

Maine Herpetological Society Newsletter

Upcoming Events and Gatherings:

AUGUST 26TH

PORTLAND REPTILE EXPO
9AM-4PM
FIRESIDE INN AND SUITES
PORTLAND, MAINE

SEPTEMBER 23, 2012:

NEW ENGLAND REPTILE EXPO

10:00 AM-4:00 PM
RADISSON HOTEL
700 ELM STREET
MANCHESTER, NH

OCTOBER 20, 2012:

MHS REGULAR MEETING
50 ELM ST.
WATERVILLE
4PM

MHS Interview

MHS: Tell us about the Lacey Act and how it impacts the herpetocultural business.

Tom: The Lacey Act was conceived for an excellent reason. When Yellowstone National Park was established people would illegally hunt large game animals in the park & sell the meat. However if these perpetrators were caught outside the park, there was nothing that could legally be done. The Lacey act was passed so that an illegal activity could be prosecuted even if the perpetrator was outside the jurisdiction of the law that was broken. It was a misdemeanor. Over time, the Lacey Act became a tool to persecute people as much as to prosecute them. In 1984 the Lacey Act was changed so it was now considered a class 3 felony, punishable by a \$250,000 fine and/or 5 years in prison per count. Comparable to the RICO act used to combat organized crime.

The act began to be used in an arbitrary way to selectively enforce the law. So if an individual illegally imported a green iguana, they could be prosecuted based on the Lacey Act. It is my belief that the Lacey Act is unconstitutional because it cannot be understood by the common man. Once an animal is in this country or now, in a state, how is a prospective buyer or a member of law enforcement to know if the animal crossed the border or was locally bred?



Absent a clear method to measure this, how can a rule be promulgated to prevent an animal from crossing a state line. It makes no sense, I see no purpose for it.

MHS: What is the current situation with the burmese pythons in southern Florida?

Tom: Let me say that I live at ground zero of the so called burmese python invasion. Number one, they are not that common. The big ones only eat 5-6 times a year, how can they endanger anything? The chances of them eating an endangered species in those few feedings is extremely remote. They claim they will devastate the bird rookeries. It can't happen. The wading birds nest in the winter time, the snakes are not even feeding during the cool months. This whole thing is silly.

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Part II

Return to the Amazon

By Doug Kranich

Part II Venomous Encounters

The two baby bushmasters were a spectacular find and the group excitedly passed the bags that contained them around for closer examination. Captured the previous night, they were a much sought after and rare snake to find in the Amazon jungle. Bushmasters are the largest of the vipers and the largest venomous snake of the New World. The celebration turned to horror instantly when almost simultaneously, two people were bit as they carelessly opened up the bags for a clearer view. Panic ensued.

Fortunately, I woke up from this nightmare and never had to live through the reality. But it was a bad dream that occurred only two weeks before visiting Peru and certainly reflected the anxiety I was feeling about traveling to where venomous snakes were common. As fascinated as I

am with them, being present when venomous snakes are being handled and photographed is always unsettling. Luckily I was with people who were extremely qualified and cautious. Protocol for safe storage and handling was always followed.

I had the opportunity to find and photograph several venomous snake species during my trip to Peru and they generated some great tales. Here are a few of the best!

Dale, a fellow tour member and I were in separate kayaks on opposite sides of the Orosa river when an object floating down the river caught my attention. Closer inspection revealed that it was an inflated 3-4 ft. snake floating with no effort whatsoever. Then I spied that huge, unmistakable venomous Fer de Lance head extended several inches above the water. Nothing had been immediately clear because the snake had a very similar color to the muddy water.

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MHS Interview With Tom Crutchfield

MHS: Share with us one of your favorite stories from the "good old days"

Tom: Back in the early 80's I had a 22 pistol filled with blanks. At the time I owned group of very rare tree vipers. Charlie R. (name shortened to protect the poor guy) was a snake handler at the San Diego Zoo & he had never been to Florida. So they sent him out to pick up one of these vipers for their collection. He was a nervous guy, kind of high strung. So we're looking at this specimen - now there were only a couple of these in the country - and we're looking at this beautiful turquoise viper on a branch in his box. Charlie's acting very snooty and says something like "Yes Tom, I think this will do for our collection." So I say to him, I don't know Charlie, this snake looks a little bit sick to me. He refutes, "No. it'll be fine." I then pull the gun out of the draw as Charlie adjusts his glasses - he can't believe what he's seeing. I say, in fact this guy looks so bad I need to put him out of his misery. I aim at the snake & shoot. The snake was knocked off his branch by the wading and poor Charlie peed in his pants right there, thinking I killed a \$4000 viper he was supposed to bring back to his zoo.

MHS: Thanks Tom, it's been great visiting with you.



“The head of this snake is light to dark brown or even black. The underside is most often pale yellow. Specimens of this species may weigh up to 6 kilograms (13 lb) and are often 1.2 to 1.8 meters (3.9 to 5.9 ft) in length.”

(Continued from Page 2) By Doug Kranich

The ‘Jergon’ (local Spanish name) was floating about 30 ft from shore and once I ascertained its identity, I called Dale over to take a look. He approached shore thinking it was at river's edge and he actually was between the bank and the snake before he realized it was out in the river behind him. I didn't know Dale too well yet, and he surprised me when he kayaked right up next to the snake, with feet dangling over the sides of his boat. It didn't bolt, but it did change to a coiled configuration, kind of like an inner tube. The head was still angled up directly toward Dale.

He got kind of a wild look in his eye, a grin on his face, and started talking about how easily he could lift it into his kayak and take it back to camp. I was expecting the worst. A wave of panic crashed over me as I had a flashback to my nightmare and I pleaded with him not to try that. He hesitated whilst pondering the idea for another moment. I was quite relieved when the snake decided it had had enough, and simply led Dale to the bank, disappearing into the aquatic weeds by the shore.

We had been warned of the constant danger posed, especially by the Fer de Lance. One could be anywhere, day or night, and their camouflage was uncanny. The night before we left the Santa Cruz field station, we had one of those ‘anytime, anywhere’ experiences. We were walking back to our sleeping huts after the evening meal, during which dark had fallen.

I always carried my light and wore my boots, but this time I had gone to dinner without my light and wearing sandals. Walking across the grass to my hut, Dale was out in front with his light, moments later, nonchalantly stating, “there’s a Fer de Lance right here!” Sure enough, there was the 3’ snake slithering along with its head held high in the short grass right in front of our huts. Talk about a gulp and a reality check! It gave me a lot to think about all over again.

Because of the skilled handlers I traveled with to Peru, I am fortunate to have incredible pictures of several species of deadly coral snakes and pit vipers, but we never were lucky enough to find any bushmasters. Regardless, my nightmare will always be a vivid reminder of the ever-present threats associated with Peru’s Amazon.

MHS ADOPTION PROGRAM

Red Tailed Boas:

Currently we have 3 boas ready for adoption (under 4 feet long).

\$65 each Donation



Ball Python:

These great snakes are some of the most popular in the hobby. They are a great beginner snake and do not require a large enclosure. We have only 1 left in the program.

~~\$65~~ Donation
\$40



Russian Tortoise

This 12 year old tortoise is a happy & healthy guy looking for a new home. He's a good eater & ready to go.

\$95 Donation



Reptiles For Sale

BLUE TONGUE SKINK (Adult)

This healthy blue tongue skink will make a great addition to your collection. He's a good eater & very easy to handle. \$150.00
email: pgroy@mac.com

ALBINO CORN SNAKE PAIR (Adults)

Large (36" to 42") breeding pair of albino corn snakes. \$220 Call 207-242-1560

55 GALLON REPTILE TANK W/ SCREEN

Dimensions are 48" L 12" W 21" H \$125
Call: 873-6083

7 FOOT REDTAIL BOA

This mild mannered male is available for your next breeding project. \$150
call 207-859-8714

75 GALLON TANK & STAND,

Asking \$200. No screen.
Contact : linda@maineinfomaven.com

EMERALD SWIFTS

These 5-7" lizards are great starter pets and at \$20 each they are very affordable.

Contact: secrowe1@mac.com

GREEN TREE PYTHON

2 year old Female feeding on frozen thawed small mice. From Rico Walder at Signal Herpetoculture \$650

Contact: pgroy@mac.com

**For Further Information e-mail the
Maine Herpetological Society
mhsadoptions@gmail.com**

USARK : Legal Action Against FWS Constrictor Rule



Approximately three months have passed since U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) took the unprecedented action of adding four constricting snakes to the Injurious Wildlife list of the Lacey Act. Never before have animals widely held by the American public been listed. Originally FWS

suggested the addition of all of Boa, Python and Eunectes. The list was whittled down to nine constricting snakes after the highly controversial "Risk Assessment" was published by Gordon Rodda and Robert Reed of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The final rule was announced in January 2012. USARK was able to block five of the nine proposed snakes by taking dynamic action against the rule. Never before had a Injurious Wildlife listing been challenged or blocked. Nevertheless, the final rule was enacted March 23rd 2012 with four constricting snakes.

From the very beginning of this process USARK has been very careful to lay the groundwork and establish the public record that would afford us the ability to take legal action if necessary. Scientists from all over the world have criticized the sloppy and speculative work used by FWS to justify Lacey Act listing. In 2010 USARK filed a formal challenge of the USGS "Risk Assessment" under the Information Quality Act. In 2011 Georgetown Economic Services (GES) published "The Modern Reptile Industry", an independent and comprehensive economic survey that included the impact that a Lacey Act listing was likely to have on legitimate business interests. The GES report demonstrated how the listing could impact as much as \$104 million in trade annually. USARK built a clear and convincing case that FWS was potentially arbitrary and capricious in their zeal for a listing.

USARK and its counsel are carefully reviewing their legal options for addressing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's unwarranted listing of four constricting snakes, including Burmese pythons, on the Lacey Act's Injurious Wildlife list. We believe the listing decision was precipitous, unsupported by the best available science, and poor policy. USARK is also concerned about the five other species of snakes, including *Boa constrictor*, that FWS has deferred addressing.

We believe FWS has exceeded its Lacey Act authority in terms of the breadth of the restrictions placed on the four listed species. The organization will continue to develop its legal theories and develop a plan for addressing the industry's legitimate concerns with the proposed and final rules.

These legal maneuvers are not inexpensive, and will be even more costly if it is necessary to file a federal lawsuit. Our goal is to raise \$250,000 between now and the end of the year. This is only a start. If we file a lawsuit it could easily require twice that amount. FWS doesn't think that the Reptile Nation is capable of fielding a serious legal challenge to their arbitrary Lacey Act listing. They don't think we can raise the money. We have waited until our legal team gave us the word that they felt we have a strong and clear course of action to follow. **Now is the time for the Reptile Nation to stand up and take back what is ours!**

Please use PayPal to donation@usark.org. Please put "LAW" in the comment or note area; or you can mail a check to: USARK, PO Box 279, Grandy, NC 27939. Please put "LAW" in the memo line.

**Visit the Maine
Herpetological Society's
Portland Reptile Expo**
Fireside Inn & Suites
81 Riverside Street, Portland
SUNDAY August 26, 2012
9:00am – 4:00pm

Vendors

A Plus Serpents
BBC Reptiles
Big Dog Reptiles
Crazy About Chameleons
Da'Touey Reptiles & Rodents
Geckcessories
Glenn Echo
Hell Bent Reptiles
J & D Reptiles
Jabberwock Reptiles
KCS Exotics
KMurphy Reptiles
Loki Reptiles
Macs Poison
Maine Herpetological Society
Maine Reptile Center
Mainly Morphs
Michael Krick Reptiles
Mojo Herps
Morph Addiction
New England Herpetological Society
Samantha's Geckos
Stellar Serpents





Panamint Rattlesnake

The Catoctin Zoo

Drive past the Catoctin Wildlife Preserve & Zoo in Thurmont, MD and you'd think it was your everyday roadside zoo. You'd be wrong.

Founded by Richard Haas over 25 years ago, this operation has bred the yellow anaconda and the monocle cobra. They have american alligators on display & 34 species of venomous snakes from Africa & Australia as well as 12 species of turtles & tortoises.

They are opened Memorial Day through Labor Day. Check them out: www.cwpzoo.com

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