



# BEHIND BAARS

A publication of  
**The Bay Area Amphibian and Reptile Society**  
sponsored by the Palo Alto Junior Museum  
1451 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, CA 94301  
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(408) 450-0759 (BAARS Voice-mail phone)

## *Amphibians Are Harvested Around The World For Dinner Plates*

Up to one billion frogs are taken from the wild for human consumption each year, according to a new study. Researchers arrived at this conclusion by analysing U.N. trade data, although they acknowledge there is a lot of uncertainty in the above figure.

France and the U.S. are the two biggest importers of food-grade amphibians, with significant consumption in several East Asian nations. This in spite of the fact that about one-third of all amphibians are listed as threatened species, with habitat loss being the biggest factor.

But hunting is acknowledged as another important driver for some species, along with climate change, pollution and disease - notably the fungal disease *chytridiomycosis* which has brought rapid extinctions to some amphibian populations worldwide. Absence of essential data to monitor and manage the wild harvest is a large concern, says Professor Corey Bradshaw

The new research, to be published in a forthcoming edition of the journal 'Conservation Biology', suggests that the global trade in wild frogs has been underestimated in the past. "Frogs legs are on the menu at school cafeterias in Europe, market stalls and dinner tables across Asia, to high-end restaurants throughout the world," said Corey Bradshaw from Adelaide University in Australia.

"Amphibians are already the most threatened animal group yet assessed because of disease, habitat loss and climate change - and man's massive appetite for their legs is not helping." Amphibians are farmed for food in some countries, but these animals are not included in the new analysis.

### *Exporting extinction*

Indonesia emerged from Professor Bradshaw's analysis as both the largest exporter of frogs - 5,000 tonnes (Euro measure) per year - and a major consumer. Frogs are liquidised to make a "health drink" in parts of South America.

This has raised concerns that South American rain forests may soon experience the declines induced by hunting that have been seen elsewhere in the world, notably in France and the U.S, where species such as the Californian Red-legged Frog have crashed.

The researchers suggest that the amphibian trade may mimic the current situation with global fisheries.

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## BAARS CALENDAR- 1st half of of year 2009

Mar 6 BAARS Board Meeting- @ TBD  
Mar 27 Regular BAARS meeting at Cubberley Community Center, Palo Alto  
Speaker- TBA

April 3 BAARS Board Meeting- @ TBD  
April 4 Herp Hike at JD Grant Park, San Jose  
April 19 Earth Day Herp Show at Westwind Barn, Los Altos  
April 24 Regular BAARS meeting at Cubberley Community Center, Palo Alto  
Speaker- Jan Robb w/herp photos from her recent travels  
April 25 Festival for the Environment, Mt. Madonna School, Watsonville

May 1 BAARS Board Meeting- @ Scott & Caroline Alexanders  
May 2 Herp Hike at JD Grant Park, San Jose  
May 22 Regular BAARS meeting at Cubberley Community Center, Palo Alto  
Speaker- Dr. Robert Norris on Venemous Snakebite Management

## ADOPTIONS CONGRATULATIONS

*Adoptions Successfully Placed This Month:*

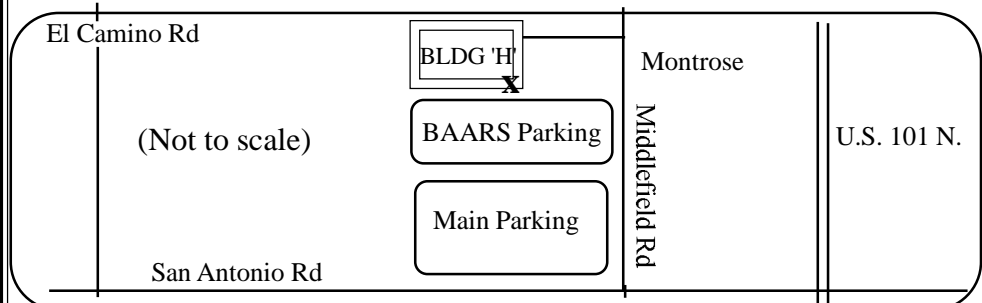
- 1- Savannah Monitor
- 2-Ball Pythons
- 2-Red Foot Tortoises
- 3- Bearded Dragons
- 4- Red-Eared Sliders

### General Meeting Information

Meetings are held at Cubberley Community Center  
4000 Middlefield Rd, Bldg H-6, 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 MESSAGE- MARCH 09

First of all, I'd like to thank Dave Colling, for a great presentation on Rainbow Boas last month (February). Dave has been breeding a variety of rainbows boas for a number of years, and it was interesting to see all of the various morphs that are out there (and have yet to developed).

In my opinion, rainbows are much harder to keep than a lot of people realize, and it is good to see that Dave is having so much fun (and success) with the beautiful rainbows. Dave, along with his supportive wife and two daughters, run Rainbows-R-Us Reptiles, and can be found on the web at <http://rainbows-r-us-reptiles.com/>.

This month (the March meeting), BAARS will be having a dual theme general meeting - both a "bring your favorite reptile", and a "Silent Auction" night. The "bring your favorite reptile" portion is pretty much self-explanatory.

However, please remember that the owners set the rules for handling (or for not handling). Of course, no sick or "under the weather" reptiles, and (heaven forbid), nothing with Mites! Remember to think about bringing electric heaters with you, and we'll have some tables set up next to outlets (for the heaters).

We're going to try a "Silent Auction", with the proceeds going to BAARS (well, at least 50% of the proceeds). We'll have some auction items lined up on one side of the room, with associated item numbers, so that you can write your name down with the amount that you bid. At the end of the night, we'll see who the high-bidders are, and we'll settle up.

Please bring an item to Auction!!! We need quality reptile or amphibian items to auction off (please, only clean and unbroken items). Next month's general meeting will probably feature Jan Robb, who will be discussing her herp photographs from around the world.

In May, we'll be hearing from Dr. Robert Norris, who is an expert on the treatment of venomous snake bites.

This time, he'll be discussing venomous snakes and the treatment of snakebites from United States and North American snakes. Hopefully, Al Wolf from Sonoma County Reptile Rescue will show up, since logic would dictate that in his line of work, he's one of the most likely to get bitten by a venomous snake.

BAARS participates in educational reptile shows throughout the year, and the West Wind Barn show is coming up, April 19th. The theme is "Earth Day", and a number of different wildlife exhibitors typically show up, including "Leopards etc", exhibiting some of their large cats, a raptor rescue group, the Audubon Society, and other wildlife groups.

Tom Harrison will be leading some hikes at J.D. Grant Park, probably as soon as April 4th (check the BAARS web calendar for more information). We will also be scheduling a date soon for our Pepperwood and Pinnacles campouts, so check our calendar.

Scott Alexander  
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### Questions From The Book of Imponderables:

'Why do Frogs close their eyes when swallowing?'

Those big bulging froggy eyes are round, as in most animals, so they protrude inside the equally huge mouth cavity as well as outside the head. Special eye-muscles help push prey down their throats and into the esophagus while eating. We humans do much the same by using our tongues.

Frogs literally cannot swallow large items unless their eyes help push it down to the stomach, says Richard Landesmann of the University of Vermont. They use this same mechanism to help themselves breathe, since frogs lack a diaphragm.

The book goes on to humgrously speculate that if humnans ate the same diet as frogs, we might want to close our eyes while swallowing, too....

(Concluded from pg 1)

“Amphibian harvesting seems to be following the same pattern for frogs as with marine fisheries - an initial local population collapse in Europe and North America, followed by population declines in India and Bangladesh- and now potentially in Indonesia.”

“Absence of essential data to monitor and manage the wild harvest is a large concern,” said said Professor Bradshaw.

The researchers suggest establishing a certification scheme so exporters would have to prove that their animals had been hunted sustainably.

However, a large portion of the trade in amphibians for the pet trade is conducted illegally, and experts say Customs officials in many countries are ill-equipped (or motivated) to spot and deal with illegal consignments.

So keep the preceding in mind when shopping at Wal-Mart or Costco or other world-food wholesalers; those ‘bargain exotic meals’ on sale may be contributing to an extinction. Read labels to determine if the contents were farmed, sustainably harvested or nothing said at all....

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#### AND THEN TO ADD MORE CONFUSION-

A recent study notes major declines of many species of salamanders at several sites in Central America and Mexico, with emphasis on the San Marcos region of Guatemala, one of the best-studied and most diverse salamander communities in the Neotropics.

Profound declines of several formerly abundant species, including 2 apparent extinctions, were revealed. Terrestrial specialist-animals seem to have declined more than ‘generalist’ salamanders all living in formerly benign microhabitats.

The specialis species have largely disappeared from multiple sites in western Guatemala, including in well-protected areas, suggesting that the phenomenon cannot be explained solely by

localized habitat destruction (of which there was little in some regions).

Major declines in southern Mexican *plethodontid* salamanders occurred as far back as the late 1970s to early 1980s, concurrent with or preceding many reported frog population declines from the same areas.

The species in decline comprise several major evolutionary lineages of tropical salamanders, underscoring that significant portions of the diversity of Neotropical salamanders may be at risk, from as yet unknown causes.

This data highlights the urgent need to document and understand Neotropical salamander population declines as part of a larger effort to conserve global amphibian diversity.

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BAARS Editor’s Translation:

Not only are frogs dying off, it’s all genera of amphibians, even in remote rain forest areas, and researchers haven’t found a true world-wide ‘smoking gun’ yet!

Fungal infections, global warming, habitat destruction, industrial pollution- all explain some but by no means all of the amphibian die-offs. More work is needed!



## TURTLE DESIGN STUDIED FOR ARMOUR IMPROVEMENTS...

Turtles have evolved a body plan so successful that they have remained largely unchanged since the time of dinosaurs. Turtle shells, made of bones fused with their ribs, obviously protect vital organs against predators. But the protective ability of a turtle's skull- far greater than other animals- was a surprise that has triggered scientists to take a closer look at the skull's architecture and engineering.

C.T. scans reveal that the skulls have a broad, fairly extensive shelf of bone that may reflect shockwaves away from the brain, Dr. Ketten said. "The turtle skull even reminds you of some of the helmets used in World War I, with a flange in back." Or, the skulls, made of fused bone plates, might be constructed in a way that makes them flexible in the face of pressure waves and resistant to breaking, she said. "We don't yet know."

More than shape may be involved. On each side of their skulls, sea turtles have large glands that produce salty tears to keep their body fluids in balance in salt water. These "big balls of tissue of either side of the brain" may in some way act as shock absorbers, Ketten said.

"It's speculation on my part, but I'd say evolution has provided great head armor for the turtle. What else can be learned from evolutionary designs?"

"Turtles are a wonderful system to model for improvements to body armor for humans," Ketten said. "It's a case of looking at something theoretically and seeing a practical side of it."

**BIG NEWS-** The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are turning 25 in 2009. Mirage Studios, Inc, owners of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles brand, announced launch of the TMNT25 Website at <[www.tmnt25.com](http://www.tmnt25.com)> The "Shell-ebration" will run throughout the year for their many fans.

## 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

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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.

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

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual/Family \$25/yr                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing \$50/yr      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$35/yr  | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$100/yr           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional (schools, libraries, non-profit org, service org) |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NEW MEMBER  | <input type="checkbox"/> 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

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Palo Alto, CA  
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## ADOPTIONS & FOR-SALE

[REF #81105]

**Red Ear Slider**, approximately 6 years old  
Healthy and active with a good disposition  
Current Diet: Turtle Pellets, feeder fish, water plants, dried shrimp, crickets, turtle treats  
Accessories (Cage, Food): Currently in 20 gal. fish tank  
Reason for Adoption Request: Moving not enough space for it anymore, don't want to keep it cooped up in fish tank  
Level of Urgency: low  
Location (City): San Jose

[REF #90103]

**Ball Python**, 44" long, 6 yrs old  
Health status: Good, active and a good weight.  
Disposition: very docile, enjoys being handled  
Current Diet: small live rat every 10-14 days (won't eat frozen/thawed)  
Accessories (Cage, Food): 48" long tank, cage furniture, under-tank heater, and light & fixture  
Reason for Adoption Request: Lifestyle changes  
Level of Urgency: moderate  
Location (City): fostered in San Jose

### FOR SALE

Three stunning baby Dumerils Boas, born 6/30/08. Beautiful high-pink/orange color, well-behaved and very handleable. Shedding normally, eating F & Th. pinkies weekly. From small adult parents- both are only 4' long, so babies will not get too large. Adult male is Lloyd Lemke stock. Asking \$125 ea, unsexed. Photos available from <[fastgrandma@aol.com](mailto:fastgrandma@aol.com)> or call Judy (775)-264-3907, near Lake Tahoe. May deliver.

### High Quality Leopard Geckos For Sale

1 Pair of 'Las Vegas Patternless' Leopard Geckos  
1 Pair of Albino / SHCTT Leopard Geckos - This pair will create 'Sunglow' bloodlines.

Let me know if you are interested - 408-679-5672

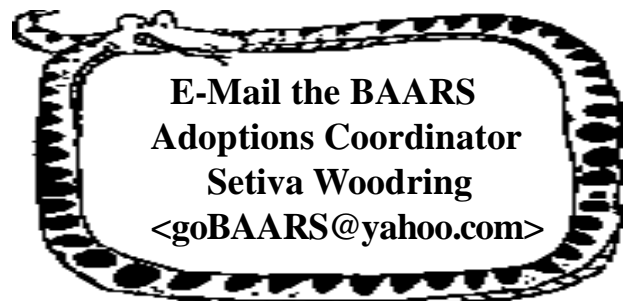
**For Sale-** 14 baby Dumerils Boas, born 8/27/08, eating 1 live fuzzy or hopper weekly. \$50 ea. Contact jim - <[jimathome@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jimathome@sbcglobal.net)> for photos & further info.



WEB SITE  
[WWW.BAARS.ORG](http://WWW.BAARS.ORG)

**The animal adoptions listed herein are for the prospective benefit of BAARS club members as adoptees.**

**No guarantees as to the health, suitability or legality of the adopted animals as pets, is either expressed nor implied.**



**Magnets To Keep Crocodiles Away From Florida Suburbs?** By Curtis Morgan, Miami Herald, 3/4/09

Veteran trapper Todd Hardwick, owner of 'Pesky Critters' who has hauled hundreds of wayward alligators and crocodiles out of FL neighborhoods over the years, tried something strange earlier this year. To the puzzlement of onlookers, Hardwick pulled two colored magnets from his pocket and taped them atop the nubby noggin of an 11-foot croc he'd caught near Coral Gables, FL.

"I was quite embarrassed the first time I did it," he said. "People were like, 'Todd, what are you doing? What is that?' 'That' was the start of a modest but fascinating experiment by state wildlife managers, aimed at short-circuiting homing instincts that often lead captured reptiles right back to the spot that first got them in trouble.

The hope is that magnets, removed just before an animal is freed in a faraway relocation spot, might disrupt a primitive but powerful navigation system that lets crocs follow the earth's magnetic fields — almost like a personal Global Positioning System guides motorists.

"If there is a way we can break that homing cycle on some of these crocs, maybe there will actually be some value in relocating them," said Lindsey Hord, biologist with the FL Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. Right now, relocating wandering N. American crocs usually proves futile. Most transplants get killed in territorial fights, crushed by cars while crawling back home or are recaptured again in the same areas. They tend to return quickly, within weeks or even days, beelining back from 30 to 50 miles away.

"Anything that slows down or prohibits the homing instinct from happening is good," said Hardwick, one of the state's best-known reptile wranglers. Hord said he was inspired to try magnets by a recent journal article on biologists in Chiapas, Mexico, who reported good success relocating 20 'magnetized' crocs. Similar tests have had disorienting effects on the navigation abilities of ocean-ranging tuna and even the homing pigeon. Birds are the most closely related relatives of crocs and 'gators, and they share similar navigational abilities.

**THE BAY AREA AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE SOCIETY**

**PALO ALTO JR MUSEUM, 1451 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD**

**PALO ALTO, CA 94301**



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