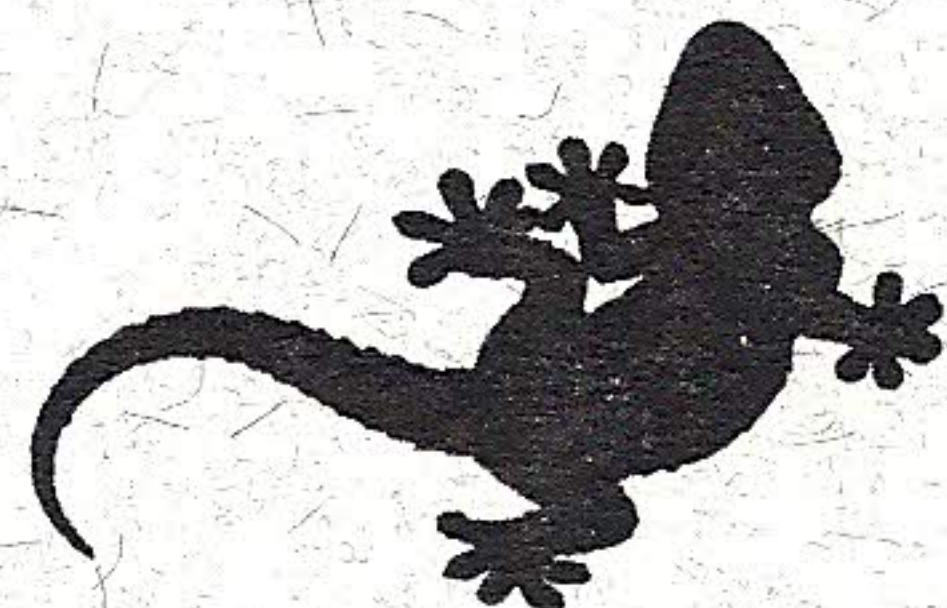


different sources. The first one I bought from a breeder in California who described the animal as an above average specimen, "a 7+ on a scale of 1 to 10." Naturally I thought a 7+ would be fine for starters and paid a healthy sum. I asked the breeder to call to make sure it would be warm enough to ship the snake because it was the middle of December. About a week later my wife called me at school to tell me the snake would be at the airport in two hours. Great! The week before finals on a day when the temperature didn't get above 30°F and my car heater doesn't work very well. The snake made it okay but it wasn't a 7+, unless he meant a 1 was perfect. Needless to say I will never buy another animal from that breeder. As it turned out I spent more money on that snake than any of the others (which I bought in Utah) and it is the ugliest one I have. Another drawback of buying an animal from a breeder is occasionally the animal is in poor health or has parasites.

Dealers, on the other hand, tend to be more honest and usually guarantee live, healthy, feeding animals. But like pet stores many have outrageous prices. For example, I have seen 9-12' Burmese pythons (typical color phase) on dealer lists for prices ranging from \$250 to \$600 each.

As to the last part of your question, no Mark's Ark is not the main place to buy amphibians and reptiles in Utah. There is a place in Sandy called Zooherp Inc. that sells amphibians and reptiles to zoo's, private breeders, and pet stores throughout the U.S. and in several other countries. I wouldn't normally give details about a business or a breeder, but you asked, and Zooherp Inc. is the best place to buy herps in the state, if not the country. Since most of their business is done by phone and on occasion people have tried to steal animals, an appointment is required for walk-in customers. If you are looking for a specific animal it is best to call occasionally to see if any are in stock. It's best not to purchase animals on the spur of the moment, because often pretty or neat herps are not the easiest to take care of and die after a few months if you don't know the "trick" to keeping them alive. The advantages of buying an animal at Zooherp Inc. is they are guaranteed to be healthy and feeding, they are priced competitively, and there are usually more than one to choose from. You can reach Zooherp Inc. by calling (801) 566-6743.



HERPETOLOGICAL NOTES

GRAY-BANDED KINGSNAKE, *LAMPROPELTIS ALTERNA*, PREDATION

The incident took place at 10:26 pm on 2 June 1992, 9 mi. N. Study Butte, Hwy 118, Brewster Co. Texas. King "Buddy" Smith and a friend were cruising back and forth on a stretch of road that night, and saw a coyote on the side of the road several times. At one point, however, they saw the coyote circling and pawing at something in the middle of the road, and then reach down and pick it up with its mouth. It was at that point that King and his friend were startled to recognize the morsel as a gray-banded kingsnake! King jumped out of the car and screamed "drop that snake! Drop that snake!" Luckily for the snake (and the snake hunters) the coyote obliged and released the snake unharmed.

Printed as it was told to **Louis Porras**, Zooherp Inc., 235 West 9210 South, Sandy, UT 84070.

NEWT BREEDING FRENZY IN WASHINGTON STATE

In early March of this year a colleague and I were on our way to attend a scientific meeting in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. I convinced him to spend a day in the Seattle area first to hunt for salamanders, after which we would drive to Vancouver. It sounded like a great idea (to me at least), particularly since we saved a bundle on air fair flying to Seattle instead of Vancouver using Morris Air Service.

Prior to our trip I spent hours studying the best available book on Pacific Northwest herps (R.A. Nussbaum, E.D. Brodie, Jr., and R.M. Storm. 1983. Amphibians & Reptiles of the Pacific Northwest. University of Idaho Press, Moscow. pp. 332.) to give us an idea where to collect in Washington. I strongly recommend this approach to those of you who travel and want to collect specimens, instead of just hunting for them with no success. Get hold of regional and state books (don't just rely on the Eastern and Western field guides, which are too broad in scope). The unfortunate thing is many of the state books on herpetology are not very good to pinpoint localities. Often I rely on specific articles published in the scientific literature. As it turns out, locality records often correlate with accessible roads and highways (this makes sense since none of us like to walk when we can drive).

I decided to hunt east of Seattle and east of the Hood Canal area just north of

lake Cushman. The road is en route to Olympic National Park. At a likely spot of thick wet forest of trees and ferns we parked the car and walked up a side road that had a stream running by it. About a mile or two up we found ponds and more streams. There we found a few western redback salamanders (*Plethodon vehiculum*) and one Ensatina (*Ensatina eschscholtzii*) under logs. In the ponds were about 12 egg masses, either of the Northwestern or long-toed salamander (*Ambystoma gracile* or *A. macrodactylum* respectively). In one pond there were larvae which were either *Ambystoma* sp. or *Dicamptodon copei* (Cope's giant salamander). Unfortunately we were unable to net these wary creatures so positive identification was impossible.

The most abundant species encountered was the rough skinned newt (*Taricha granulosa*), and we saw about a hundred of them. My colleague pointed out a pile of newts in the water that were in a breeding frenzy. I took photos which didn't turn out too well due to light reflections. Then we netted them, broke up the pile and counted nine newts in all; eight male and one female. When we put the newts back in the water they re-aggregated and continued their courtship ritual. Later we found a trio of breeding newts, consisting of two males and one female. Have any of you seen or read accounts similar to this with other salamanders or other amphibians or reptiles?

Donald F. Smee, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-5600.

Garter Snake Defense?

Typically when you pick up a garter snake (*Thamnophis* sp.) the snake empties the contents of its musk glands and often relieves itself on you. This is a defensive response we've all come to know and love in these snakes. But imagine Paul Jamison's surprise when on 12 July 1992, he found a valley garter snake (*T. sirtalis fitchi*) at dry Lake, Cache County, and instead of making him smell by "musking" him it gave birth in his hand! He's not sure if the snake was in the middle of giving birth or if the shock of being caught caused the typical muscular contractions, which normally empty the musk glands and cloaca, to force an egg out prematurely. The baby was fully developed and lived for about three hours. The female obviously has more eggs, but as of 14 July 1992 no more have been born.