

Reptile expo slithers to Wilsonville

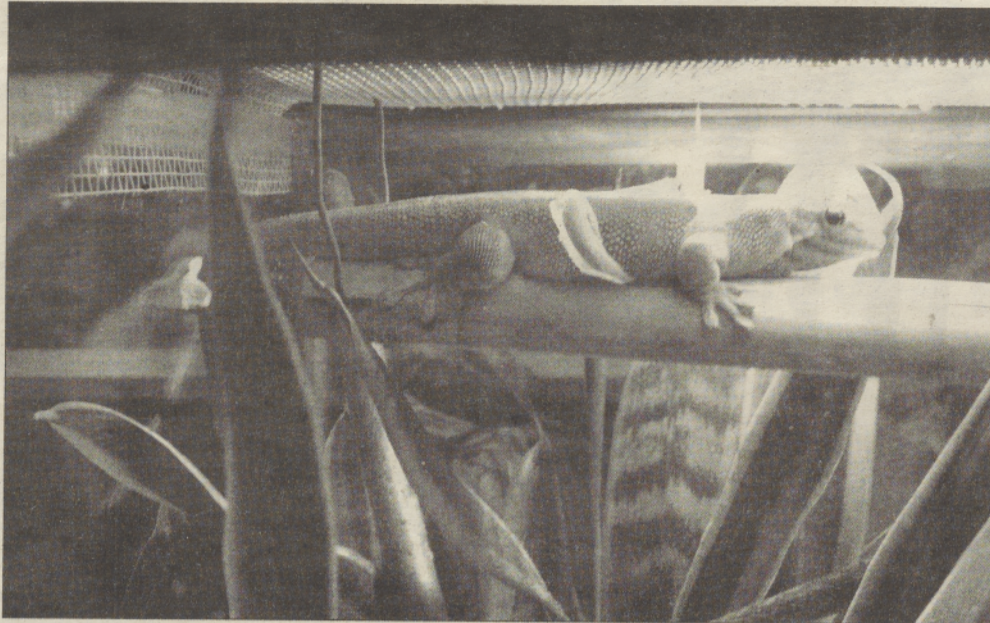
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Broods of reptiles, amphibians and insects infested the Portland Metro Reptile Expo, slithering and crawling into the Wilsonville Holiday Inn last Saturday. Following the reptilian rampage was a horde of lizard enthusiasts and connoisseurs. Treated to exotic sights and experiences, the expo crowd had their hands full with excitement and an eagerness to see amazing creatures around every table corner.

The Northwest Reptile Expo runs three times a year. The Jan. 26 Portland Metro meet up marked the 13th presentation since the semi-annual event began. This installment seemed to be packed with more vendors, using twice as much of the hotel's space compared to prior events. More people were present than in expos past as well, extending a giant anaconda of a 'hand-stamp' line through the hotel.

The parking lot was crammed with visitors' vehicles. No spots remained open for long. Lining the curbs that surrounded resident trees and bushes were cars squeezed bumper to bumper. Trucks pulling trailers loaded and unloaded equipment and creatures in the back entrance lot.

Snakes wove through the crowd, wrapped around their owners' necks, getting an up close and personal view of the event. Despite the advertising specifi-



Brittany Bell/The Clackamas Print

Passersby during the Metro Reptile Expo at the Wilsonville Holiday Inn saw a gecko perched atop a log in his case. Attendees got a chance to marvel at reptiles, amphibians and insects. They also had a chance to buy the reptiles and the supplies necessary to take care of the new pet.

cally instructing that all personal pets be left at home, brave expo goers brandished their reptilian friends proudly. No one seemed to mind toting the creatures, as they produced positive and sometimes timid reactions from each encounter.

Inside, the loud and bustling atmosphere was kept lighthearted and comfortable by the cheerful vendors. They helpfully educated the masses about their scaly companions, cautioning them of dan-

gers and specifications while also showcasing the beauty of the different species. One helpful vendor even taught a mother and daughter how to handle and take care of their soon-to-be new pet snake.

"It does seem like a lot of responsibility," said Tanya Wellbrook, mother of three. The duties of owning an exotic pet can be very daunting and require keen attention to habitat, food and general health of the animal. The expo experts were well versed in

explaining scaly precautions, unfamiliar from needs of furry companions.

Reptile-inspired jewelry was available for purchase at a handful of tables across the venue. Pet food ranging from crickets, worms and mice were being doled out for hungry critters.

At a table selling insects and spiders, a game of Plinko was offered. For the price of a dollar, contestants had the opportunity to drop a ball in the

game board and win candy, or if they were really lucky, roaches! Yes, people buy pet roaches. While not everyone can appreciate such an odd pet, some find the durable bugs quite fascinating.

"Yeah, they can survive a nuclear war but not a water dish," said Mark Foster, a young vendor at the spider table.

Don't forget, even lizards need doctors. A vet offering free checkups was posted at the event. Different supplies, lights and decorations were stocked at various vendors. Heat rocks, heat pads heat lamps were displayed, available for purchase. Terrariums of every size, food dishes and boxes of merchandise decorated the tables. On a few table tops were beautifully sinister looking carnivorous plants. The only thing missing from the meat-eating jungle scene, was a sign reading: "Feed me, Seymour!"

Flocks of children ran around with their parents close behind. Peering inside cages and terrariums, they soaked up the information. The temperature inside the hotel was very warm, it seemed the heat was turned up for the cold blooded reptiles, or all the heat lamps mixed with body heat resonated the warmth.

After 2 p.m. some of the vendors began marking down prices by 10 to 20 percent. It was an obviously successful day for the Expo and the vendors. With so many attendees and available products at Saturday's expo, future events are likely to have similar success. Speaking of which, they'll be back in Wilsonville this year on Aug. 17.

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