



Reptile handling

Dec 2, 2018



Introduction to our reptiles (and others in the Interactive Room)

- ▶ Snakes
 - ▶ Milk snake, kingsnake, gopher snake, rosy boa
 - ▶ Lizards
 - ▶ Bearded dragon, chuckwalla, leopard gecko
 - ▶ Arachnids
 - ▶ Tarantula, desert hairy scorpion
 - ▶ Birds
 - ▶ Swainson's hawk, pygmy owl
 - ▶ Mammals
 - ▶ Pocket mouse, squirrels, prairie dog
- 



Who can handle the animals in the Interactive Room

- ▶ AFTER TRAINING
 - ▶ Education team members
 - ▶ Interpretive guides
 - ▶ Teen volunteers
 - ▶ Medical services
 - ▶ Staff
 - ▶ Others as designated by staff
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GUESTS ARE NEVER ALLOWED TO HOLD THE ANIMALS

There are some situations and some team members where this rule may not be in effect – but in most cases, YOU are the only one allowed to hold an animal unless the person has gone through this training and handling program



Qualifications for handling during public hours/programs

- ▶ Must have volunteered steadily for <2 months to show responsibility and accountability!
- ▶ Must go through this presentation with Laura or another staff member (either in a class setting or separately if no date is set for a class)
- ▶ Must practice handling the animals on your own time BEFORE presenting to guests or doing programs
- ▶ Must have basic knowledge of the species, the individual animal and husbandry information

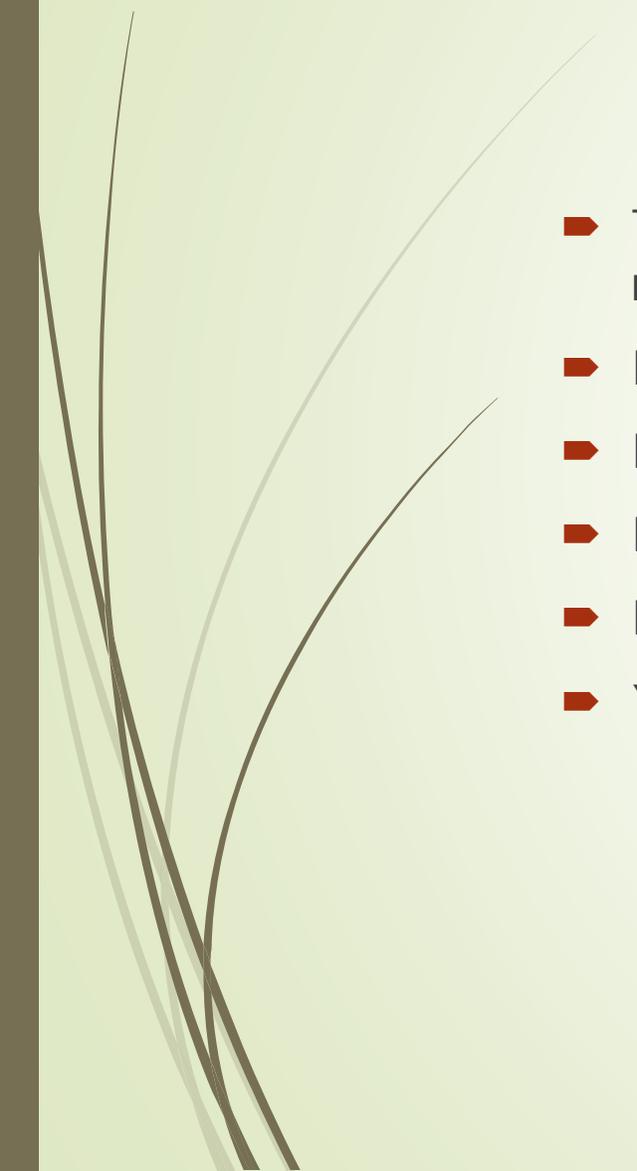


It is up to you to know your comfort level with each animal

- ▶ Some people have history holding these animals while others are starting for the first time.
- ▶ Today we will handle some of the animals and we can discuss where you feel you are and determine how much training time you will need with Laura/David/Alex



Basic rules for presenting to the public

- ▶ These are not YOUR animals. They are part of an education collection for a reason
 - ▶ Do not baby talk the animals
 - ▶ Do not anthropomorphize the animals
 - ▶ Know your audience
 - ▶ Know when to stop talking
 - ▶ You call the shots
- 



Best practice for presenting

- ▶ Prepare the audience for what you are bringing out
 - ▶ Many people have a fear of snakes etc so be sympathetic
- ▶ Ask them to remain calm and quiet
- ▶ Talk about the animal – it's history, it's life cycle etc
- ▶ Ask if they want to touch the animal
- ▶ Follow the rules for touching animals



Rules for guests to touch our snakes/lizards/pocket mouse

- 1. One person can touch at a time
- 2. Using 2 fingers, gently touch the back of the animal's body
- 3. Move in the direction of the scales/fur
- 4. Do not squeeze the snakes
 - If they want to touch the belly of the snake, use the same 2 finger rule
- 5. Make sure you have control of the animal's head the entire time
- 6. Do not allow fingers to get near the animal's mouth
- 7. Guest must use hand sanitizer after touching the animal
 - If they want to touch again, the sanitizer must be dry on their hands

If the animal is moving around/showing signs of stress, stop the touching and explain that you will try to have the animal calm down before continuing

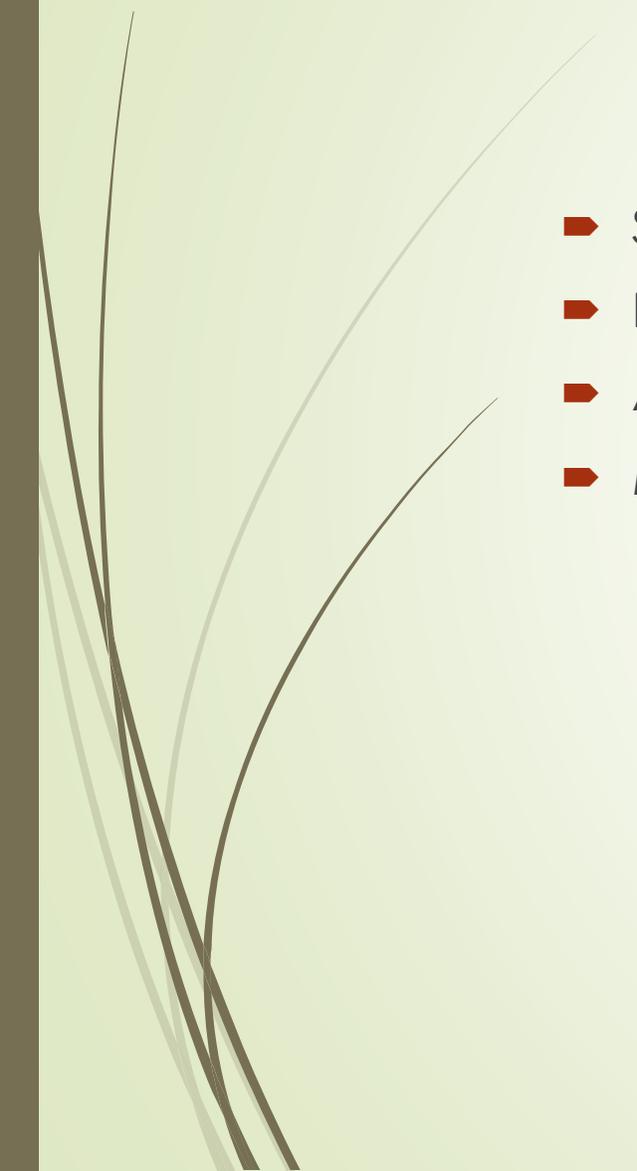


Topics for presentation

- Why snakes are good
 - Why we have a few non-native animals in our care
 - Why are these animals here
 - What Liberty Wildlife does/our mission
 - Your training/experience (relevant information only!)
- 



AND NOW THE ANIMALS

- Snakes: Bones, Lydia, Beetlejuice, Elmer, Lola, Bandit, Joya, Ruby
 - Lizards: Thor, Jose, gecko
 - Arachnids: tarantula, desert hairy scorpion
 - Mammals: Finn
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What does it mean when a snake is blue?

- When a snake is about to shed it's scales loosen from it's body – including the scale over the eye (snakes do not have eyelids!)
- Their appearance becomes dull and their eyes get a cloudy/milky color
- There are very vulnerable at this time
- **DO NOT USE A SNAKE WHEN IT IS ABOUT TO SHED OR IN MID-SHED**





Look at the feeding log

- ▶ Our snake care team lead includes Sharon Sneva, Anna Amador, Dom Macchiaroli
- ▶ (Daily care and teens care for the lizards/arachnids/birds/mammals)
- ▶ Find the feeding log in the cabinet next to the enclosures to make sure the snake has not just eaten within the last two days OR if it has not eaten the last few times it was offered – it may be hungry
 - ▶ In that case, assess the snake's attitude when you approach the enclosure



Unlock the enclosure

- ▶ The keys are in the lockbox at the end of the enclosures.
- ▶ Code is 1981 (the year Liberty Wildlife was founded)
 - ▶ DO NOT GIVE THIS INFORMATION TO THOSE WHO AREN'T TRAINED
- ▶ Look for the animal in the enclosure to assess it
- ▶ Open the front and move any furniture blocking you from reaching it
- ▶ Touch the animal gently on the back
- ▶ Pick it up gently

- ▶ REMEMBER TO ENSURE THE DOOR IS CLOSED COMPLETELY AND LOCKED AFTER YOU RETURN THE ANIMAL



Arachnids

- ▶ THIS IS TOTALLY ALEX'S DOMAIN
 - ▶ You are not required to hold them, but if you feel comfortable opening the door and moving furniture around so guests can see, feel free to learn
 - ▶ Always return furniture to proper place after you are done
 - ▶ Please wet sponges with water as needed
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Lizards



- ▶ Bearded Dragon – the bearded dragon has tough outer skin with spikes that can be irritating to people with soft skin. His skin is durable and his tail is permanently attached to his body. Never pull on it. It is better to let him fall than grab him by the tail. They like to climb a bit so it is common for them to relax calmly or climb up your arm or shirt.
- ▶ Chuckwalla – The common chuckwalla has a very stocky build. They have a belly that sits very low to the ground. They also have a very thick tail that is scaly. They seem to be overweight due to the fact that they have folds of skin that hang around the neck and along the sides of their bodies.
- ▶ Leopard Gecko – the leopard gecko has very soft skin, easily torn and wounded with rough handling. The skin is not durable though not as delicate as some other gecko species. The tail can pop off if threatened so be aware of this when handling the ensure no pressure is placed on the tail as this is an automatic response and not one the lizard decides to do.



Mammals



- ▶ Squirrels and prairie dog will be only for observation! They will bite!
- ▶ Pocket Mouse – Finn – can be held in the palm of your hand
 - ▶ Guests may touch on the back. If he starts to move too much (your hands will be like a mouse treadmill), cup both hands around him to simulate dark and quiet. Return him to enclosure if he doesn't regain calm.

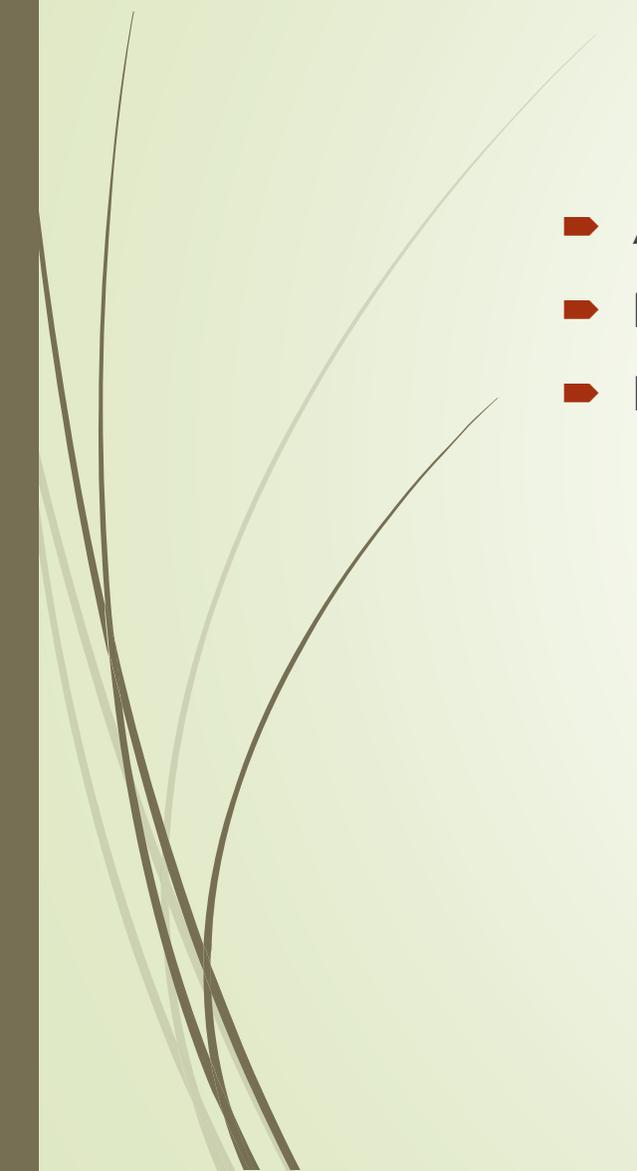


What happens if

- ▶ If an animal jumps out of your hand or falls, do your best to safely contain it and return it to its enclosure.
 - ▶ Alert Laura, Jan or Alex so we can observe for any injuries
- ▶ In an animal bites you or a guest, remain calm and return the animal to its enclosure
 - ▶ Alert Laura, Jan, Alex or Megan so we can tend to the injuries



PART TWO: Handling

- ▶ Alex: arachnids/gecko
 - ▶ David: snakes
 - ▶ Laura: dragon/chuckwalla/mouse
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After this training

- ▶ I will email you a copy of the presentation and a REPTILE QUIZ
- ▶ Fill it out and return to LauraH@LibertyWildlife.org
- ▶ Then we will discuss your comfort level with the reptiles and meet individually to decide when you are certified to handle alone
- ▶ THIS DOES NOT CERTIFY YOU TO TAKE REPTILES OFF-SITE YET
 - ▶ There are other steps to take in order to do that so we can talk about that once you have met with me