



BEHIND BAARS

A publication of
The Bay Area Amphibian and Reptile Society
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1451 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, CA 94301
Vol 5 (May 2008)
(408) 450-0759 (BAARS Voice-mail phone)

A Fisherman's Tales of Herping

Do fishing and herping mix? Yes, they do! While fishing at local Bay Area lakes, I'll typically see birds and mammals, but I've also been fortunate enough to spot various reptiles and amphibians. In this article I'll share some of my recent encounters with herps. I'll *try* my best to suppress my fisherman's impulses to exaggerate and embellish. (Besides, in this case, I had my camera!)

In mid-April I took advantage of an unusually warm Saturday to drive up to Joseph D. Grant County Park for some spring fishing. In the past, BAARS has visited this park located at the base of Mount Hamilton to explore the vernal ponds, which serve as homes for the larval stages of pacific tree frogs, California newts, western toads, and tiger salamanders. I've also seen bobcats, redtailed hawks, and feral pigs in this Park. For this fishing trip, I climbed down to the park's picturesque pond that holds a self-sustaining population of largemouth bass. I did catch and release two ~~small~~ ~~large~~ huge bass that day, but what I will remember are my herp catches that day.



That day I was fishing with a lure that doesn't look like a real animal. It resembles some bizarre crayfish- squid hybrid. When presented properly to simulate a living animal, bass will gobble it up. As I was walking around the pond, I saw a spotted, brown bullfrog (*Rana catesbiana*) floating on the edge of the water. I cast my alien-looking lure several feet past the bullfrog and reeled in slowly. The bullfrog immediately spun his body around to face the approaching "creature". It waited patiently then lunged as the bait entered within striking distance. Like largemouth

bass, bullfrogs are opportunistic predators that will attempt to eat any living creature that will fit in their mouths. The frog smiled for a few pictures and was released.

I caught my second bullfrog of the day when I was just reeling my plastic lure out of the water and it got snagged on some grass growing at the edge of the water. I was casually yanking on the line for a few seconds to free the lure when all of a sudden something shot out from the grass and splashed noisily into the water. I almost had a mini heart attack from this surprise! This bullfrog also tolerated a few pictures and was released.

Cont'd on pg 4)

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(408) 978-2369
<charles.salexander@verizonbusiness.com>

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(408) 842-1457-7979
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Membership Secretary
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Newsletter Editor
Jack DeRyke, (775) 267-3907
<jderyke@aol.com>

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BAARS CALENDAR- 1st half of of year 2008

- May 2 BAARs Board Meeting- @ TBD
- May 23 BAARs Board Meeting- @ TBD
Regular BAARs meeting at Cubberley Community Center, Palo Alto
Speaker: Ned McAllister- 'Year of the Frog'
- June 6 BAARs Board Meeting- @ TBD
- June 6-8 2nd Annual Pepperwood Nature Preserve Herping Trip
Please check w/Eric Koessel for details
- June 27 BAARs Board Meeting- @ TBD
Regular BAARs meeting at Cubberley Community Center, Palo Alto
Speaker: TBD

BAARS ADOPTIONS THIS PAST MONTH

- 1- Ackie Monitor
- 1- Argentine Boa constrictor
- 1- Corn snake
- 1- Ball Python
- 2- Box Turtles
- 2- Desert tortoises
- 2- Mississippi Map turtles
- 5- Leopard geckoes
- 11- Red Eared Slider turtles

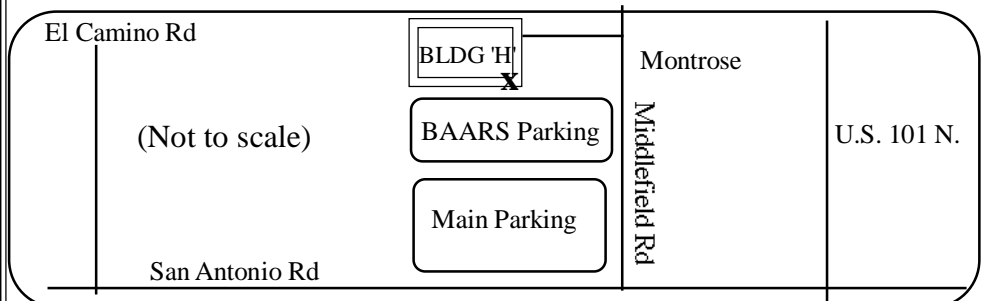
CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WHO WERE INVOLVED!

General Meeting Information

Meetings are held at Cubberley Community Center
4000 Middlefield Rd, Bldg H-1, Palo Alto CA
Meetings are on the 4th Friday of each month, except for Nov and Dec.
Meeting starts promptly at 8PM; doors open @ 7:30 PM
Annual Meeting & Holiday Party is held on the 2nd Friday of December

Meeting Guidelines

All people attending meetings must be quietly seated except for the social break in the middle. This is to ensure the speedy completion of the business portion of the meeting, as well as in consideration of our speaker(s). ALL animals brought to the meeting must be in suitable containers, including a source of heat if req'd
All animals must be kept in their containers during the business portion of the meeting. Aggressive animals, sick or in-shed animals or delicate animals, should not be brought to the meeting, both for their sake and that of the humans attending.



BAARS PRESIDENT'S REPORT, MAY 08

Hello BAARS members and Friends,

First of all, I must apologize for this tardy president's report. I've been having a lot happen in my personal life, and things have been distracting me. I am trying to close on a new house, on 2.3 acres of land. I think there might be a reptile sanctuary in my future! But I never realized how stressful and time-consuming this would be. More details on my new domicile and the reptile sanctuary to follow.

Next, I'd like to thank John Binns and Mike Kern for the wonderful presentation they gave at our last general meeting. They made a great team, with Mike providing a lot of the narration around his photographs, and John going into more detail about the Guatemalan Beaded Lizard and other projects that the IRCF has going on.

This month we'll be hearing from Ned McAllister, a biologist who will be talking about the Year of the Frog, and habitat designs for frogs and amphibians. Currently, we don't have guest speakers booked for June or July, so please feel free to give me a call directly if you have a good candidate for a speaker (Scott's Cell= 408-823-3675)

Upcoming shows look pretty sparse right now. Later in the year (Sept/Oct), we'll be doing the Audubon show in Cupertino, and the YSI wildlife festival at Alum Rock Park. Sulpher Creek Nature center has canceled their annual Wildlife Festival, due to poor attendance.

BAARS would still like to have an event at Sulpher Creek Nature Preserve, and Pete Marshall, our Sulpher Creek liason, is trying to book a date for that. Happy Hollow in San Jose- another venue for our educational shows is undergoing a major remodel and we thus don't have any shows scheduled with them.

Remember, BAARS' second annual Pepperwood trip is on June 6-8th. Pepperwood is a privately run nature preserve, and BAARS will have access to the bunkhouse and the main cabin. Please contact Eric Koessel if you'd like to go on this trip, or checkout the BAARS website for more information.

Sincerely,
Scott Alexander

Big Python Loose in STOCKTON?

Several local homeless people have reported seeing a large snake slithering around in Mormon Slough. Maybe.

They've been reporting what may possibly be a 15-or-more-foot long python near the Wilson Way bridge over that arm of water.

"This is not a joke," says Michael McPherson, who is currently homeless. "There's something down in there!"

Animal Control officials hadn't heard about it and a local snake- if it existed, likely wouldn't have survived our recent cold snap, but several of the City's homeless say its quite real and some of them refuse to stay under the bridge- in the snake's nest, as they refer to it.

"Apparently a lot of people have seen it," Pat Carter said. And Pat is one of them. Ms. Carter, also homeless said she thought she was walking past a large log one day.... until the 'log' moved.

"I was gone when I saw it move," she said. "I took off running. I was running so fast I was running on my kneecaps!" That was a month ago.

There's no concrete proof the snake ever existed, but rumors persist and people believe it enough so the homeless, including Pat Carter, are leaving the bridge for another nearby underpass because of what Ms. Carter says she saw.

Luther Hale, who is camping out under the Airport Way bridge, admits he won't go near the Wilson Way bridge, because of the rumors he's heard about the big snake.

Allan Perry of the city's Animal Control services, said the office hadn't received any phone calls about the snake, but he went out looking for it on Wednesday, after the Stockton Record called about it. They found nothing.

Cont'd next pg)

My third herp catch of this trip was when I had just gotten another bass to bite on my lure. The fish shook his head and spit the hook out of his mouth. The line bounced out of the water and the hook got caught on some land plants growing at the edge of the water. I was staring at the plant trying to figure out how to untangle my line when out of the corner of my eye, I observed a little yellow line moving through the grass.

Looking closer, I saw the line was part of the dorsal patterning of a garter snake (*Thamnophis elegans*). It froze as I approached and gently lifted it off the ground. The snake rewarded me by musking, but most of this shot out away from me. After a few photos, the garter snake was also released. I went home that day with an aromatic bouquet of fish slime, frog slime, and snake pee on my hands.



On another fishing outing in late April, I woke up bright and early to visit Los Vaqueros Reservoir and try my luck for rainbow trout. This huge park is located between Livermore and Brentwood. The park is home to wildlife including golden eagles and kit foxes.

In past trips I've seen osprey, coyotes, and wild turkey. For this also unusually warm Saturday excursion, I reeled in four ~~tiny~~ big gigantic trout and I did catch two herps.

While standing on a fishing pier, I noticed something floating on the water. It looked like a small rope or piece of garbage at a distance. As the waves moved it closer I got a better look at the "rope's" brown and cream colors and the triangular shaped head. It was a baby western rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*). There was no movement, so I assumed it was dead. I almost fished it out of the water with my hand, when I noticed its head was slightly poking out of the water.

I decided it might be a smarter idea to use my net. The snake *was* alive and started to slowly make its way out of the net.



I carefully scrambled off the floating pier while balancing the snake in the net until I reached solid ground. Once on terra firma, the snake moved slowly.



Displaying a little attitude, the snake shook its miniature rattle at me, then settled into a coiled defensive posture. I relocated the little rattler up the hill, away from the hiking trail. I assume the baby somehow found itself in the lake and got exhausted trying to swim in the chilly water.

After a long day of fishing, I walked back to my car lugging all my fishing gear. Within 20 feet of my car, I discovered a young gopher snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*) basking in the sunshine. I was thinking I should just drop off my gear at the car and return to see the snake, when it started to slither away into the grass. I threw my rods down, flung my backpack to the ground, and sprinted over to the snake. It hissed loudly and vibrated its tail like a rattle-snake. But it was just a little bluffing- no biting or musking involved. It settled down quickly, and after a few snapshots it was released.



Hope you enjoyed reading about recent fishing adventures made memorable by herp encounters. I think I did a pretty good job of stickin' to the facts.

Ken Wong

(Python Loose Cont'd)

“If there’s something out there that big, we’re interested” Perry said, especially for concerns of public safety.

Homeless people who have seen or heard of the big snake speculate that someone didn’t want the animal as a pet anymore and released it into the wild. That’s not unheard of, Perry said.

Rumors have also placed the snake near Hazelton Avenue and Stanislaus Street. Kevin Johnson, a Stockton computer engineer who jogs nearby, said he’s friendly with the homeless people in the area.

They’ve never said anything about a big snake to him, though he’s seen smaller snakes on his route before.

Bill Gillingham, owner of Great Valley Serpentarium speculates that, based on descriptions of a bark-like brown splotchy color, it might be a Burmese Python. They’re found in Southeast Asian rain forests and the cold would likely bring on respiratory infections that could eventually kill it.

If it’s still alive, he said, it’s probably snacking on small animals near the water since pythons are semi-aquatic. If Animal Control services finds the snake, they will bring it to Gillingham. “We can i.d. it, get it back to health and find a proper home for it,” said Gillingham.

Animal Control is still searching for the elusive animal, said Perry.

Each Spring, snakes in the Abruzzo region of Italy have been rather rudely awoken from their hibernation to take part in a parade.

For thousands of years, local snake-catchers have gone out from the mountain town of Cucullo to pluck snakes from their habitats to be marched through the streets and draped around the statue of Saint Dominic during the Serpari Festival that takes place on the first Thursday of each May.

The parade is celebrated to evoke the Saint's help to ward off snakebites and was originally carried out to show the local shepherds it was safe to go out into the pastures with their flocks.

"I was afraid of snakes but now I am not afraid because the Saint is nearby", Cucullo resident Mary Ardele said. "For me this is a religious festival and also brings to life my devotion for the Saint", she said while holding a couple of snakes in her hand.

Saint Dominic is revered for his work in the eleventh century in which he is said to have charmed all the poisonous snakes in the area and driven them away in the same manner as the more celebrated Saint Patrick, who incidently was also Italian- born.

The roots of the festival can be traced back even earlier to the worship of the Snake Goddess, Angitia, by a local tribe, the Marsi. At that time, snakes were associated with healing, prophecy and wisdom. The later Romans carried on the tradition, taking their venerated snakes all over Europe and the Near East.

The Abruzzo snake-catchers appeared to be acting fearlessly in handling their wriggling showstoppers, but that's partly because Italy has only one indigenous venomous snake, the small viper, and they are not invited to the Serpai Festiva, even though a strong case could be made for them causing the need for a Saint's protection.

BAARS NOTES

Classified ads

Classified ads are free for members (\$5/mo for non-members)

Display ad rates:

- \$7.00 Business card size
- \$11.50 1/6 page
- \$22.50 1/3 page
- \$35.00 1/2 page insert
- \$70.00 full pg insert

All display ads should be camera-ready. Electronic submissions should be saved as postscript format (.pdf) for best image quality.

Live Food Items

Feeder animals may be available at the regular meetings. It's recommended that you bring your own containers for transport home.

Frozen Rodents are sometimes available through BAARS as a Group Buy. Details will be available at the meetings.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

- Individual/Family \$25/yr
- Sustaining \$35/yr
- Institutional (schools, libraries, non-profit org, service org)
- NEW MEMBER
- Contributing \$50/yr
- Patron \$100/yr
- RENEWAL/CHANGE OF ADDRESS

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER/AREA CODE: (_____) _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP CODE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

HERPETOLOGICAL INTERESTS _____

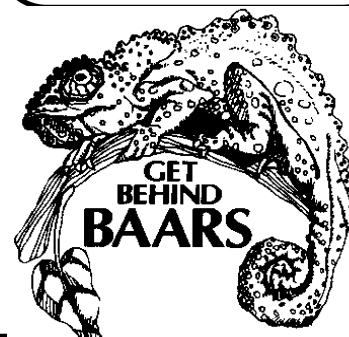
For more info, visit our website: <http://www.baars.org/index.html>

To join **BAARS**, mail this application, with your check to:

BAARS MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

c/o

Palo Alto Jr Museum
1451 Middlefield Rd
Palo Alto, CA
94301-3351



ADOPTIONS & FOR-SALE

[REF #7207] **2- Ball Pythons**, 1 Male, 1 Female, 3-4 ft long, at least 7-8 yrs old. Health: Good. Disposition: Good. Curr. Diet: 1 live med rat every other week Vet visits? not recently - in good health Reason for Vet Visit? Checkup & gender I.D. Comes w/ custom wood house. Reason for Adoption: can't have them in my classroom where I teach now. Level of Urgency: moderate. In San Jose near Oakridge Mall.

[REF #7211] **2- Red Eared Sliders**, lg females, 4-5 yrs old. Health Status: great health Disposition: good Current Diet: turtle pellets & bloodworms. Vet visits? Once. Reason for Vet Visit? One had pneumonia; was given shots for 10 days (originally bought from Petco) Comes w/: 4x4 pond. Reason for Adoption: Am remodeling and do not have room for them Level of Urgency: High In Redwood City, CA

[REF #7403] **Corn Snake**, Gender Unknown, 2 ft long, 6 yrs old. Healthy; good disposition. Has been held by students for entire life, but was aggressive last time out of cage to feed. Current Diet: mice Comes w/ cage & heater. Reason for Adoption: getting too big/aggressive for students. Not urgent. In: San Francisco.

REF #7504] **Bearded Dragon**, Male, Elderly Adult (Health Status: Appears fine for older dragon Disposition: Alert, but calm, very sweet. Current Diet: Salad, fresh weeds and flowers, occasional mealworms (Reason for Adoption: Taken into foster care while waiting for forever home. Add'l Information: Missing half of his tail. Level of Urgency: Moderate. Location: in San Jose.

[REF #6801] **Rosy Boa**, Female, About 3 ft long, about 10 yrs old Health Status: Healthy Disposition: Sweet when handled frequently but bites when not handled frequently or when hungry. Current Diet: Mice Vet Visits? Dr.Chris Sanders @ Wildwood. Reason for Vet Visit? For wellness visits; last visit was treatment for smoke inhalation after a house fire. No cage, but any food I have at the time of adoption goes with her. Reason for Adoption Not spending as much time with her as she needs. Level of Urgency: Very low- has a home until right person comes along. Location: Saratoga, CA

[REF #80501] **Ball Python**, Male, Approx 3ft long, 14 yrs old. Very sweet and pretty ball python. Great couch companion. About 14 years old. Excellent health and regular vet visits. Had bacterial infection- cured w/ antibiotics. Excellent feeder. Eats 1 sm. rat ev. 10 days. Comes w/cage, accessories, lights, rheostat & stand w/ storage areas. Also comes w/supply of frozen rats. Reason for Adoption: Moving to a much smaller place. Urgency: Moderate. In Campbell, CA

[REF #80503] **Ball Python**, Male, Approx 3ft long, 5 year old Health Status: healthy. Disposition: Beautiful, mellow snake. Current Diet: frozen adult mice (Mouse Factory) Vet visits? regular checkups with Dr. Chris Sanders. Comes w/cage, food, lamps. Reason for Adoption: Lack of time, cage requirements Level of Urgency: medium. In San Mateo.

[REF #80504] **Green Phase African House Snake** (*Lamprophis fuliginosus ssp*) Gender: female approx. 20" , approx 1.5 years (Health Status: good, docile. Current Diet: f/t fuzzy mice. Urgent. In San Jose.

[REF #80505] **Jeweled Lacerta Lizard** (*Timon lepidus*). Female approx 18" , approx 1.5 yrs. Health Status: fair. Disposition: skittish. Current Diet: insects/fruit. Vet visits? no; had Baytril injections upon arrival. Comes w/cage. Urgent. In San Jose.

[REF #80506] **3 Ocellated Skinks** (*Chalcides ocellatus*) 2 males, 1 female under 12". Age: approx 1.5 years. Health- good but nervous. Curr. Diet: insects/fruit. Accessories: for male/female- 20 gal long cage, for 1 male 10 gal. Urgent. In San Jose.

[REF #80507] **2 Oregon Red Spotted Garters** (*Thamnophis sirtalis concinnus*). 1 male 2', 1 female 2.5' (Health Status: female good, male looks skinny- never really put on weight after last brumation. Calm once out of cage. Diet: unscented f/t fuzzy or hoppers Accessories: 20 gal. long cage. Urgent. In San Jose.

[REF #80502] **Beautiful Red-Tail Boa**, w/SPECIAL CARE REQ. 3 yrs old, 12lbs, 5 ft. Striking patterns & sweet nature. Had chronic respiratory infection & tested positive for IBD. This needs to be confirmed w/another blood test. Has just finished a round of antibiotics. Had cancer, but Dr. Sanders operated and is in remission. At present, active, alert, sheds well, & is excellent feeder- one large or two med. rats every 10-14 days. Comes w/cage, lights, rheostat & frozen rats. Will require reg. vet visits in future and should NOT be housed with other snakes. Is doing extremely well now & with proper care will continue to do well in the future. Reason for Adoption: Moving; Moderate urgency. In Campbell.





ANOTHER SIGN OF SPRING.... at an undisclosed location on a warm sunny day, Prairie rattlers wake up and leave their dens, seen in left foreground.

Jim Jones photo

THE BAY AREA AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE SOCIETY
PALO ALTO JR MUSEUM, 1451 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD
PALO ALTO, CA 94301



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