

USARK History

By Andrew Wyatt

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Reptile keeping has long been an active hobby and business in America. In the last 30 years, domestic reptile breeding has slowly evolved into a billion dollar industry involving thousands of small business men and women engaged in the free trade and commerce of animals ranging in value from \$100 to \$100,000 across all 50 states. The U.S. production and export of high-quality captive-bred reptiles represents 82 percent of reptile trade worldwide. As the business of reptiles has become large, so has the threat of unnecessary government intrusion and activism at all levels; local, state and federal.

After numerous setbacks to the reptile industry from government action, a small group of reptile keepers decided they had had enough and were driven to take collective action. In February of 2005 the North Carolina Association of Reptile Keepers (NCARK) was established as a voice for the reptile community at the state level in North Carolina. In March of 2008 these concerned men and women convened a meeting in Chicago, with representatives from around the country, to chart a new and positive course of action and involvement for the future of the reptile industry. After several days of debate and deliberation the United States Association of Reptile Keepers (USARK) was born.

Now, more than one year later, USARK is a significant and growing organization with thousands of members in all 50 states and a dozen countries. USARK has already established itself as an involved participant on legislation in 7 states. USARK sponsored legislation for responsible reptile keeping in North Carolina in January 2009, which has sailed through the North Carolina General Assembly and will be signed into law soon.

In April 2009 USARK directed a grassroots campaign that culminated in the delivery of more than 49,000 letters, and thousands more telephone calls and e-mails to the U.S. House of Representatives in regard to House Resolution 669. Currently USARK is working with the sponsors of S 373/HR 2811 "The Python Ban" to amend these bills in order to let the captive bred trade in all pythons continue.

USARK is determined to build a strong and universal understanding amongst its members and throughout the elected legislative bodies across America that will facilitate the continuation of free trade and ownership of reptiles.

Andrew Wyatt is the President of the United States Association of Reptile Keepers (USARK) and has been an avid herp enthusiast for more than 35 years. He has traveled the world and has had his animals featured in a number of television productions. For more information about USARK, [click here](#).

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