

Creepy creatures crawl around campus

JOEL P. SHEMPERT
Feature Editor

For some time now, strange and terrifying creatures have made Clackamas their home, and even with Halloween just past, no one, for the most part, seems to have noticed.

Somewhere, a hairy beast is at rest, swift legs ready to carry its venomous fangs to its prey. Elsewhere, having consumed its mate, a ravenous monstrosity lurks in its murky lair, rows of deadly teeth eager for new victims. In still another clime dwells a strange, inhuman thing, soon to unleash upon the world its carnivorous brood.

Allow me to direct your attention to the biology lab in Pauling 141, where habitats for a plethora of organisms are maintained.

The various members of the animal kingdom which inhabit Pauling 141 are tended both by students and by Lab Manager Joan Harrison-Buckley. In addition to being useful for studying various aspects of animal life, they serve to add a unique atmosphere to an otherwise ordinary lab.

The most prominently displayed animal is the plump piranha which skulks about in a large aquarium near the door. Goldfish swim blithely about the tank, and the fearsome predator makes no move to pursue them.

"She eats basically liver," explains Harrison-Buckley. "Her mate ate live goldfish, but we cannot seem to entice this fish to eat live fish."

Just where is this mate, you ask? There is indeed only one piranha in the tank, but this was not always so.

"We've had that fish for many years. A student donated a pair of them," Harrison-Buckley relates. "Some people think the piranha we have now is the male because it's so brilliantly colored. No one's really sure if that's the male or female, but we did have a male-female pair."

So what happened?



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

Biology student Carrie Smith obviously doesn't have arachnophobia as she gets a little close to a tarantula who has made a home in Pauling 141.

"After one weekend we found that one of the fish had been preyed upon—by the other one, most likely. So we're down to just the one, and he or she is not in real good shape. She's very sickly," Harrison-Buckley says. On a steady diet of liver, it's no wonder.

While it may be disappointing that the passerby isn't likely to witness the consumption of a hapless goldfish, Harrison-Buckley assures us that the piranha is no invalid. "She can be very quick when she wants to be. I'll put my hand in there several times when cleaning the tank," Harrison-Buckley reveals, "and she can swim quite effectively when she wants to. She's not so sickly that she doesn't know how to maneuver herself. They're known for their maneuverability."

Continuing the thread of deaths under mysterious circumstances, one might turn to the container which houses a preying mantis, who happens to be something of an uninvited guest in the lab.

"Someone just put the preying mantis in the cage one day not too long ago. We had some walking sticks in there," says Harrison-Buckley. "One Monday morning we came in and there was the preying mantis. She had eaten the walking sticks."

It is possible this new resident will provide students with objects of study for some time.

"By the size of her abdomen you can see she's been laying egg cases," Harrison-Buckley says, referring to the insect's bloated body. "We don't know if they're fertile or not."

This presents a bit of difficulty for users of the lab.

"There are no native preying mantises in Oregon, so we certainly aren't going to release any. Even though they're prevalent here, they're not indigenous to this area, so we cannot responsibly let them go," states Harrison-Buckley. Biology students could soon be playing mantis nanny to a large brood.

We now direct our attention to the other side of the room, a strange conspiracy is beginning to shape up. There is an aquarium which originally housed only goldfish, but no longer.

"We have an unknown fish that just appeared one day in one of our tanks; a Jack Dempsey cichlid fish. . . it's been a really interesting year in that lab. We

don't know who's plotting to dump all their pets on us," confides Harrison-Buckley with a smile.

Whoever it is, it seems they have a taste for blood. The Jack Dempsey fish "is starting to eat the goldfish, so she's looking real healthy. We feed her blood worms; that's her main diet, but she seems to be going after the goldfish," Harrison-Buckley says.

The lab is full of surprises. Possibly the most fear-inducing animal present, the tarantula, is actually rather harmless.

"This tarantula is not handled very much, but people have them as pets, and they handle them quite often. They're not particularly dangerous," Harrison-Buckley reveals.

Conversely, the lab's two aquatic salamanders, which are called Axolotl and are very beautiful, are reportedly "real aggressive predators." The pair of orange amphibians resemble developing tadpoles.

"They never really develop any further. They live their whole life in the aquatic form that you see. They do not become terrestrial like most salamanders," explains Harrison-Buckley.

It would seem that in Pauling 141, life-and-death struggles are commonplace. The various beings that dwell there serve to illustrate the most fundamental principle of the biosphere: everyone eats everyone else. If the mysterious doings which punctuate the lab's activity continue, who knows what unsuspecting animal will have to fear for its life? No matter what creature shows up next, it should be intriguing to watch.



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

"Zoo keeper" Carrie Smith bonds with preying mantis in biology lab.



A SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

If you were awarded a college scholarship worth \$30,000 and were told all you had to do was work in law enforcement for four years, would you be interested?

We thought so.

The Police Corps is looking for highly motivated students who are looking for a challenge and a chance to make a difference in their community. If you qualify and are selected you'll receive a \$30,000 college scholarship. When you graduate you'll serve four years as a trained law enforcement officer. After completing four of the most exciting and rewarding years of your life you may decide to become a teacher, a lawyer or a bricklayer. You may even make law enforcement your career. That choice is yours, but whatever you do, you'll never forget those four years and how you made a difference.

For an opportunity call (503) 378-3720 ext 4141.