

Pomona Reptile Super Show

Aisles at the Pomona Reptile Super Show were packed with patrons and reptiles.

January 13, 2010

Last weekend my brother Rob and I checked out the Reptile Super Show in Pomona. This was my first visit to the Pomona show. Having been to his San Diego Reptile Super Shows, I knew show organizer Ramy Guirguis could put on a good event. I was curious to see what the turnout would be this soon after the holidays, though. Were people still tired after all the holiday hubbub, or were they anxious to get out there and start spending some money on reptiles? And also, what would the animal availability in January be like?

I'm happy to report that the Pomona Fairplex was crawling with reptile enthusiasts who were eagerly checking out the vendor tables. And there were plenty of reptiles available. When I arrived in the morning there was a good-sized line waiting to get in, and that line remained well into the afternoon. The aisles inside were crowded, and I often found myself peering over the shoulders of people while trying to get a peek at the reptiles. The selection of animals at the Pomona Reptile Super Show was great, whether your preference was for lizards, turtles, snakes or tortoises. Invertebrates were represented, too, especially by Justin Kiykel's and Theresa Westfall's Tarantula, Inc. table.

Rob, ReptileChannel associate web editor Ben Weiner and I met up with Sandy Quinn, REPTILES' sales manager. I tell you, you have to love traveling to be a sales manager. Sandy is based in the Chicago area, and she visits what seems like dozens of reptile shows every year, flying all over the country in order to do so. Everyone at the shows knows her, and a typical part of attending any reptile expo with Sandy is standing by while she hugs all her friends. Later on we were joined by BowTie's Chairman of the Board, Norman Ridker, who was very impressed by the activity and enthusiasm on display at the expo.

We moseyed around the show all day Saturday. When I attend a show I'm usually there for two reasons. One is to support Sandy in her efforts, which is to visit with current and potential advertisers of REPTILES magazine. Sometimes her clients will have questions or ideas for me to consider, or I may have questions for them. We visit with each other to talk about what they're up to and what the magazine may be up to, if they're curious.

The other reason I attend shows, aside from the obvious – to get a feel for the continuing popularity of reptiles – is to recruit authors. I always seek to have the reptile-care articles in REPTILES written by the experts who are working with the animals, and one place to get some face time with those experts is a reptile expo. It's a good place for me to pitch article ideas, or have article ideas pitched to me. I think I may have already lined up a brand-new author, so the show was definitely worth my time!

Some of my authors were there. Bob Applegate, who has written for me many times, was there with his wife Marilee. Uromastyx breeder Doug Dix had some great uromastyx on display. Steve Sykes was manning the Geckos Etc. booth, this time without his wife Debra, because she was home with their new baby, Andrew. I just realized I neglected to stop by the Isis Reptiles booth to say hi to Mike and Isis Madec, who recently wrote a black-headed python article for the April REPTILES. I got to hound Allen Repashy and Philippe de Vosjoli about a new crested gecko article, as well. Dan and Colette Sutherland were busy at The Snake Keeper booth, which featured a terrific assortment of ball python morphs.

On the minds of many, of course, is bill S. 373 and how it could cripple the reptile industry were it to ever become a law. USARK had a booth, and President Andrew Wyatt was in attendance, helping to gather signatures of opponents to the bill. An auction was held Saturday night to raise funds for USARK to help in its continuing representation of the reptile industry on Capitol Hill.

Reliable regulars such as Zoo Med, Reptile Industries (featuring a great booth promoting Mark and Kim Bell's online reptile store, www.Reptmart.com), Waterland Tubs, the International Reptile Conservation Foundation, Jon's Jungle and LLL Reptile were there, of course, but one vendor that was especially interesting to see at the Pomona show was Geico Insurance. Their booth seemed to be constantly crowded. It was great to see a company such as Geico reaching out to reptile fans specifically. The Geico-gecko tie-in made them a natural to do so, of course. I hope they found it worthwhile to be there, because while reptile-specific organizations are of course the backbone of reptile shows and the entire reptile industry, "non-reptile" companies such as Geico can very much help make the hobby even more mainstream.

Rob kept commenting how impressed he was with the turnout. He typically attends bird shows, and this was his first reptile



expo. Suffice it to say that by the time we left he was trying to figure out a plan for setting up a bearded dragon enclosure. Yep, the Pomona Reptile Super Show was bustling, and if my day there was any indication of what other 2010 reptile expos have in store, it's going to be a good year!