

The Herp Gazette

HOUSE OF REPTILES

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We're Off To A Great Start!

A little bit about the history of the store.... back in 2004 we created a reptile and amphibian department within the larger Healthy Pet pet store in West Linn, Oregon. We named the department Healthy Pet Exotics and, although we only had about 700 square feet to work with, quickly built it into the best place in this area to purchase herps and herp supplies. In the spring of

2006, the store changed hands and in that process we were given the opportunity to buy the department. We did and on September 29th, 2006 we opened the new store, "House of Reptiles", in our new Tigard location. The new store has 1800 square feet and the larger space allows us to have even more great supplies, more animals, more animals on display, and a much larger cage for

Daisy (our 13' albino Burmese python). The store is centrally located with easy access from both I-5 and Hwy 217, but it can be a little tricky to find because we sit back off the road in the Pacific Terrace Shopping Center. We are open 10am to 7pm Monday through Friday, and 10am to 6pm Saturday and Sunday. (In the fall, we may be decreasing our Sunday and Monday hours a bit.)

Meet Our Helpers:

It has always been of interest to us to provide mentoring opportunities to as many interested youth as we could. We've always had several youth helpers who provide volunteer assistance to us and, in turn, get the benefit of our years of experience with these kinds of animals. We've hosted a number of them over the years, some for a day or two and others for months or years. Our current youth helpers include:

Marshall Brooks, who will be a junior at Lake Oswego High School next

year, has been helping out on the weekends for close to three years. As of this summer Marshall has moved to a paid position working three day a week until school starts next fall.

Hadley Rentz has been coming with her Mom every Monday for an hour. Hadley will be a fourth grader at Scholls Heights and she has a bearded dragon named "Mushu".

Robbie Brink will be a ninth grader at Wilson High School next year and he comes a couple days each week to help out. You can read more about Robbie in the "Customer &

Pet Profile" on page 5 of this newsletter.

Ben Chase will be a ninth grader at Wilson High School next year also and is helping out during the summer. He owns a crocodile skink and Chilean rose tarantula.

Seth Ellison is a student at PCC who helps out one day a week during the summer when school's out. Seth owns a ball python named "Mary Jane".

Former helpers include Kenton, Alison Burros, Kelsey Lissman and Ricky Dunitz.

Quarterly Care Sheet: Dumeril's Boa

SPECIES: DUMERIL'S BOA (*Acrantophis dumerili*). Other names include: Dumeril's Ground Boa.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: The Dumeril's Boa is a stout-bodied, well-proportioned snake that reaches lengths of five to seven feet and sometimes, even more. Like many boas in captivity, if kept under optimal conditions they tend to live long lives of at least 20 to 30 years. They are native to the drier forests and fields on the island of Madagascar, and are currently listed as an endangered species there due primarily to habitat loss. They have a beautiful, well-defined, leaf-like pattern on their backs and their colors tend to be shades of brown, black, cream, white and pink. Occasionally they can also have some orange, peach or coral coloration as well. The young can be somewhat shy and nervous, as is not uncommon with some boa constrictors. With proper care and regular handling, Dumeril's Boas become docile, easily handled snakes that do well in captivity.

CAPTIVE CARE: Dumeril's Boas, as is true with most snakes, are powerful escape artists and should be kept in enclosures that can appropriately house snakes securely. The minimum size enclosure for an adult is three to six feet in length. The enclosure should have adequate ventilation. A number of different substrates can be used, but we recommend either newspaper or the more aesthetically pleasing aspen bedding. In the wild Dumeril's Boas are ambush predators and, even as babies, these snakes frequently show a preference for hiding and should be offered two to five inches of substrate (if using aspen bedding) and/or adequate hiding areas (if using newspaper). Boas need a temperature gradient in their enclosures so that they can 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 creating a basking area of 90 to 95F over 1/4 to 1/3 of the enclosure. Heat can be provided below the tank by under tank heaters or heat tape, or above the tank by black or red spot lights (not white light) or ceramic heat emitters. To prevent burns, all bulbs used inside the enclosure should be in a protective wire basket. 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 bottom of the cage immediately above or below the heat source. The other end of the enclosure can be room temperature (typically 70 to 75F). Fresh, clean water should be available at all times. Other cage decorations can include branches for them to crawl on or under. In captivity, Dumeril's Boas can be fed appropriately sized rodents 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 juvenile boas should be offered food every five to seven days; subadults and adults every seven to 14 days. Captive-born snakes make better pets than do imported ones so it is a good idea to know the background of the snake you are purchasing. 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.

ADDITIONAL NOTES: It has been observed that this species can be cannibalistic, especially the younger juveniles. It is safest not to keep them together or with any other snakes in the same enclosure.

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Native Herp Spotlight: Rough-skinned Newt (*Taricha granulosa*)

This native amphibian ranges from the Oregon coast east to the eastern foothills of the Cascades. It grows to an adult size of nearly eight inches. Rough-skinned newts are frequently found in and under rotting logs in forested, partially wooded and developed areas that are near a water source. During the spring when breeding they are quite abundant in many ponds, lakes and other slow-moving bodies of water in our area – especially where there are lots of aquatic plants in the water.

Their rough, grainy skin is brown on the back and sides and orange on the

belly surface. This bright orange coloration is thought to be “aposimatic” coloration that is intended to warn potential predators of the newt’s toxicity. The poison (tetrodotoxin) produced in the skin of this newt is similar to the poison produced by many species of puffer fish and is highly poisonous. Biologists tell us that there is enough poison in the skin of one adult rough-skinned newt to kill 25,000 adult mice. It is believed that Indians in the Pacific Northwest used the poison against their enemies and there is at least one reported death of a college student from ingesting this

newt. Although there is little danger in simply touching one, it is a good practice to thoroughly wash the hands of anyone who has come in contact with one.... especially a child.

The term “Taricha” means “a preserved mummy” (your guess is as good as ours!) and the term “granulosa” means “full of small grains”.

Although rough-skinned newts are not a protected species in Oregon, it is best to leave them where you find them.



“Pet” Peeves: Turtles and Turtle Care

One of the most common and difficult problems we encounter are the people who come into the store looking for a pet turtle, thinking that it will be a cheap and easy pet. In our experience, they are neither!

Many turtles, aquatic and terrestrial, need UV-B light and those bulbs are more expensive than other bulbs. To be adequately cared for turtles, especially terrestrial ones, need a fairly large enclosure. We believe that they should be kept in something that is AT LEAST two feet by four

feet in size. Some turtles need daily access to water, which will need to be cleaned daily (because they will drink the water AND defecate in it as well).

Turtles are not the best children’s pets because of the possibility of being accidentally injured or dropped by an unsupervised child. Should a turtle be dropped and its shell broken, it can be fatal.

In our many years of keeping reptiles and amphibians we only know one person (a child) who

may have contracted Salmonellosis from a reptile. However, aquatic turtles are the reptiles most commonly associated with the spread of that illness.

Turtles can make great pets for people who are informed and prepared to take proper care of them. They have great personalities and can actually come to know their owner. But potential turtle owners should do lots of research to make sure it’s the right pet for them.

“Should a turtle be dropped and its shell broken, it can be fatal.”

“The treefrogs’ toe pads are coated with a thin layer of mucus that sticks to surfaces in the same way that wet tissue paper sticks to glass.”

International Herp News

Researchers in Scotland have discovered the secret to the ability of treefrogs to adhere to smooth surfaces like glass. The treefrogs’ toe pads are coated with a thin layer of mucus that sticks to surfaces in the same way that wet tissue paper sticks to glass. In a process called “peeling”, the frogs simply alter the

angle of their feet and toes and then the toes detach from whatever they are sticking to.

At this year’s meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (commonly known as CITES), all species of flat-tailed geckos (genus

Uroplatus) were upgraded from Appendix III (animals of concern) to Appendix II (nearing threatened status).

National Herp News

Louisiana state legislators in both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate are sponsoring bills that would allow the domestic sale of baby turtles in the United States, a practice that has been outlawed since 1975.

Did you know that rattlesnake roundups still occur in seven U.S. states? These barbaric “celebrations”, where

hundreds of rattlesnakes are removed from the wild to be tortured and killed, continues to occur each year in Alabama (Opp), Georgia (Claxton and Whigham), Kansas (Sharon Springs), New Mexico (Alamogordo), Oklahoma (Apache, Granite, Mangum, Okeene, Waurika and Waynoka), Pennsylvania (Cross Fork, Curwensville, Landisburgh, Lowber,

Morris, Noxen, Sinnemahoning and Towanda) and Texas (Big Spring, Brownwood, Cleburne, Freer, Jacksboro, Mathis, Sweetwater, Taylor and Weatherford). If you are a fan of reptiles and you have a need to rage against something, direct your anger at the people and organizations that sponsor rattlesnake roundups in those states.

Pacific Northwest Herp News

Did you know that Oregon has 42 native reptiles: 24 snakes (only one of which is venomous), 16 lizards and two turtles? There are also 31 native amphibians: seven aquatic salamanders, 11 terrestrial salamanders, and 13 frogs and toads.

The non-native reptiles that have caused the most concern among local biologists and Oregon Department of Fish and

Wildlife officials are the red-eared slider and the common snapping turtle. The most troublesome non-native amphibian has been the American bullfrog.

Both Oregon and Washington have introduced laws this legislative session that will further limit herps that can be kept. Washington’s law just passed and is quite prohibitive. It

outlaws all elapids (cobras, etc.), all vipers (rattlesnakes, etc.), and all crocodylians, among others. Oregon’s proposed law will add crocodylians to the list of “exotic or wild animals” that cannot be kept without a special permit available only to zoos or other similar institutions.

“The most troublesome non-native amphibian has been the American bullfrog.”

Customer & Pet Profile – Robbie Brink

Robbie Brink discovered **House of Reptiles** a few months ago and has been a fixture here ever since. Robbie will be a ninth grader at Wilson High School next year and plans on going to college to become a herpetologist. Robbie has been volunteering at the store one day a week for the past couple months. Since school ended for the year, he is now coming twice a week. Robbie has owned reptiles since he was 13 years old and he currently cares for a leopard gecko named “Zazu”, two fire skinks (“Bowser” and “Magnum”), and a crested gecko named “Venom”. Robbie

has been saving his money and getting the necessary supplies ready so that he can acquire his next reptile – an Argentine black and white tegu!

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, as well as a little bio about the two of 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.



Robbie Brink, holding an Argentine black and white tegu at the store.

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.

“Each county and city can also have its own regulations and statutes.”

House of Reptiles

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STORE HOURS:
Monday through Friday
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10am to 6pm

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.house-of-reptiles.com

New Product Spotlight: Zilla Desert Series 50

When asked about which UV-B bulb is the best one for a particular animal, we've always recommended the mercury vapor bulbs for animals with high UV-B requirements (bearded dragons, uromastyx, etc.). These self-ballasted incandescent bulbs put out five to six times more UV-B than do the fluorescent UV-B bulbs. Mercury vapor bulbs also emit heat and are, in essence, two bulbs in one.

Recently, Zilla (formerly ESU) has come out with a "low profile single bulb fixture" that includes a UV-B fluorescent bulb. Its called the Desert Series 50 and it emits more UV-B than any other fluorescent tube we've ever tested. (We have a solar meter and we test all of our UV-B bulbs - that way we don't have to rely on what the manufacturer says!) In fact, this bulb rivals the mercury vapor bulbs we carry so we now have a more potent

fluorescent option to offer customers when high heat is not also a requirement. Its also important to remember, when selecting the right UV-B option, that glass and plexiglass block out UV-B rays and screening (like is on the top of many cages) blocks out about 40% of UV-B rays.

It pays to have a full understanding of what your UV-B needs are so that you can make the best choice about the bulb you need.

Photo Shoot Day

On Saturday, July 21st, we will have a professional photographer in the store to take pictures of our customers and their pet reptiles and amphibians. David Gaylor of Oregon Event Photography will be here from noon to 4:00pm that

day with his spotlights, backgrounds and fancy cameras. He'll take several photos of each customer and their herp, and then take them back to his shop for processing. The photos will be ready seven to 10 days later and will run from \$4.99 to \$?,

depending upon how many are ordered and what sizes they are. By special arrangement, we might even make some of our in-store animals available for photos with customers (excluding Daisy). Hope to see you there!

About Our Organization...

House of Reptiles is owned and operated by Tim Criswell, who has over 20 years of experience in keeping and

breeding reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. Assisting Tim are employees Ashley Sorenson and Marshall

Brooks, and a host of volunteers, most of who are mentioned above in the "Meet Our Helpers" section.

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