

It's Coming

By Russ Case

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Here I am with Jules Sylvester at the 2008 National Reptile Breeders' Expo. Jules provides animals, including many reptiles, to movie and television productions. He put the snakes in Snakes on a Plane. [Click image to enlarge](#)

There's an art exhibit at the Daytona show, too. Here, Carel Pieter Brest van Kempen works on another masterpiece. This is the time of year when many of the e-mails I receive from various reptile industry people contain questions along the lines of, "Are you going to Daytona?" and "Will I see you in Daytona?" There are many great reptile expos throughout the country these days – great news for reptile hobbyists everywhere – but there's no denying that Wayne Hill's National Reptile Breeders' Expo is still the biggie.

If you've never been to the Daytona show, and you're really into reptiles, you really should try to get to it someday. No matter what your taste in reptiles you're likely to find a breeder at the show who is selling exactly what you're after. Of course you could go and end up finding an entirely new species you would like to try. If this is the case, however, remember my past warnings against impulse buying. It's not always a great idea to buy an animal you had never considered keeping before, and thus may not be aware of how to care for it. However, the breeders are right there to give you advice and after talking with them you should know whether or not you would be up to the task. Plus many animals have similar care requirements. Maybe you go to the show wanting to get a Burmese python and instead a retic catches your attention. The care for them is not that different. It's when someone goes expecting to take home a leopard gecko and ends up with a Nile monitor that problems can arise.

One of the highlights of the National Reptile Breeders' Expo is the charity auction that is held on Saturday night. Many vendors contribute items that you can bid on, everything from live animals to equipment and various reptile-related tchotchkes -- and, yes, even REPTILES magazine subscriptions, of course! REPTILES sponsors a pre-auction icebreaker every year, too, with free food typically available. There is a live auction as well as a concurrent silent auction (the type an item is laid on a table, and is accompanied by a bid list on which people write their bids for that item)

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This was me before my Lasik surgery. Just kidding...it's Tattoo Pete, of course, who is a fixture at the National Reptile Breeders' Expo each year. [Click image to enlarge](#)

The Daytona silent auction raises money every year for herp conservation programs. The 2009 auction money will go to the Costa Rican Amphibian Research Center. The auction raises money for various reptile-related conservation efforts. Here's a quick breakdown of where auction money has gone in the past several years (taken from "Show Us the Money," by David Lee and Wayne Hill, REPTILES, October 2008):

- 2002: Turtle Survival Alliance, endangered turtles
- 2003: Asian Turtle Consortium, Asian turtles
- 2004: programs to help the endangered Philippine crocodile and the Orinoco crocodile
- 2005: programs to help West Indian rock iguanas
- 2006: Project Heloderma, a conservation effort to help the Guatemalan beaded lizard
- 2007: Project Bog Turtle, to help bog turtles in the southeastern U.S.
- 2008: The Gharial Conservation Alliance, to benefit the Indian gharial

All were worthy causes, and every person who purchased something during the auction played a crucial role in procuring money for these projects.

This year the money will help set up breeding ponds at the Costa Rican Amphibian Research Center (for more about this program and this year's auction, [go here](#)).

So there you have it: an opportunity to check out the latest results of the breeding efforts of many of the top reptile

breeders, access to expert advice, fellow hobbyists who are just as enthusiastic about reptiles as you, and an opportunity to help herps that need it, and maybe even get some free sandwiches immediately beforehand. What more could you want?

This year's Daytona show is August 21, 22 and 23. I'll be there, and hope some of you can make it, too. If you can't find me on the large, bustling expo floor, try Hog Heaven, one of my favorite barbecue places, right next to the Ocean Center where the expo is held. Lunch at Hog Heaven is a Daytona tradition!

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