned above in the "Meet The Staff" section.

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