

Students get hands-on experience with reptiles

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

Fourth-graders in Clay Warburton's class got a big surprise on Thursday, February 18, when Wendy Henderson and Sarah Hagan from Central Oregon Herpetology showed up with a variety of snakes and lizards.

Clay Warburton, fourth-grade teacher at Sisters Elementary School (SES), told *The Nugget* that kids have a lot of experience with mammals as pets, but having an experience with a large group of reptiles is a very special experience, so he contacted Henderson and Hagan from Central Oregon Herpetology (the study of amphibians and reptiles) and invited them to his classroom.

The students had no idea they were about to get the chance to touch, handle, and hold several varieties of snakes and lizards. The women brought snakes native to Mexico, Honduras, the Brazilian rainforest and also some from North America. Kids were introduced to a Mexican king snake, a milk snake, a corn snake, and different types of boas and

pythons.

The variety of snakes ranged in size; some were so small you could hold them in your hand and the largest was difficult for students to hold with two hands. The majority of the class was eager to touch and hold every one that was passed their way.

Henderson and Hagan started their demonstration with snakes, and brought them out one by one. As they held each snake, they shared information about the reptile's habitat, diet, and reproduction. After all the snakes had been passed around and placed back in their cages, two of them were given a frozen mouse, and students watched in amazement as the reptiles unhinged their jaws and slowly devoured the mouse, all but its legs and tail.

After the snakes were all put away, the students were introduced to geckos and lizards. Since geckos are very jumpy, students were not allowed to hold them, but did get the chance to touch them as they were brought around the room. Kids got to see a small eye-lash gecko, a chocolate gecko, a bearded dragon and two Tegu, a male and a female, who were four feet

long.

Students were excited to talk about their experience.

Andrew Schmidt said, "It was really cool when I got to hold a snake. I was a little nervous it would bite me, but it didn't. I was surprised that it wasn't all slimy and weird. It was smooth."

" I like that we got to see all the different kinds of snakes and hold them. They felt scaly. — Eli Palanuk

Eli Palanuk said, "I like that we got to see all the different kinds of snakes and hold them. They felt scaly. I liked the geckos, too, especially when the lady was talking and they kept jumping from her hand and arms to her shirt."

Warburton told *The Nugget* that Henderson and Hagan thanked him over and over for letting them come to his classroom.

"They love reptiles, and they want others to love them,

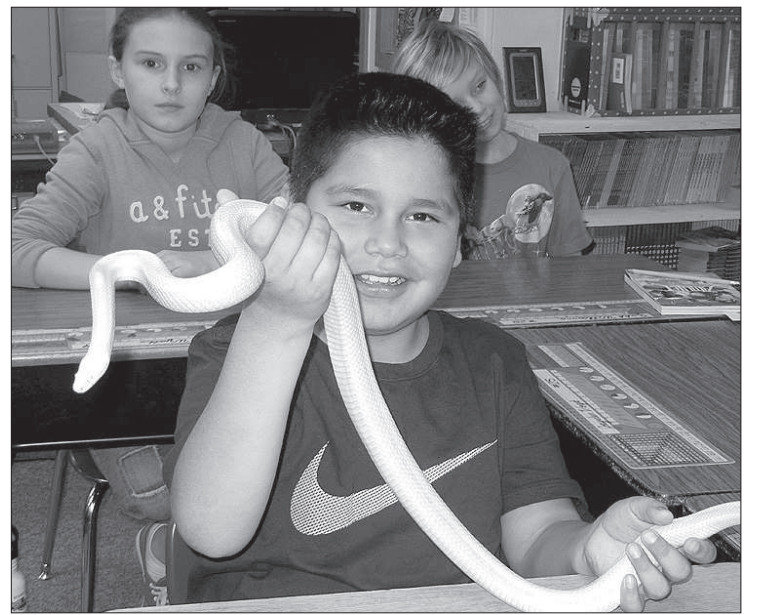


PHOTO BY RONGI YOST

Students got to handle snakes and other reptiles.

too," Warburton said. "They were very appreciative to come and share their love of these animals with the kids. I hope to have them come back again next year."

Warburton was pleased that his kids jumped right in and took advantage of the unique opportunity to be up-close and personal with both the snakes and the lizards.

"I was really happy with how open the kids were, and how so many kids put down their fears to participate and try something new. It was a

great example of the growth mindset that we are trying to encourage in all our learners."

All of the fourth-graders will wrap up their study on animal classification next week. Students have done extensive research on a specific animal of their choice, and will present their animal at the Outlaw Zoo, which will be held Friday, February 26, from 12:45 to 1:45 p.m. in the SES commons. Later, students will deliver a three-to-five-minute speech in front of their classmates.

The Nugget welcomes Karen Kassy to our team!

Karen is deeply committed to Sisters — and to helping Sisters' businesses thrive by ensuring that every advertising dollar is as effective as it can be. With two degrees in business and a background in advertising, writing and the arts, she has the skills, drive, and creative energy to help local businesses and organizations make their advertising compelling and powerful.

Karen is known for her inclusive nature and for connecting people. She volunteered to help preserve Sisters' recycling center, for which she received the Central Oregon Environmental Sustainability Award. She founded and organizes the Taste of Sisters fundraiser for the Kiwanis Food Bank and Furry Friends Foundation and is past chair of Newfoundland Dog Rescue.

Karen has hit the ground running and is looking forward to helping all of The Nugget's advertisers tell their story as part of a thriving, prosperous community.

You can get in touch with Karen by phone at 541-549-9941 or by email at ads@nuggetnews.com.

