

The Herp Gazette

HOUSE OF REPTILES

11507 S.W. Pacific Highway
Tigard, Oregon
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Celebrating Our One-Year Anniversary!

We opened our doors on September 29th, 2006 in the current location and, although we've faced some significant challenges during our first year - we're still here and going strong! We have a lot of customers from the neighborhoods that we are close to, but we also have customers who come to us from as far away as Hillsboro, Troutdale and Vancouver, Washington. We've even been able to attract herp-

lovers from as far south as Medford, Oregon and as far north as Seattle, Washington.

We've recently added some new staff that bring additional information and experience to the store. We've also added a couple new display animals to our venomous animal rotation. And then there's....."Raja"!

We have some fun things planned for this next year, some of which you can

read about in the article towards the end of the newsletter titled "**Meet With The Experts**" Day.

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, 10am to 6pm on Saturday, and Sunday from noon to 5pm.

Meet The Staff:

We've recently added two new employees to our ranks. Terry Dickson has been involved with herps since he was a kid and, with his wife Trena, currently keeps around 15 species of snakes and lizards - including his enviable collection of Brazilian rainbow boas. Since he enjoys teaching people about herps, Terry takes every opportunity he can to make educational presentations for the store.

Isaac Miller has been actively involved with herps for the past seven or eight years, becoming a herp owner himself about

three years ago. Isaac and his fiancé, Jewel, currently keep carpet pythons, Brazilian rainbow boas, Amazon tree boas, Dumeril's boas, Pacific Island tree boa, a common boa, an emerald tree boa, scorpions, tarantulas and a bearded dragon.

Our other two employees are Marshall Brooks and Ashley Sorenson. Marshall is a junior at Lake Oswego High School and has kept a personal collection of herps and bugs for five years. He started at the store three years ago as a volunteer and eventually earned the

opportunity to become a paid part-time staff member this past summer. Ashley Sorenson is a freshman at PCC and, although she didn't have much herp experience before starting at the store this past June, she's proven to be a quick learner and is now the proud owner of a ball python named "Rex".

Current and former volunteers include Robbie Brink, Kayley Broyles, Alison Burros, Ben Chase, Ricky Dunitz, Seth Ellison, Tawnya Fulton, Kelsey Lissman, Nick Lund, Will Lund, Hadley Rentz and Kenton.

Quarterly Care Sheet: Crested Gecko

SPECIES: CRESTED GECKO (*Rhacodactylus ciliatus*). Other names include: New Caledonian Crested Gecko and Eyelash Gecko.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Thought to have been extinct until the early 1990's when they were rediscovered, the Crested Gecko is native to the islands of New Caledonia east of Australia. The Crested Gecko is a nocturnal creature that reaches lengths of five to six inches SVL (snout to vent length). It is quite docile and tolerates a moderate amount of handling. It appears in a wide range of colors, from brown to bright yellows, oranges and reds. It can also have a variety of stripes, streaks, bands and spots on its sides and back that, when combined with its array of colors, can make for a truly beautiful animal. The Crested Gecko's skin is quite soft to the touch. It has an adhesive pad on the tip of its tail that assists it in climbing branches and, unlike Leopard Geckos, if the tail is lost it does not regenerate. Its name is derived from the folds of skin on the top of its large head that resemble a "crest". It also has scales above each eye that look like eyelashes, further contributing to its unique appearance.

"Adult males should not be kept together, as they will eventually fight for territory and injure or kill each other."



CAPTIVE CARE: The Crested Gecko is one of the easiest gecko species to maintain in captivity. They live in temperatures from 60°F to 85°F, although they do best from 70°F to 80°F, and in most homes do not require supplemental heating. It is acceptable, but not necessary, to provide a low-wattage heat lamp for a daytime photoperiod, making sure not to overheat the enclosure. The enclosure should be large enough for this species, should have good ventilation, and should be vertically oriented. All-screen enclosures are the preferred type of enclosure for these geckos. These are strong animals that are arboreal and they should be provided ample opportunities to climb and hide. Cork bark, hollow pieces of grape wood and other similar structures make good hiding places that the geckos seem to like. The flooring for the cage can consist of a premium potting soil (that does not contain perlite or vermiculite), commercially made soil substitutes, coconut fiber, or a mixture of those substances. If aesthetics is not an issue, paper towels or newspaper work well too. Since Crested Geckos are able to seek out water, a small, shallow dish of water should be provided for them and kept clean. Misting is not required, although they seem to enjoy it and it can be provided for them as often as once a day if desired. Crested Geckos eat a wide variety of food items including crickets, waxworms, an occasional mealworm, fruit baby foods (e.g., peach, apricot, mango, and banana) and meat baby foods (e.g., chicken and turkey). There is also at least one commercially made Crested Gecko food that can be added to the diet. Fresh food in a clean dish should be offered every other evening, providing just enough for the geckos to consume between feedings. Food items should be dusted with a good calcium/vitamin D3 supplement as directed by the manufacturer (we use and recommend Miner-All).

ADDITIONAL NOTES: Adult males should not be kept together, as they will eventually fight for territory and injure or kill each other. Their lifespan in captivity is still not known for sure, but it is believed that they can live for up to 20 years.

Native Herp Spotlight: Western Pond Turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*)

This native reptile is found from northern California through the Rogue, Umpqua and Willamette River drainage systems to a few isolated populations on both sides of the Columbia River. It also occurs east of the Cascades in parts of the Klamath Basin in south-central Oregon. This chelonian prefers slow-moving, rocky-bottomed bodies of water that provide ample basking sites (floating logs, bare banks, exposed rocky surfaces, etc.) for them to use in thermoregulation.

These are shy animals that are difficult to get close to due to their excellent eyesight and cautious natures. Adults are usually four to nine inches in length. They are

sometimes incorrectly referred to as “mud” turtles because of their rather drab appearance – the carapace is usually dark brown, olive brown or nearly black. The plastron is initially colored in pale cream to yellowish white but turns dark with age.

Favorite foods of this aquatic turtle include crayfish, insects, amphibian eggs and larvae, frogs, fish and aquatic plants.

Although they are still fairly common in some parts of northwestern California and southwestern Oregon, only small populations exist elsewhere in the state.

Females lay from one to 13 eggs per clutch, with some females having two

clutches per season and other females laying only every other year. Predation on eggs occurs primarily from raccoons and other mammals, and predation on hatchling and juvenile turtles occurs from mammals, as well as non-native bullfrogs and bass.

The Western Pond Turtle is a protected species in Oregon and removing them from the wild is against the law. The Oregon Zoo has been working with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in a joint project to repopulate certain areas in the state.

This turtle has been known to live for as long as 50 years.



“Pet” Peeves: Using Live Rodents Versus Frozen/Thawed Ones as Food

On a daily basis we advocate for feeding frozen/thawed rodents to snakes instead of feeding live ones. The things we most often hear people say regarding their preference for feeding live prey are: “My snake won’t eat anything that’s frozen/thawed”; “Eating live prey is more natural – like they do in the wild”; and “I like to watch it kill its prey”.

The four main reasons that we are such strong advocates for feeding frozen/thawed prey are:

1. Feeding frozen/thawed prey is safer for the snake. There are many, many stories of snakes that have been scarred or

even killed as a result of being fed live prey. We think it’s a shame to do that to a pet. There are also snakes that have become problem or non-feeders as a result of having been bitten by a live rodent.

2. The process of freezing kills 99% of the internal and external parasites that all live rodents carry.

3. Frozen prey can be purchased in bulk, kept in the freezer and used when needed. Frozen prey can even be refrozen once and offered at another time.

4. Frozen rodents are

considerably less expensive than live ones.

Although switching most snakes to frozen/thawed prey is simply a matter of offering the warmed-up prey with large tweezers or hemostats, it is true that some snakes can be a bit stubborn about making the switch. But with persistence and sometimes a bit of strategy, virtually any snake will eat frozen/thawed prey. In our opinion, it’s worth whatever effort it takes to safeguard the health of your pet.

“Feeding frozen/thawed prey is safer for the snake.”

International Herp News

The American Bullfrog is currently being evaluated as a possible cure for a medicine-resistant form of staph infection. The infection, *Staphylococcus aureus*, is responsible for many hospital infections in the UK and about 2000 deaths there every year. The American Bullfrog produces a particular antimicrobial peptide that it uses to fight disease, and it is this peptide that may prove useful in

fighting the staph infections.

Researchers believe they may have discovered a mate for “Lonesome George”, a subspecies of Galapagos Giant Tortoise. This male tortoise was believed to be the last surviving member of his subspecies, *Geochelone elephantopus abingdoni*, and has long held the Guinness Book of World Records title of “rarest

living creature”.

Researchers believe that Cane Toads in Australia are evolving at an alarming rate. Toads at the leading edge of their 70-year invasion across that country have evolved longer legs than those further back.

“Researchers believe they may have discovered a mate for ‘Lonesome George’, a subspecies of Galapagos Giant Tortoise.’

National/Pacific Northwest Herp News

Florida residents are finding themselves at the mercy of non-native Cuban tree frogs. These large six-inch frogs have not only caused a number of power outages in the state (being attracted to power poles), but they are also showing up in the toilets of many homes! These troublesome anurans have also been discovered in Georgia, South Carolina, California, Hawaii and Canada.

Florida has also recently banned the red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) for selling as pets. Officials hope that this move will help prevent these aquatic turtles from mating with native yellow-bellied sliders (*Trachemys s. scripta*).

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

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

The January issue of **The Herp Gazette** will include a thorough explanation by Jim Gores regarding the state’s position on prohibited species and what consumers can do to help.

House of Reptiles Store News

Our most exciting news is the addition of our two new staff members. We present them in the “Meet The Staff” article on page one. But a close second in generating excitement around the store is the addition of “Raja”. Raja is a 12’ long venomoid, male king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*) who was acquired from a friend of the store and he occupies the six-foot long custom cage directly behind the front counter. Getting him

was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and we look forward to having a new critter to “play” with (don’t try this at home – we’re what you call “professionals”).

Current residents of the gator tub include: one American alligator, a yellow-bellied slider, a Chinese pond turtle, a Mississippi map turtle, five red-eared sliders, and a common snapping turtle.

The astute reader will

notice that sometimes we mention keeping or displaying an animal at the store that is a prohibited species in Oregon. The reason we can do that is because we have a permit that was issued to us by the state that allows us to keep those animals. ODFW, US FWS, OHP and the general public can then use us as a resource when they come across animals that are prohibited.

“Raja is a 12’ long venomoid, male king cobra who was purchased from a friend of the store and will occupy the six-foot long custom cage directly behind the front counter.’

Customer & Pet Profile – Sherry Hardaway

Sherry Hardaway has been a customer of the store for at least two years, in both of the store's locations and incarnations. In fact, over the years Sherry has accumulated so many animals she could probably charge admission to her Newberg, Oregon home. In addition to being a wife and the mother of three kids, Sherry currently is caretaker to a black milksnake, a Borneo short-tailed python, two corn snakes, a leopard tortoise, two three-toed box turtles, a Gulf Coast box turtle, a pastel ball python, a golden Greek tortoise, and more frogs than she can count. Although everyone in the family (and most of the neighborhood as well)

enjoys their family zoo, Sherry is the avid herper and provides the primary care for all those animals....and some mammals too (two great Danes, a pit bull, and two cats). Sherry's interest in herps began about 10 years ago in a happenstance encounter with an escaped ball python in a pet store. As you can tell, it's been scaly around Sherry's house ever since!

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.



Sherry Hardaway holding one of her favorite reptiles, a female black milksnake.

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 Crocrodilia (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/dhcs/pets/guide.shtml>.

Portland's rules mirror Multnomah County's rules and Beaverton's rules prohibit the keeping of crocrodilians.

There were two laws being proposed during the 2007 legislative session regarding reptiles. One would have restricted the keeping of any crocrodilian and the other would have regulated pet stores and how they manage their animals. Neither proposed law made it to a vote.

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

House of Reptiles

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10am to 6pm

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Noon to 5pm

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The Herp Gazette is published on a quarterly basis, each January 1st, April 1st, July 1st, and October 1st.

We're on the Web!

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

New Product Spotlight: Zoo Med Deep Dome Lamp Fixture & Zilla Product Withdrawal

The new Zoo Med Deep Dome Lamp Fixture has a deep enough dome (approximately seven inches deep) that even when using a mercury vapor bulb or one of the compact fluorescent bulbs, the bulb will not stick out below the base of the fixture. This new fixture has a ceramic base, a convenient on/off switch, a black external finish, a polished inside that is highly reflective and will handle bulbs up to

160 watts.

Wouldn't you know it! As soon as we brag on a product they go and recall it – actually, it's for good reason. Zilla (formerly ESU) is withdrawing all of their Zilla "Desert Series" bulbs (see our July newsletter for a description) due to problems discovered in a few animals that were subjected to them. The cluster of symptoms, called photo-kerato-

conjunctivitis, include swollen eyes, lethargy, and inappetance. If you are using one of these bulbs, pay close attention for the first couple of months of use and if you notice any of those symptoms, stop use of the bulb immediately. Zilla is actually withdrawing these bulbs from the market until the problem can be resolved and we are removing them from the shelves.

"Meet With The Experts" Day

On **Saturday, October 20th**, we will have a couple friends of the store join us for the afternoon to answer questions and chat with customers about all things herp related. Joining us from **noon to 4pm** that day will be Dan O'Loughlin, DVM, and Chris Rombough. Dr.

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 and

O'Loughlin, has been a veterinarian for 15 years and has provided medical care to herps in many different circumstances including providing turtle rescue services, and consulting with the Oregon Zoo and local veterinarians. Chris Rombough, B.S., is an

independent biologist who has 15 years experience in keeping herps and 12 years professional experience in the scientific study of native reptiles and amphibians. It will be a privilege to get to spend time with these two knowledgeable men. It should also be a lot of fun!

amphibians. Assisting Tim are his wife, Shawn, employees Marshall Brooks, Terry Dickson, Isaac Miller, and Ashley Sorenson, and a host of

volunteers, most of whom are mentioned above in the "Meet The Staff" section.

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