

# REPTILE NEWS

Volume 4, Issue Summer

We Care About the Environment

## Reptile Zoo Is A Sanctuary

### The Indian River Reptile Fund Needs Your Support

*The Toughest Job in the World is Raising Money to Save Snakes*



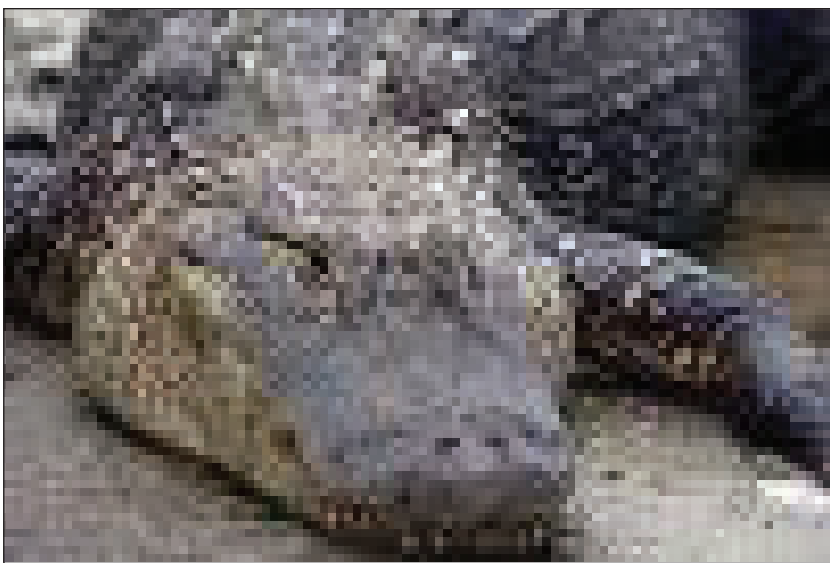
The Indian River Reptile Zoo is the only reptile zoo in Canada that does not sell reptiles and is not a pet store.

Many people do not realize that reptiles are abandoned just like cats and dogs. Sadly, over 90% of people that purchase reptiles at other reptile "zoos" and pet stores do not keep the reptile. Reptiles frequently die due to improper care, are given up because they have grown too large, lived

too long or are too difficult to care for. When animals are seized by Wildlife Canada, The Ministry of Natural Resources, OSPCA, Humane Society Officers, the reptiles are brought to Indian River Reptile Zoo. In order to house and care for these animals and others that we rescue, we have started a non-profit corporation called The Indian River Reptile Fund.

This fund will also support the expansion of enclosures for the animals at the zoo and the construction of an enclosure to house the Perentie Monitors gifted to us by the Australia Zoo and Tourism Australia.

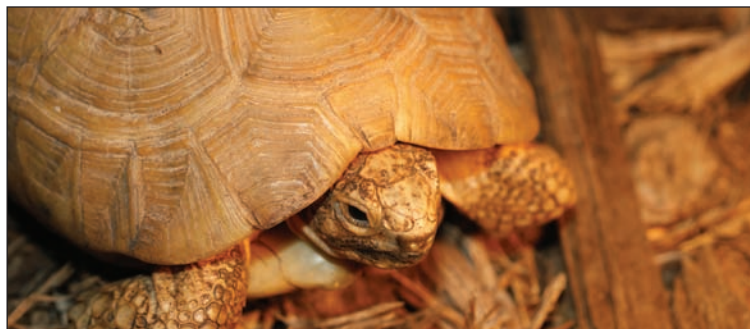
To donate send a cheque or money order to Indian River Reptile Fund, 2206 Hwy 7, RR#3, Indian River, Ontario, K0L 2B0



## New at the zoo



Mexican West Coast Rattlesnake



Golden Tortoise

## ZOO NEEDS YOU Enter to Win Cash & Prizes



### WOW!!!.....PHOTO CONTEST----ENTER NOW WIN UP TO \$500.00

Help the zoo raise funds. It sure looks like this turtle is excited about our photo contest! Please enter early and often. See details below. You can win prizes and help save and protect reptiles. Animal photos only.

### Photo Contest Rules:

This photo contest is open to all ages. There is a \$10.00 donation fee to the Reptile Fund for each entry. You can enter as many photos as you wish at \$10.00 each. All submissions must be received at the Reptile Zoo by 12:00 pm Saturday August 22nd for judging. Prizes will be awarded as follows:

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Best of Show</b>           | <b>\$500.00 Cash Prize</b>               |
| <b>2nd Best of Show</b>       | <b>\$100.00 Cash Prize</b>               |
| <b>3rd Best of Show</b>       | <b>\$50.00 Cash Prize</b>                |
| <b>Best Reptile Photo</b>     | <b>Merchandise Voucher \$50.00 value</b> |
| <b>Best Wild Animal Photo</b> | <b>Merchandise Voucher \$50.00 value</b> |



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# Zoo Curator Saves Nine Lives in the Desert

By E.K. Loyst

**June 3, 2009 – New Mexico** We all choose to spend our holiday time in different ways. Some of us just want to stay home and relax, or head for the beach. If you like dogs and cats, you may attend a major pet show. If you are a fisherman, you will seek a quiet stream or lake and hope to land the 'big one'.

If you are a reptile zoo keeper you might spend your vacation time looking for snakes, turtles, lizards and alligators.

Individuals who take a serious interest in reptiles are called Herpers and they like to go to remote places – swamps, deserts, rocky hillsides – in search of reptiles. The idea is to observe these unusual creatures in their natural habitat and photograph them.

Personally, I am not a herper, but my son, Bry most certainly is and as Curator of the Indian River Reptile Zoo, his life revolves around reptiles. This story takes place in a remote area of New Mexico. I am along for the ride, to hold the camera and as an extra driver. I might even get in a game of golf if I'm lucky.

Arizona and New Mexico are paradise to herpers with snake species, turtles, lizards. Most of these animals are nocturnal, so we spend a lot of time from dusk till dawn in the desert with flashlights or driving back roads looking for these elusive creatures. There is nothing more beautiful than a moonlit night in the desert a hundred miles from the nearest town with a camera in one hand and a flashlight and snake hook in the other, stepping carefully over rocks and around prickly cactus.

Snakes and lizards also like to sunbathe and on occasion they can be found basking on a hillside, a rock cut, or in a ravine. If you are patient, you may get that perfect photograph of a rare species taking in a few rays after breakfast or lunch.

Reptiles, especially snakes, are very private, shy animals. They are well camouflaged to hide in their environment and quickly hide when approached. They like to live in areas with a good supply of food; mice, rats, gophers, rabbits, places not frequented by man. Some of the best places to find snakes are sites abandoned by man such as old houses,

barns and dumps.

Ninety miles north of Roswell, New Mexico, while driving a quiet paved back road, we came across an abandoned house, three old outbuildings, and an excavated deep ditch filled with wood, old scrap metal and farm debris. The wet garbage was composted long ago - only the plastic remained. We searched the site and were rewarded with evidence that snakes lived here... a six foot long snake skin shed was caught on an old piece of metal roofing near the garbage pit.

## A Snake Trap

Not far from the old pit we discovered an open well head. This hole in the ground was a real danger to man and beast. It was broad daylight, but if we had been searching in the dark, either of us could have stumbled in and been seriously injured. I said "Let's cover it." Bry said "Sure, but let's check it out first"... "this looks like a perfect snake trap."

The gaping black hole, 2' by 3 1/2', didn't look very inviting to me, but Bry stuck his head in and turned on his flashlight.

"This is deep," his voice echoed back... "could be thirty feet to the bottom." He stood up and said "We got to go down, I think I saw movement at the bottom." "Are you nuts?" I said... "you are not Indiana Jones." Bry said "Look Dad, I am serious. I think there are snakes trapped down there... they may already be dead, but I've got to go down."

Close observation with two flashlights revealed a cluster of snakes writhing on some broken old boards at the bottom of the well. There was no water, it was dry as a bone and cluttered with debris. The zoom lens on the camera proved better reconnaissance and we realized a number of the snakes were dead. "Dehydrated or starved to death" said Bry.

## A Hundred Years Old

The well was over a hundred years old built in the shape of a bottle. Ten feet wide at the bottom with the smooth sides going straight up fifteen feet then tapering to the opening well head. It was a hand dug well and the sides were baked clay, smooth and rock solid.

id. When the well was originally built the sides were plastered with wet clay and then a fire was built at the bottom to bake the clay so it would not cave in. Water runoff was directed to the well during the winter wet season. The original wooden lid covering the well must have rotted away because only a small slat remained in place when we discovered it. Top to bottom the well measured 25 feet.

## The Rescue

A planning session was needed, so after a little father and son heated debate we agreed that additional equipment was needed if we were going to rescue these animals. We had flashlights and reptile handling tools, but we needed rope and bags to put the snakes in to safely lift them out of the well.

Our GPS unit indicated a small town 30 miles south of our position. When we arrived at the spot it consisted of an abandoned service station with a sign saying next gas 60 miles.

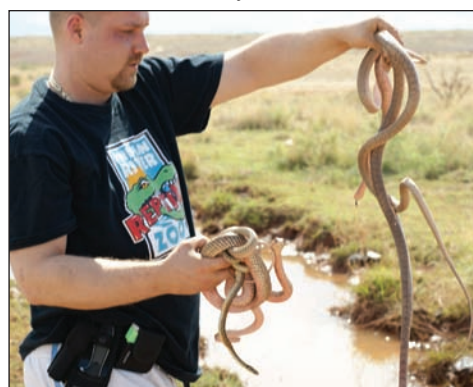
When we arrived in Roswell, New Mexico, we felt like aliens. Clearly, the fame this city achieved in the 1940's had long faded, being replaced by tacky tourist stores selling t-shirts and UFO memorabilia. An old movie theatre had been converted to a museum and for five dollars you could learn the facts about UFO's and the USA government conspiracy to cover up the crash landing of an alien flying saucer.

Thanks to the local Ace Hardware store we were now equipped with rope, extra batteries and snake bags (pillow cases). On the long drive back, we saw two cars and a truck – folks were not flocking to Roswell, but maybe the tourist season hadn't started.

Climbing down the well was easy. Easy for me as I was just holding the rope while Bry descended. My job was to bend over the hole and take pictures – lots of pictures.

Once at the well bottom, Bry stood still waiting for his eyes to adjust and listening for that familiar vibrating sound of warning that a rattlesnake will often (but not always) provide prior to striking. There were no live snakes in sight.

*Continued on next page*



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Continued from previous page

Looking down from above, I photographed Bry's activity, it was exciting to watch. His snake hook carefully lifted debris to reveal two long, thin snakes – 4 to 5 feet each. He first tried to lift them with his snake hook to put them in the bag, but he quickly set the hook aside and barehanded, he skillfully lifted each snake and guided them into the bag.

Under a scrap of wood he found three more snakes and bagged them. Lifting a piece of tin revealed a small snake. A careful search and three more snakes were discovered for a total of nine live reptiles. Bry bagged them all in two pillowcases, tied the rope around each and I lifted them out of the well and placed the bags in a shaded area.

Getting Bry out of the well was a challenge but he managed, pumped with adrenalin, his head popped out of the well with a big grin on his face.

## A Safe Release

Animals, mammals and reptiles should not be relocated very far from their original habitat or they will not survive. We lucked out and located a cattle watering hole with standing water in a dry stream bed. The snakes were thin from lack of food and dehydrated. We released them into the water. They would find their own food.

Bry identified the snakes as eight Western Coach Whip snakes and one checkered garter snake.

The snakes soon disappeared in the grass along the water's edge, but we managed to see one snake actually pause for a drink of water before it quietly moved out of our sight.

This was an exciting experience for the herper and great fun for the old guy with the camera. The remainder of our trip resulted in numerous photos of snakes, mostly gopher snakes and small western rattlesnakes and one unusual.

# What is this Snakes Life Worth?



**Collett's Snake: Pseudechis Colletti**

This Collett's Snake, native to Australia, was literally dropped on our doorstep with an ultimatum: adopt it, or it will be euthanized. Our choice was obvious, but what will it cost to keep and care for a very dangerous reptile?

It is our zoo's policy that we have an on hand supply of "anti venom" for each venomous reptile domiciled at our facility. So here is the problem. In a tough mid-recession year attendance at the zoo is down and contributions are scarce. The Collett's Snake is our only venomous Australian snake so we need to order life saving serum at \$1000 per vial. The minimum requirement is ten vials. That's \$10,000, a lot of money for a snake to live. If we were trying to raise money to save a dog or cat it would be easy. People love mammals but snakes...not so much. The Zoo needs your help on this project. It is worth saving from an educational stand point alone as thousands of children will hear this story and see the snake at the zoo for many years to come. Please contribute to the Indian River Reptile Fund.

## Accreditation What Does It Mean?

What does it mean when a zoo is accredited by CAZA? CAZA is the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums. To receive accreditation means that a zoo has met a high set of standard in animal care, public safety and protocols for any possibility from natural disasters such as tornadoes, power outages etc.

It is very important that you only visit and support accredited zoos for many reasons such as: you will be assured that the environment is safe for you and your family as well as being safe for the animals. A non accredited zoo might risk your safety just to make your visit more exciting. There might not be proper barriers between visitors and the animals. This practice not only causes harm to people; but, as a result also puts the animals in danger of being hurt if they are able to escape or bite someone. Some facilities will perform unsafe practices such as allowing snakes to be wrapped around a person's neck. This practice is all very exciting but totally unsafe. Any snake is capable of biting! If someone happens to smell like a prey item to the snake (for example if they just had a chicken sandwich for lunch) the snake

very well could mistake the persons moving hands for a chicken and strike. Many roadside zoos and inexperienced reptile showman have been sued from damages when visitors have been injured in this type of event.

The lectures and information given at an accredited institution will be factual rather than spectacular exaggeration just for the effect. SSP programs (species survival plans) and stud books are implemented at accredited zoos. These programs enable animals in danger of extinction to be protected in order to preserve the species. In many cases, endangered species are able to be released again into the wild after protection of their environment is accomplished.

Ask yourself this question: would you take your family to a non accredited hospital or purchase medicine from a non accredited pharmacy? The same logic applies to zoos.

Ontario has passed legislation that will force all roadside zoos to meet the standards of CAZA accreditation or be closed down. This will affect many zoo/pet stores which keep wild animals in appalling conditions. These places house



dangerous animals such as vipers, cobras and rattlesnakes and yet they do not stock any antiserum! This is a severe threat to the public as well as the employees. Antiserum can be many hundreds of miles away. Indian River Reptile Zoo does keeps an up to date supply of antiserum for all of the animals it displays.

Caza accredited zoos are not allowed to sell animals to the general public. They are only permitted to trade with other accredited facilities. The selling of wild animals who are often brought into Canada is not in the best interest of the unfortunate animal nor is it in the public interest. Most purchased animals die due to the fact that the owners are unable to provide the proper environment, diet or care for exotic species.

There are many accredited zoos in Ontario that are safe to visit and are accredited by CAZA. They are the Peterborough Zoo, the Bowmanville Zoo, and of course the Toronto Zoo. To find out which zoos are accredited please visit [www.caza.org](http://www.caza.org)

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# True or False?

1. A Rattlesnake can lose its rattle. true false
2. Komodo Dragons are venomous. true false
3. King cobra is the largest venomous snake. true false
4. Snakes chase people. true false
5. Snakes sting with their tongue. true false
6. Snapping Turtles bite swimmers. true false



ANSWERS  
1. True 2. True 3. True 4. False 5. False 6. False

## Venomous Snakes Can Kill! Only Two Zoos In Canada Have Antiserum For The Exotic Venomous Snakes They Keep!

Believe it or not there are venomous snakes kept illegally as pets all across Canada in every province. When one escapes, (not if), the public is put at risk. Many people do not realize that it is not just the snake owner who might be killed, it could be the innocent neighbour next door who could be endangered.

In 1999, Bry Loyst, the owner and curator of the Indian River Reptile Zoo established the Ontario Antivenin Bank in order to provide a source of antiserum for emergency use.

So far, there has only been two deaths attributed to venomous creatures. One was in British Columbia by a cobra and the other was by a venomous caterpillar in Alberta. The problem is that no record is usually kept of the bites that occur. However, we do know that numerous exotic snakebites occur every year and they happen mainly in the province of Ontario.

Since the inception of the non profit Ontario Antivenin Bank it has received a mere \$2,000.00 in donation in all those years. Antiserum is extremely expensive and it has to be constantly updated to be effective.



**Eyelash Viper**

## Peanut Butter Caper

Who do you call when you see a raccoon with his head stuck in a peanut butter jar? Animal services is not interested, so the Reptile Zoo comes to the rescue. It is not the same as catching an escaped boa constrictor or an iguana but it is an adventure all the same. The poor raccoon had stuck its head in a plastic peanut butter jar for a tasty treat and there was no way he could remove it with out our help. The peanut butter caper came to a successful conclusion when Bry Loyst of the Indian River Reptile Zoo and its able staff, netted the raccoon and safely cut the plastic jar for removal. Embarrassed and grumpy, the raccoon climbed the nearest tree mumbling to himself.



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## Canada Wildlife Officers

When reptile and exotic animals arrive at the Canadian Border it is not Canada Custom officers that must deal with their entry. They simply call Environment Canada and a Wildlife Officer is assigned to investigate if the animal is illegal. If it is on the CITES Endangered Species list it is a serious offense.

What if it is a spitting cobra in a wooden crate or a bag full of rattlesnakes or venomous snakes? This is dangerous work and all officers are now trained at Indian River Reptile Zoo.

In 2002 Environment Canada invited Indian River Reptile Zoo to develop a specific training course to teach officers to identify and safely inspect exotic reptiles. The certification course also includes first aid and emergency procedures and short term husbandry techniques.

Including the course held at the zoo this spring, over 60 Canada Wildlife Officers have now been certified in this course.

## Reptile Facts Did you know?

- Malayan Pit Viper venom is being tested for stroke victims
- Black Mamba venom is being tested for Alzheimer's disease
- Copperhead venom is now being tested for application on skin and breast cancer
- Spitting cobras can eject venom up to 12 feet
- Ontario has eight native turtles species
- Saltwater crocodiles from Australia can grow to 25 feet
- Ontario's longest snake grows to 8 feet (Black Rat Snake)
- There is only one venomous snake in Ontario, the Massasauga rattlesnake
- Pit Viper venom is used to control high blood pressure in millions of people

# "Bring a Branch & Paint a Snake" EVENT

**Wednesday July 29th, 2009**  
**2:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

**Bring a crooked branch, Bring the kids**  
**Bring the grandparents, Bring the whole family**  
**to our FREE event at the Reptile Zoo!**

**HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:** You must bring your own branch. Try and make it a twisted or curved snake like branch from a dead tree (*no live trees need be harmed*) from the forest or your yard.

We supply the paints and brushes; you supply the branch. Fun for all ages. Paint your branch to look like a snake. Stripes, lines or spots — you be creative during our two hour **PAINT A SNAKE EVENT**. Prizes will be awarded for the most artistic and the most unique painted snake - T-shirts, Surprise bags, etc. You can keep your snake or donate it to the zoo.

There is no cost to participate. It's just old fashioned family fun.



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## Standing Stones -Sculpture Garden



These unique sculptural shapes are solid belmont rose pink granite. Each stone weighs over 2 thousand pounds and is placed to create a stonehenge atmosphere. This sculpture garden is now a picnic area for zoo visitors and monolithic stone lovers. We are looking for corporate sponsors and will name the gardens in their honour. Call Dianne Loyst to discuss details 416-222-4092.

## New Walking Nature Trail And Picnic Area

Just opened for your family enjoyment is our 2 km nature trail and enlarged picnic area. Your zoo admission allows you to walk this trail and experience flora and fauna of a unique land formation created 10,000 years ago by the last retreating glacier. Experience an old growth cedar forest, visit our new turtle territory and be sure to see our new picnic site.

Take a long walk then enjoy our standing stones picnic area surrounded by giant Stonehenge-like monolithic granite arches.

## Busted!

On numerous occasions in the past year, Indian River Reptile Zoo was called to assist enforcement officers on bylaw infringements and a drug bust. Here is a report on two of the events.

In February of 2008, the Indian River Reptile Zoo received a call from enforcement officers as support in a seizure of animals from an apartment within the city of Oshawa. Under Oshawa's Responsible Pet Owners bylaw, all boas and pythons are prohibited within the city to both own and sell. The bylaw states that snakes may be kept as pets as long as they are not "dangerous". Banned snakes also include rattlesnakes and cobras. Thirty three Ball Pythons were removed from the apartment. They now reside at the Indian River Zoo.

## Daily Planet Live



Bry presents Chompsy the baby alligator to the hosts of Daily Planet television show, Jay Ingram and Ziya Tong, in March 2009.

## World Class Reptile Zoo

The Indian River Reptile Zoo is gaining world recognition for its high safety standards and protocol as well as its husbandry standards, wildlife officer training course and the founding of the Ontario Antivenin Bank.

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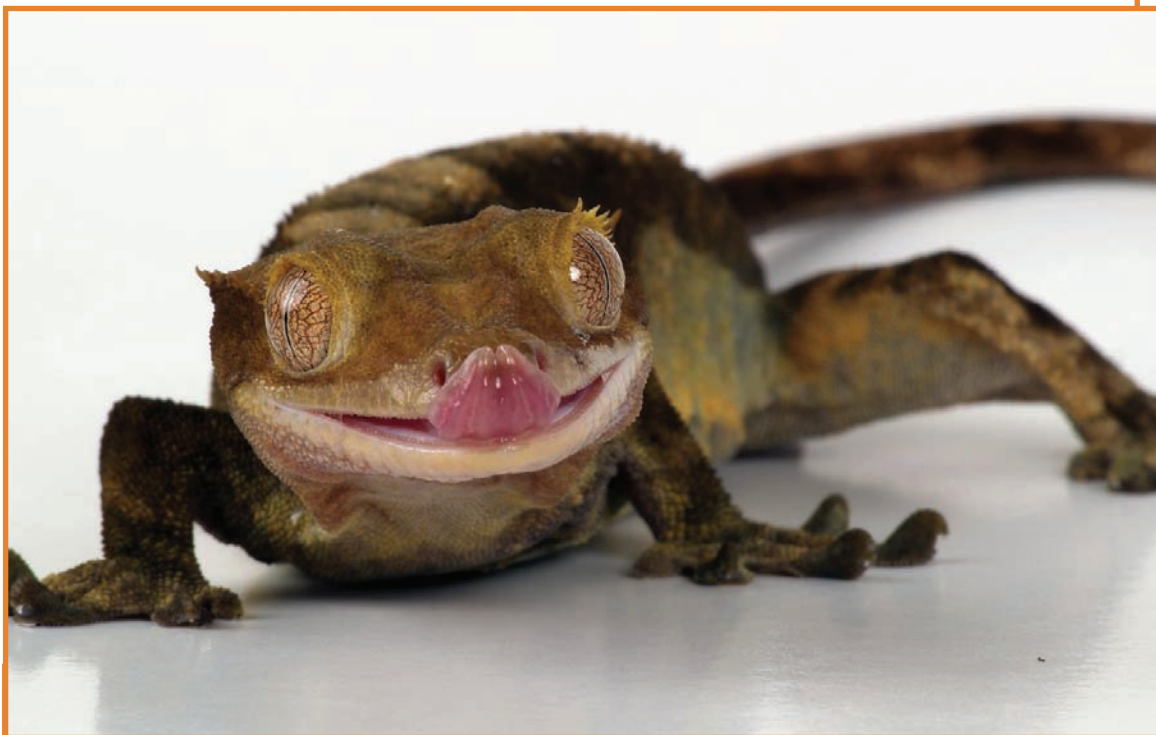
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# Who's Who at the Reptile Zoo



Can you identify these reptiles? Visit the Zoo and learn the names of the reptiles above and compare these photos to the real animals. Take your own pictures of our 400 unique reptiles and meet Chompsy the Gator and Monty the Python!



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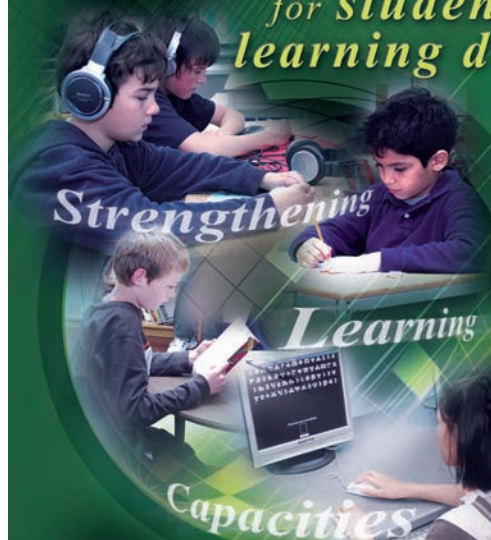
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## A cognitive program for students with learning disabilities



The Arrowsmith Program comprises a suite of cognitive exercises for students with learning disabilities that was developed from research in neuroscience.

The Arrowsmith Program identifies, intervenes and strengthens the weak cognitive capacities that affect learning. Students are able to capitalize on their increased learning capacities and after a three to four year program can function without further special education assistance or program accommodations.

Read about the Arrowsmith Program in Chapter 2 of the New York Times best selling book "THE BRAIN THAT CHANGES ITSELF" by Dr. Norman Doidge

The Arrowsmith Program addresses:  
Reading  
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## Congratulations Anne



Four years ago, Anne Yungblut joined our zoo staff. Since that day, she has continued to amaze us with her exceptional public speaking ability. Crowds love her and we constantly receive compliments on her performances. She has a contagious enthusiasm and sparkle that is evident in every event she does from presentations to thousands of people to small birthday parties.

Anne Yungblut is the first zookeeper who is able to care for all of the venomous snakes in our collection. She excels at every level of zoo keeping and has trained not only our new staff members, she has also assisted in the training of over 60 federal wildlife officers in our "Identification, Safe Handling

and Emergency Procedures Course" specifically designed for government wildlife officers.

Anne is in charge of husbandry for all the animals in our zoo. The rattlesnakes and the turtles are her favorites. Although the American crocodile definitely does not seem to favour Anne; she simply ignores him and proceeds to service his enclosure in spite of his objection.

Since Indian River Reptile Zoo's inception in 1998, we have never had an Assistant Curator. Until now that is. This year, Anne Yungblut has been promoted to Assistant Curator.

Congratulations to Anne! We are extremely proud and grateful to have you with us at the zoo.

## Canada's largest Reptile Outreach Program

When Bry Loyst, curator of the Indian River Reptile Zoo first opened the zoo in 1998, he had no idea that the Outreach Program would become a major part of the zoo's annual activities. Indian River Reptile Zoo is the only accredited reptile zoo (CAZA) in Canada and is not subject to the normal bylaws restricting other facilities. This fact enables Indian River Reptile Zoo to display and teach in public areas whereas it is illegal for other zoos/wildlife educators to do so in most municipalities.

### THE ZOO COMES TO YOU

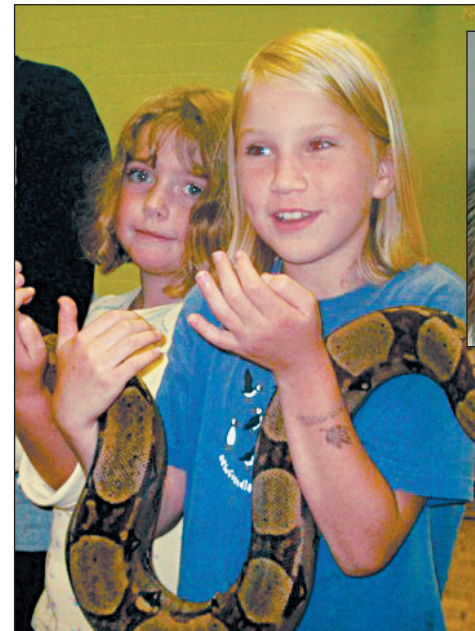
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### What am I doing at the Reptile Zoo?

Hi I am a Cotton-Top Tamarin. I was rescued by the zoo and I now have a new home that I share with a pair of boring turtles.

The kids love the snakes and alligators but I just watch.



### Things To See

- Crocodiles and alligators sunning themselves outside
- Educational demonstrations featuring live reptiles, pythons, lizards, turtles.
- Canada's largest rattlesnake collection: tiny pygmy to large diamondback
- Other venomous snakes including cobras, mambas, vipers and more

### Things To Do

- Safe and educational fun for the whole family
- Walk our Nature Trail
- Enjoy our new picnic area
- Visit our outdoor reptile exhibits
- Shop in our gift store
- New outdoor turtle exhibits
- New educational centre



**Book Now Outreach Program**  
**705-639-1443**

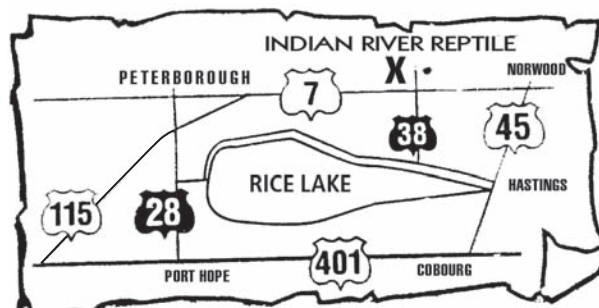
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## How to Find The Reptile Zoo



## Come & Visit



East of  
Peterborough  
16 km on Hwy. #7  
At Cty. Rd. #38  
Summer  
Hours Daily  
10 am - 5 pm  
Phone  
705-639-1443

Take A Look At Us  
[www.reptilezoo.org](http://www.reptilezoo.org)