

Python Persecution Continues

The bill that could ban pythons is not going away.

November 6, 2009

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Reticulated Python

It's a regular occurrence in recent months to find a USARK e-mail in my inbox alerting me to the latest legislative efforts aimed at curtailing some aspect of the reptilekeeping hobby. This week the big news was that a hearing on H.R. 2811 was going to be held before the House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security on November 5. The hearing was postponed, though, until November 6, the day you're reading this blog.

I remember the days when this sort of news was a rarity. Nowadays, sadly, it's a common occurrence. This is ample evidence of the ongoing efforts to curb the reptilekeeping hobby. Today the pythons, tomorrow the beardies? It's not hard to imagine that is the road we could be heading down.

When bemoaning the existence of bills such as H.R. 2811, reptile fans always wonder why dog and cat owners don't come under the same persecution as reptile owners. Though I have no hard numbers handy at the moment, I believe that there are more dog-related injuries inflicted upon humans than reptile injuries, and it's common knowledge that cats eat a lot of birds, including songbirds that are becoming increasingly rare.

The reason the keeping of dogs and cats is not attacked to the same degree as reptile ownership is a simple matter of numbers. There are nowhere near as many people keeping reptiles and amphibians as there are people keeping dogs and cats, and organizations that want to end the keeping of pets know this. Some of these groups think that no pets of any kind should be kept, and that pets are pretty much the modern version of slaves. In furthering their agenda they have to start out small and go after the smaller industries. The reptile industry is large and accounts for a lot of money being funneled into U.S. coffers. The dog and cat segments, however, are huge. Any attempt to severely limit the abilities of people to keep these animals would surely be unsuccessful. The outcry would be a thousand times larger than that of the reptile enthusiasts.

However, with every little success, the groups that want to abolish the keeping of pets come a little bit closer to their ultimate goal. I wouldn't be surprised if we eventually began witnessing a larger number of increasingly restrictive legislative efforts aimed at the more popular pet segments. Give it time. These groups have to keep themselves alive, after all, and they're not going away any time soon -- especially when they receive the continued support of ignorant celebrities and other unenlightened individuals. Frankly, I find it a little scary at just how committed some of their members are. Case in point: the two Humane Society of the United States members who adopted dogs and cats from local animal shelters, and then who euthanized them themselves. This case was well-documented. Did the two get in any big trouble? No. All they ended up being convicted of was Littering, because they dumped the animal carcasses into a private dumpster.

Of course, the main fuel to the python fire is the effect of escaped snakes on the environment. I don't think it's wrong to be concerned about the environment, but I do think it's wrong to support blanket legislation that will likely do nothing other than have a detrimental effect on the livelihoods, as well as the simple pursuit of happiness, of many U.S. citizens.

All pet fans should pay attention to what's happening in the reptile hobby. These events might be the bellwether of what could happen to other people's lives someday.

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