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**BULLETIN**

of the

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November 2022



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## A Personal Rock Rattlesnake (*Crotalus lepidus*) Envenomation of the Right Index Fingertip, or, I Pick My Nose with Lefty Now

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### Prologue

I mostly call the Rock Rattlesnake (*Crotalus lepidus*) “lep” in this piece. I also hang the moniker “willie” on the Ridge-nosed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus willardi*). See Figure 1 for images of each to help clarify what a lep is, and what a willie is. I will use proper common and Latin names for any other herpetofauna described.

A good way to start this is to quote John Wayne. In his role as Sergeant Stryker in the movie *Sands of Iwo Jima*, he recited the script that became one of his most famous movie lines. “Life is tough. It’s even tougher if you’re stupid!” In a nutshell, that sums up the story about to unfold.

The task at hand is rather daunting. The words ahead are going to make me look very stupid. But it is a story that *should* be told. And the person telling the story *should* be the guy who—for ten seconds of his life—witnessed a roughly 60-cm total length Rock Rattlesnake chomp hold of his right index fingertip. The author had the perfect ringside seat for it all. His astonishment was so overwhelming that he saw, as if in slow motion, the mouth open, both fangs swing out, and the head rise above the fingertip. After a moment’s hesitation—fangs still out—with a downward lunge, she burrowed her head into that fingertip. Both fangs entered the finger up to the gumlines of the snake. Next, the author witnessed the left side of the lep’s head and face compress against that fingertip until such point as the left venom gland was squeezed bone dry. The author next noticed, and had plenty of time to admire, that lep’s head shift to the right, and repeat the process. She had the good sense not to withdraw her left fang while doing so. Ms. Lep, AKA “Repp’s lep,” would

probably still be burrowing into that fingertip today, had I not (ten seconds into the process), realized flipping the snake away was the proper course of action.

Of course, the flipping away action did nothing to enhance the ability of my buddy to get a body temperature reading off his \$120 cloacal thermometer, which was stuffed up the snake’s nether regions. The 120-dollar wonder promptly withdrew from the snake’s ass in midair. (I speculate that some snaky sphincter action assisted the ejaculative process. But that is just a guess.) The snake landed harmlessly in a grassy patch about 10 meters upslope of me. The cloacal thermometer landed with an audible clink in the perfect little rock patch at the bottom of the arroyo I had been following, and broke into two distinct pieces. It goes without saying that all the mercury within the thermometer drained into the rock pile, which theretofore was primo habitat for two species of montane rattlesnake. (We didn’t find *squat* there for years afterward.) This was *all* where stupid began, but it was by no means the stupidest part of the day. Everything went downhill from there, and the stupider it got, the tougher my life became. As any astute reader with a lot of endurance will note, we start with stupid, and end with stupid in this piece. In other words, there is still a *lot* of stupid to come. Way more than just a day or two. As the closing remarks indicate, stupid continues to this very day.

### Passion and the Ridge-nosed Rattlesnakes (*Crotalus willardi*) of Arizona

The author settled in Arizona in May of 1981. He arrived with visions of being able to find many things herpetological in



Figure 1. (Left) Rock Rattlesnake (*Crotalus lepidus*) from the vicinity of Overhage Canyon. The author uses the word “lep” often in the text to describe them. (Right) Ridge-nosed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus willardi*)—often called “willie” in the text. Images by the author, Cochise County, Arizona.

nature. But there were three biggies on his personal life list that took precedence over all others. The other two matter, but not now. The only rattlesnake to be on the top three list was a willie. It took 9 years, 2 months and 22 days for me to personally find my first Arizona willie. Yes, gentle reader, we have indeed shifted off the leps for a few sentences, in order to discuss the willies. The willies led us to the leps, but the willies were *always* the personal driving force for anything that I participated in at the time. Leps came my way easily; the willies did not. We must consider this 9 year, 2 month, and 22 day thing as part of the package of the day about to be described as playing a *huge* role in the second wave of stupid to engulf us. Being able to routinely find willies was a new thing at the time. As it turned out, this new thing was a privilege that I wasn't willing to walk away from.

Before going any further, we need to introduce you to Frank "Ridgenose" Watkins. Frank is the guy whose \$120 thermometer was broken as part of the previously described flandickery. Hence, ever since that moment, my friend Frank has been a bit of a sorehead about it all. Hey—I offered to pay for half! Frank also took exception to a brief but public accounting of what happened here. It is best for all parties involved that he remains as "Frank" throughout the remainder of this narrative. Frank is not his real name. I will do my best to be kind to the poor guy, for I put him through a lot!

Frank was our leader throughout the project that grew from our initial contact with willies. There was a gradual ramping up of sorts. It all started with simply finding willies. Frank informed two premier herpetologists—and I mean the topmost rungs of premier Ph.D. pit viper folk—of what we were finding. These are two names that I will take to the grave with me. They encouraged Frank to do something more than simply find and photograph the snakes. They were willing to get Frank whatever equipment he needed to proceed, and tacked him onto their scientific collecting permit. Then the project grew to full-up processing any willies *and* leps encountered. The project eventually evolved into a full-blown radio-telemetry study on both species. But the latter event happened *after* the day about to be described. We were in the mark, capture and recapture phase the day that this story begins. And that day was:

### 13 July 1991

There were three of us involved. Frank was driving. My 16-year-old son Tim was along. So was my son Tim's father. At precisely 0800 hours, Frank's bright red Pathfinder edged to a halt. As had become customary, we parked on the shady side of a large juniper. Upon stepping out of our chariot, and into the knee-high grass, our pantlegs and boots immediately demonstrated the lush patch to be perfectly wet. By "perfectly wet," I mean perfect for willies. Not too dry, not too wet, just right. Though this was still rather early-on in our willie days, we knew whether or not a day was going to be good as soon as we stepped out of the vehicle. Substantial and cold rain had fallen the night before. Those poor willies were wet, cold and miserable, hunkered down in their clumps of bunch grass and shallow talus moorings. It was just *now* starting to warm up, and the skies were clear from coast to coast. We had parked roughly a mile deep in the sweeping canyon that we would soon be assailing.

We named this canyon "Overhage Canyon" after Phil Overhage, who was the guy who had shown us this spot two years previous. Overhage Canyon is roughly 100 meters of grassy flats wide, flanked to either side by gently sloped, scrub-oak-peppered hills. It runs northward and upward for several miles, narrowing as it ascends. It remains unchanged southward all the way into Mexico. Two crudely dammed ponds feed a shallow, semi-permanent riparian corridor that flows through the canyon bottom. The hillsides to either side of this vast channel are in turn gouged by twisting arroyos that are drainages that flow into Overhage Canyon. The bottoms of these mini-gorges are packed with boulders and rocks, some of which are poised on the inclines to either side. (Those were the best ones—shallow and sporadic talus to either side, and moderately deep talus up the center.) Scrub oak and juniper cast shade over these rocks and boulders, but they also allow enough filtered sunlight through to provide advantageous thermoregulation. The game plan was to follow the wider draws that wound their way upward on the east side of our main canyon. One person took the center of the draw, the other two flanked either side. Once we reached the top, we shifted southward to the next draw over, and went back down in the same fashion.

Within five minutes of heading toward the first (and best) side draw of Overhage Canyon, Frank scored. The three of us were hastily hoofing in single file along a trail that serves as a shortcut between our parking spot and the left turn that would take us up our best draw. We technically were not even looking yet. We were just blazing nut-to-butt along the path, with Frank leading the charge. Frank suddenly stopped dead in his tracks, nearly causing a three-person pileup. In very nonchalant fashion, he said: "Oh! It's a ridgie." (Frank called willies "ridgies." I don't think any of us ever once called them by their full name.) No lies were told, for indeed a coiled adult willie was pancaked on the trail in front of Frank. I was more than a little irritated with the snake for being such a no-brainer gimme willie. It coils on the trail? But I was even more peeved at Frank, who found a snake who was there especially for me. It was *my job* to find the obvious ones. By virtue of leading the charge, he found a willie that was meant for me! By this point in time I had personally found a few of them, but damn few. Frank was *always* scoring on the little tan-colored buzzworms, to the point where he was almost pleasantly bored with the act. "Oh, it's ridgie," he nonchalantly says while stifling a yawn. My brain was screaming: "How's about I slug you?"

But there wasn't time for hooks to be thrown. In a flash of tan and white, the willie broke out of its coil, and began to head into the tall grass that flanked the trail. Frank deftly hooked the snake out of the grass, and pinned the head against the trail substratum. He snagged the head, picked it up, and stretched her out. She was a big one, maybe 60 cm (~ 2 feet) in total length. It was to be my job to work the tail. I swabbed the end of Frank's cloacal thermometer with an alcohol wipe, and slid it on in. I do believe that was all we were doing at the time. Grab snake, anal probe same, and release. If there was more to it—and there probably was—the rest is forgotten. Regardless of what we did or didn't do with the snakes this day, this was the early phases of what would evolve into something bigger, better, and much more thorough.



We scored another willie in our first draw. All went as before. End of story. However, after this second willie was processed, I was no longer thrilled with the poop chute thermometer end of things. “Hey Frank,” sez I, while wiping some wayward snake musk from hands to pants, “I’m tired of dealing with the dumb end of these snakes. How about I take the smart end on the next one?” To this, Frank was amenable. (He may have been less agreeable had he known that I knew *nothing* about head-pinning and picking up rattlesnakes.) We eventually worked our way back down another draw on the east side of the canyon, and picked our way across the stream and grassy flats to work the west side. As soon as we arrived at the bottom of one of the many rocky draws on that west flank, my eyes detected the linear flash of an orange and pink snake gliding across open terrain. I saw it for all of two seconds before it slipped into a pile of loose bark near the trunk of a dead alligator juniper. Upon lifting the most tantalizing slab on top of the bark pile, it was noted that the orange and pink snake was a 457-mm (~18-inch) total length Eastern Patch-nosed Snake (*Salvadora grahamiae*). It is well that this snake was snatched the second it was noted. That act spared bark from flying everywhere. The habitat remained pristine.

In a word, the Patch-nosed Snake was a SCREAMER! I have never seen anything like it—in the wild or among a myriad internet images. I have about 20 images in hand, and viewed hundreds on the web. There was not *anything* that rivaled this one. See Figure 2 for an idea of what *Salvadora* from this canyon normally look like. The one in the images is nice, and conveniently the same size as my SCREAMER. In order to avoid a lengthy written discourse on what my SCREAMER looked like, the reader should refer to the *Salvadora* in Figure 2. My SCREAMER had a bright, vibrant orange-colored stripe down the spine, flanked to either side by the customary black stripe, and everything below the black was pink! Wow—huh?

Frank was the only one carrying a camera this day. To my amazement, he wasn’t interested at all photographing this snake. We already had this gorgeous *dandy* in hand. One shutter click and done! But he completely eschewed the photo op. He called it “Just a damn patchnose.” GAAA! We probably saw five willies for every “damn patchnose” snake in this canyon. But Frank’s reaction is to be expected from your average *Crotalus* freak. He didn’t want to waste his film with the most beautiful



**Figure 2.** Eastern Patch-nosed Snake (*Salvadora grahamiae*) from near Overhage. Think orange top stripe, black stripes upper flanks, pink lower flanks. See text for details. Image by the author.

“damn patchnose” snake ever found. But I can really only blame myself for not carrying my own camera. (I did not purchase one until 1993.)

Soon after the snubbed SCREAMER was released, I was working my way up the center of one of the previously-described arroyos. I shined my mirror into a snarl of exposed juniper roots on a soil embankment to my left. In a blaze of glory, the reflected sunlight revealed a dog-ugly, dingy-colored lep stretched out in a mini-cavern within and behind the tangle. Frank handed me his hook. I slipped the smart end of that hook under dead center of the dog-ugly lep, and whisked her on out. The pin went well, and the snake’s head was deftly clamped between thumb and middle finger. As was later highlighted many times over by Frank and others, I should have controlled the head of this vile wench from hell with my index finger. Whatever that index finger should have been doing, it most certainly was *not* controlling the head of that *ugly* little lep. It just kind of hung there for long enough to act as bait, and the lep took it: hook, whine and stinker! Ouch—really! The lack of control of the head allowed the snake to easily twist out of my inept grasp.

The time that Repp’s lep bite ensued was 0847 hours. In 47 minutes, we had found two willies, a SCREAMER *Salvadora grahamiae*, and a lep. As soon as I picked Repp’s lep off the ground, Frank was ready for the dumb end. It was during the initial phases of being anal probed that the lep’s head split in half at the jaw line. The bottom half slid leftward, the top jaw slid to the right. The action could best be described as a scissors opening to make a cut. The alignment of the lower jaw with regard to the top was cocked sideways to normal at an angle of about 45 degrees. (Think of the quirky ways any viper will “yawn” after biting a prey item. The yawn will often include the bottom and top jaws going sideways of each other before the reset phase of jowl alignment.) The fangs in the upper jaw swung proud of the nostril and each seemed to develop a mind of its own. They were performing a spider-walk of sorts, clawing at air while straining to reach that index finger. A split second later, with a powerful little surge, the lep twisted her neck out from between my thumb and middle finger. Then came that awful moment where the determined little snake got her head above that index finger, and the 6-mm-long (~¼ in) fangs were poised to plunge downward. That would have been an opportune time to drop the snake, but my mind was in a form of shock and awe about it all. As her head descended upon that finger, both fangs made contact with skin, and readily sunk out of sight. Her left fang entered the skin beneath the fingernail, and the right fang slid along the thumb side of it. Her bottom jaw then slid back to the right, and clamped onto the fleshy part of the finger. Then followed the leisurely compression of the venom glands—a form of milking herself directly into my system. Most snakebites are lightning-fast. Lunge—wham—withdraw—quicker than the eye can follow. This bite was much more deliberate. The snake was no doubt enjoying the notion that she was going to mess me up! She had every reason to hate me with every fiber of her being, what with the violation of her nether region and enduring my bumbling grasp of her neck. As soon as the snake was *finally* cast aside, the two puncture wounds bled profusely. I saw the opportunity to get some venom out of the wounds, and began performing oral suction on my finger. At this point, there



**Figure 3.** Author's right index finger, 15 minutes post-venenation. This and the following three images by "FRW."

was no cutting required, as the blood was flowing freely out of the puncture wounds. It was all suck – spit! Suck – spit! Repeat “suck – spit” until you are little less than an idiot, and you understand the process.

There was little doubt in the minds of two of us that the day was over at that moment. The third party thought the bite was no valid reason to put an end to the Cinderella Day that we were experiencing, and said so. Nevertheless, a stop at the truck was deemed appropriate. That act was probably the only lick of sense we showed. Had I lapsed into anaphylaxis, every step toward that truck was one less step they would have had to drag me. We were there in 15 minutes. The person who eschewed photographing a damn patchnose was all for taking an image of my bloody fingertip (Figure 3). Then came the showdown. *Eye didn't want to leave. Eye wanted to keep going!* I reasoned that any pussy can run away from a trivial love tap by a dinky, dingy little rattlesnake. Real men — *real tough guys* — keep going. If the bite ain't from a 12-foot-long King Cobra, there is no need for alarm. What could this dinky little shittin' rattlesnake do to me? Peh! And besides, *real* men don't wear out as the day wears on. Tim was of course in for whatever. I later found out that the fact that I wasn't crying greatly raised his estimation of his dad as a tough guy. (Any form of respect from my son was usually very short-lived, and this was one of those cases.) At first, Frank was all like “Are you sure?”, but once the willie and lep count began ramping up, he too was enjoying himself. The lack of a cloacal thermometer eliminated the need for processing. Between the hours of 0900 to 1300, we left three willies and four leps in peace. Not to mention a fat, sassy and very pregnant female Black-necked Gartersnake (*Thamnophis cyrtopsis*).

The afterglow of the day was still with me as we piled into Frank's Pathfinder. Damn right! Four willies, five leps, a pregnant gartersnake, and a SCREAMER *Salvadora* had me forgetting all about that right hand of mine. At this point, it was swollen half again larger than normal, and the swelling was crawling its way uphill beyond my wrist. Two angry, dark-colored blebs began to form above the entrance wounds of the fangs (Figure 4). By the time we jostled our way to the main drag, the warm and fuzzy afterglow of a fantastic herping day began to diminish. Said glow was replaced by the highly efficacious pain receptors residing in my fingertip. The hand began to throb in a most painful manner.



**Figure 4.** Author's hand, four hours post-venenation.

Knowing that I had just made a mess of this day, not to mention Frank's study, had me enduring it all without complaint.

But Frank was no stranger to venenation. He too was a member of the White Fang Club—many times over. He was the magnet, and several different forms of venomous snakes were steel. As we continued our two-hour drive home, he was aware of what I was going through. We began to strategize what might happen next. For pecuniary reasons, I was against surrendering to a hospital. But there might be two factors that would force the fiscal reaming that a hospital visit offers. The first was pain. Visualize placing your hand splayed on a cinder block while pounding on it with a hefty rawhide mallet. Don't forget to whack a finger or two in the process. Yep—that sums it up nicely. If I was to avoid the hospital, I would face days—if not weeks—of this kind of pain. The second concern was tissue damage. With two blebs already afflicting the punctures, the flesh rotting the skin off my finger was a very real possibility. When we finally got to Frank's house, a half bottle of pain meds suddenly appeared in my backpack, and was sent home with me. At least for the near term, the mysterious pills, presumably a gift from one of God's angels, might help me to try to ride out the pain.

By the time I got home (I have no memory of how I got there), it was pushing four in the afternoon—roughly seven hours post-venenation. At that point, the swelling was extending beyond my elbow. My forearm resembled that of Pop-eye the sailor man all amped up with a snootful of spinach. At the time, my association with the Tucson Herpetological Society (THS) had me rubbing shoulders with some impressive people. One of these people was Jude McNally, who was then the director of the Arizona Poison Control Center. Jude was a licensed doctor of pharmacology who specialized in toxicology. He dealt with stings and bites all day long, every working day. Jude had given me his cell phone number a few years previous, and I did the first smart thing that I had done all day by dialing that number. Jude answered on the first ring, and I laid out the situation. His first question to me was if there were any blebs (blisters) forming in the region of the fang punctures. He seemed more concerned with that than the swelling. When I affirmed that there were indeed two blebs forming, he tried to persuade me to go to the hospital. But Jude is a gentleman in that he is both gentle and a man. He accepted my cries of poverty as a factor for gutting this thing out. But he also promised he would be near his

phone all day and night. If I changed my mind about the hospital, I was to call him first. Two hours later, the pain and swelling were such that I made that call. It was time to pay the fee! Apparently, Jude expected that phone call. He had already alerted a noted snakebite expert, Dr. Richard Dart, of my situation. Jude put me on hold while he called Dr. Dart. That took all of 20 seconds. I was to report to the emergency ward front desk of the University Medical Center in 45 minutes. That didn't give us a whole lot of time! But Dianna, who was a bastion of support through all this crap, drove me there.

Hey reader! A tip for you: If you ever want to get past the front desk of *any* emergency ward, just tell 'em: "Snakebite!" That got me "in" so fast that I barely had time to relish the angry expressions of those 30 or so other people who had been piled up ahead of us. I was "in" so fast that I got there *before* Dr. Dart did! I got "in" so fast that I'm already getting ahead of myself in the telling! Back up and rock on Rog!

Once past the desk, I was placed face up on a gurney and whisked away—watching with fascination as the tubular fluorescent lights whizzed by quicker than the centerline stripes on a fast-flying interstate. Whoever was pushing that jalopy of mine knew the meaning of the word "STAT!" Yehaw! *What a rush!* I wonder if the breathless orderly knew it had taken me nearly 11 hours to get there? Might he have slackened his pace any had he known? But everything was on a STAT pace. From the second I was on the gurney until I was in a curtained Dilbertville cubicle of the ER, everything was STAT! STAT! STAT! The ER head nurse, Nurse Ratched (I think that was her name) also had her mouth flying in STAT fashion. "Ratched on STAT" was most displeased with my decision to wait so long before paying her this visit. Words like "stupid" and "idiot" emanated from her gullet. With a few "You know better than this" 's thrown in there for good measure. I was probably just farting in the wind with my beautifully phrased rebuttals. Nurse Ratched didn't seem to grasp that there were 10,000 reasons for being late. Each with a dollar sign in front. And now, thanks to *her*, there were now 10,001 reasons to be late. As STAT and Nurse Ratched raged on around me, a doctor—NOT Dr. Dart—who we already know was not present because I got ahead of myself in the previous paragraph. No! This doctor was a lanky beanpole of a man who was all tricked out in a Green Hornet costume, mask and all. He marched in, and barked an order to get some ice and a bucket. His intent was clear. He was going to ice that puppy down! Bad move, and I was on that like scum on a pond. "Don't you *dare* bring any ice!" Ratched on STAT jumps in there with "Oh, so now you're going to tell *us* how to do *our* job?" And I'm snapping right back with: "If you think you're icing this down, hell yeah! I'm telling you how to do your job. That is the *worst* thing you could do right now!" Thankfully, Dr. Dart made his entrance at that critical point, Nurse Ratched and the Green Hornet (Dr. Frost?) left, and things were instantly under control.

Dr. Dart presented a polished professional demeanor, styling in his spiffy three-piece suit, tie and polished shoes. A shock of curly brown hair, neatly combed, rose above thick eyebrows, and his eyes seemed to fire out from behind his glasses. They burned with a form of quiet wisdom, and his neatly trimmed beard and Lance Armstrong physique helped to solidify the

image of a type of man who is *always* the right guy for the job. I was in good hands. And he sent the ice brigade packing as soon as it arrived.

Dart had treated so many snakebites that this was going to be routine for him. But he was truly wowed by the damage Repp's lep had done. I know that to be true because he said "Wow!" at his first inspection. They got me sitting more upright while a gang of three got me into the gown and on a drip IV. About this time, Jude McNally entered, and he too was awestruck by what this little kung fu rattler had done to me. He got all wide-eyed and must have said "I'm *really* impressed" at least three times. (I'm convinced that the punch behind the bite was perhaps turbocharged by a certain rectal discomfort the snake was experiencing. But that is just speculation.) While Dart ordered and awaited the arrival of 15 vials of antivenom, he showed the required caution of injecting me with a tiny amount of the "good stuff." We speak of the horse-serum-based product manufactured by Wyeth Laboratories—injected at full strength directly into my arm. Had there been any kind of reaction, what followed may have been different. We waited five minutes, no angry zits grew from where needle met skin, done deal! Meanwhile, the good Dr. Dart had ordered another IV for me while we watched for Mount Acne to appear. When no reactionary zit appeared, we were back to STAT! The IV arrived. STAT! it was plugged in. STAT! The new IV was loaded with ten vials of Wyeth's "Antivenin (Crotalidae) Polyvalent" mixed with saline solution. He saved the other five vials for later. He also was kind enough to inject some morphine into me, and then, add some more into the hopper of the first IV. And I was feeling so GREAT all of sudden. Why *did* I wait so long for this, anyway? Those were my thoughts as I passed from consciousness into the blessed oblivion that followed. While I was out cold, they moved me to a private room near both the ICU and Emergency Ward. I was not awake for the move, but I'd bet it happened STAT!

"Mr. Repp? Mr. Repp? We need you up to wake now. We need you to sign this form that gives us permission to perform a fasciotomy." Oh yeah, doped up or not, and even though it was 0200 hours, I was *wide awake* now! "*A fasciotomy? WTF for?*"

Yes sirs and ma'ams, two highly paid and pleasantly bored third-shift surgeons took it upon themselves to try to earn their keep by slitting my finger up to my elbow in several places, disfiguring me for life. A fasciotomy is a treatment that might be used in extreme cases, but I was nowhere near the point of needing it. And any such procedures would have to be cleared by Dr. Dart in any case. These two morons were *way* out of their lane. As soon as the two knuckleheads saw that they weren't going to peel me like a banana, slicker than greased snot, they pulled the old bait and switch. "Oh no, Mr. Repp. You misunderstood us. What needs to be done here is a compartment test. That is merely a precursor to a fasciotomy. This will measure the pressure in your arm to help us ascertain if a fasciotomy is the right course of action." So, I bought into that, and signed their form. Bap, they were gone for a blessed 20 minutes or so. While I was waiting on them, I began to assess my new digs. I noticed a blue-colored plastic-plunger-like affair that had a silver button in the center. The plunger was connected to a device not unlike a bread box, which in turn had a clear tube full of viscous clear



**Figure 5.** Author's torso, resplendent in hospital gown, 24 hours post-venomation.

liquid vertically mounted to it. The plunger was connected directly to the clear tube. When I depressed the silver button, I saw the tube drain to bone dry while entering the IV drip needle in my right arm.. Yeah, *baby!* Self-administered morphine! As soon as I knew what it was, I *floored* that plunger. Why *did* I wait so long to come here?

It is well that I pumped up on ye old vitamin M before the two knuckleheads returned. I was going to need every drop of the morphine that I had just squandered and *more* by the time they were through with me. They wheeled in some kind of electronics enclosure that was infested with gizmos, gauges and connections. On the same cart as the enclosure was a dizzying array of cables. Much flandickery ensued while the two brainiacs fumbled to figure out which cable went where. When all was deemed ready, they produced a rectangular plastic box. When the box was cracked opened, and the contents revealed, my buzz was completely killed. Morphine fled my body like rats off a sinking ship. For inside this box were two 6-inch-long by 3-mm ( $\frac{1}{8}$ -in) diameter needles. The two needles were connected to a single cord, that terminated in a connector. Said connector was plugged into the last remaining port, and each knucklehead grabbed one of the needles and approached my forearm from opposite sides. I've got to hand it to them—they were quick! I only had time to scream out one comment as both needles sunk halfway into each arm. My crude comment centered on a matriarch and fornication, and was loud enough to wake the entire hospital. "Are we still friends" asked they in unison. "Hell no! *I hate you guys. WTF are you doing to me,*" came my response.

Well, the machine sort of danced on its cart, and for the next half hour, the sound of whooshing and disgusting slurpy sounds filled the room. I also imagined I heard the sound of a hospital cash register going "Ka-ching" 2,573 times—once for each dollar that this was going to cost me. When they *finally* withdrew the needles, there was no blood. But the puncture wounds began to weep a vile yellowish fluid that had a disgusting odor. That yellowish, viscous ooze continued to leak out of those two puncture wounds for two full days! In a way, maybe this leakage helped me to avoid a fasciotomy. There was a lot of pressure vented out of my forearm through each puncture. Each weep hole emitted a steady trickle of yellow ooze. Thank God and Greyhound, the two surgeons eventually vanished, and I was allowed to sleep the rest of night unmolested.



**Figure 6.** The author's right hand 24 hours post-venomation. Note the necrosis near the fingernail.

Eliminating most of the fluff of what happened the next day, Dr. Dart appeared at 0800-ish. He was not happy to note the weeping puncture holes in my forearm. He admired these with a quick scowl and a shake of his head. But being the pro that he is, it was all dismissed without further discourse. I would like to think that my two ghoulish knuckleheads caught some form of flak over it all, but that is something I will never know. Dr. Dart was still concerned with the swelling, and loaded me up with five more vials of Wyeth. This was the last time antivenom was administered. A total of 15 vials had been consumed. I remained in my room the entire day. There was a steady stream of visitors—mostly idly curious herpers who wanted their looky-loos. Because of visiting hour guest limitations, poor Dianna and Tim spent most of this day in the waiting room. Those who loved me best played second fiddle to my herp buddies. Sad! Frank stopped by fairly early as well, and snapped the images seen in Figures 5 and 6 almost exactly 24 hours post-bite. Should the images not be enough to go by, at this point, the blebs had grown considerably, my hand resembled a catcher's mitt, and my right arm rivaled that of Arnold Schwarzenegger. The swelling continued past my shoulder, and into the right side of my chest. The pain was such that even my right man-boob was throbbing!

All day long, my hand was elevated above my head—with an easy disconnect—in an effort to move the venom (and the Wyeth) through my system. My friend and fellow White Fang Club member Bill Savary stopped by to chat. At one point, he told me to disconnect my hand and lower it beside my bed. When I did, it was: *whoa baby—did that ever hurt!* The throbbing went from head to toe to—well, I guess we've discussed sphincters enough already. I've always said my real friends are trying to kill me. I guess Bill became my *real* friend at that moment.

The last big event of the night was the TV crew. They were doing a news segment on snakebites, checked the local hospitals for a good "mark," and guess who they found? Yep! I got to be on TV! I think the interview went well, but they cut everything but a wide-eyed Roger Repp, all decked out in his pretty blue gown, right man-boob exposed, telling the world "And then she bit me. I said "Oh, NO!" A bunch of dialogue was eliminated, and ended with "and it *really, really hurts.*" In all, my air time



was maybe ten seconds. Don't most people get 15 minutes? There was a whole lot of other stuff said, but they cut it. I'm glad they left in what they did. But "Oh, NO" were not my words at the moment of the Repp lep bite. How about "*Sunnova bitch!* She bit me!" (See Repp, 2018.)

Right after News 13 left, Nurse Ratched checked back in. The reader may recall that I did not exactly make a great first impression with her in the introductory moments of our new life together. Upon noting her scowl (think "Wizard of Oz" minus the broomstick) as she entered, I brightened, and scornfully growled: "Oh, good—it's *you!* Hey, did you ever find that bucket of ice for me? I've been waiting over 24 hours!" Of course, that antagonizing utterance was stupid for so many reasons that we won't go into them. Isn't there a song about tugging on Superman's cape? How about "and you don't mess around with Ratched?" All this to say that this article still has plenty of stupid left in it. Right down to the very last sentences!

Nurse Ratched demonstrated that she was maintaining her usual jocular sense of humor by suggesting that she would return with the bucket as soon as she could. There was more, but I'm not sure exactly what she told me, for she spoke in medical jargon that I didn't understand. I think her words implied that she had a plan for what to do with that bucket when she returned. But I grew suspicious when she told me she'd be sending for somebody to help turn me over for the procedure. I thanked her for her kind offer of proper bucket lodging, but declined the treatment.

As she flitted about the room, she took it upon herself to offer that the story of my bite was dull and ordinary. She went on to inform me that "we see this sort of thing every day. In *my* world, you are nothing special. The only reason you were chosen is because the other guy they had in mind died. What a pity! Why do I think that the wrong one died?" She dusted off her visit by mumbling something like "You've had too much of this already. Sweet dreams." Before I could gather myself to remonstrate, she disconnected my blessed morphine plunger and ripped it out of my hand. And then, in STAT fashion, she was gone. Was it something I said? While I think her sneaky little tactic could best be described as "dirty fighting," I feel like I got off lightly when she did not return with the bucket.

Through the magical process known as writing, we fast forward to Monday, 15 July. I awoke to encouraging signs that things were better. The swelling had stopped, and was working its way backward. But the finger? Take your standard, worst-ever toothache, plant it into your fingertip, and you get the idea. Add the ambience of a localized form of fingertip leprosy to your experience, and you get a better idea. I was a hurting unit, but improving. An alert day-shift nurse (she called me "Sweetie") noticed my morphine factory had been shut down. That operation was apparently premature according to my chart. The problem was quickly solved when "she-who-called-me-Sweetie" produced a magic pill—and *that* bad boy beat the *tar* out of their puny "ripped-off-by-Ratched" device. Dr. Dart visited, announced that he was pleased with my progress, but I would not be discharged until that evening. I was well taken care of until about 1800 hours. At that point, the nurses slid the last IV needle out. Following that, an orderly cleaned and neatly bandaged the many holes in both arms.

To demonstrate how things have changed regarding opioids through the past 30+ years, I was handed a bottle of 30 pain relievers, with directions to take one to two as needed for pain, every four hours. I believe these were five milligrams of the good stuff, and 325 milligrams acetaminophen. These days, doctors and hospitals don't do any such thing as hand a patient *anything*. *Especially* opioids. There are some *real* grouches manning the morphine supply lines these days! I was also handed an appointment card that indicated I was to report to Dr. Dart for a follow-up visit in four days.

I returned to work for the first time on that Friday. My office was conveniently close to the University Medical Center, and I was able to kill two birds with one stone by reporting to work and Dr. Dart on the same day. When I visited Dr. Dart, he had both Jude and one of Jude's workmates with him. This workmate took one look at my finger, and told me flatly "You are going to have a sore finger for at least six months." At the time, I thought he was a jerk for saying that. But it turned out that his prognosis was actually very kind. That was 31-plus years ago, and I *still* have a sore finger! While my condition was improving, my right hand was swollen and throbbing. Dr. Dart asked me to make a fist with that hand. Three of my fingers and thumb loosely cooperated with the effort, but all I could get out of my index finger was a 30-degree range of motion. Dart was not favorably impressed, and informed me that without PT (physical therapy), the finger might require amputation. He spoke, I listened. Before leaving his office he cut me a scrip for five killer pain meds. I was to go to PT five times, and take one of these 30 minutes before each treatment. He handed me a card with my first PT appointment already scheduled.

I dutifully returned to the PT ward at the University Medical Center on Monday, 22 July. I was treated by a kindly physical therapist who was roughly my age. She was a middle-aged hippie of sorts, slender in build, with long straight dishwater blonde hair parted down the middle, pleasant angular features, and amiable manner. We shall call her "Cat Woman," for her office wall was decorated with photos of her many cats and two cat calendars. Cat figurines and stuffed animal kitty toys were tastefully displayed in every possible roost. She started the visit by handing me a one-page comic strip of sorts. There were six hand-drawn sketches of an index finger in various positions. The only words on the page were in bold font at the top. "The Finger Dance." This easy-to-follow guideline was *the* battle plan for the next two weeks. The reader is encouraged to look at one of their own index fingers. Point to sky, bend finger to 90 degrees, and finally, bend finger at second and third knuckle so that the tip touches the palm. Back up to the 90-degree position, and end up pointing skyward again. We have just performed the finger dance together. My range of motion with that finger of mine was pointing up, and that was it. My own finger dance was in reality a mimic of a Jesus freak's "one way," and as decrepit as that finger was, I was going to miss heaven by miles! Cat Woman started to massage that finger gently at first, and then she began to bend that finger downward. It was at this point that the reason for Dr. Dart's extra-strength pain killers became apparent. As she began to manually bend that finger to the point where it touched the corresponding callus on my palm (I was a working man back then), there emerged a musical backdrop to accom-

pany the dance. Said music emanated from my gullet. The symphony that followed could best be entitled “Fugue in the key of Rog.” The masterpiece was sung in a *cappella* fashion—a prolonged series of wailing, whimpering, whining, and sniveling, with percussion provided by the gnashing of teeth. That went on for a solid hour, after which I was told to go home and perform that finger dance for every waking moment until my next visit. To make a long story short, by the end of my last visit two weeks later, I was able to perform the finger dance on my own. I will forever be grateful to Cat Woman. As we have just witnessed, there are good nurses, and there are bad nurses. Like roughly 99% of the nurses who have cared for me through the years, Cat Woman was a good nurse. Or a good physical therapist. Whatever her proper title, she was yet another of God’s angels to emerge in the healing process.

There remained one final direct kick to the groin with the early stages of recovery. Those 15 vials of the Wyeth Serum swept back through my system for one final whammy. Those familiar with the good old fashioned horse serum (the good stuff), will tell you there is often an allergic reaction that kicks in approximately a week after it is administered. My reaction arrived right on schedule, one week after the initial dosage. It came in the form of hives. A form of acne vulgaris ran rampant all over me—from my toes to the top of my head to inside my . . . never mind. The nefarious zits were spaced at maybe 6-mm (¼-inch) intervals. The infestation was ugly, piled on something that was ugly to start with. And it itched like a—what was it about a matriarch and fornication previously mentioned? Of course, to go after any of these miserable *itching* welts from *hell* with standard fingernail usage is unwise. At least it was with me. Doing *that* once was enough to teach me a lesson. Yehaw! The pimply little bastards lie in wait—well after you have begun to scratch them—until they fight back. And they fight back with **FIRE!** But I soon learned that gyrating about while butt naked on the carpet at home did provide reasonable relief. I also learned to apply helpful topical creams only *after* the nude dude was *finished* with his newfound therapy. From start-to-peak-to-finish, this hives crap lasted two days. Leaving a grown, naked man gyrating on a floor for two days is a good sign that we are winding down. This was as low as it all got.

### “Going flatline” without any pleas for mercy

I am not seeking sympathy from *this* crowd. Hell no! I don’t want to hear *squat* from any of you. I don’t want to hear anything like: “You should have done this,” or “you shouldn’t have done that.” I’ve had over 31 years to dwell on this. YOU have had 31 minutes! I *know*, as do all of you, that the wiser course of action was to get to the hospital as fast as Frank’s chariot could carry me. If we had left as soon as we could, we might have made it to a hospital by high noon. But to which hospital would we have gone? The one with Dr. Dart, ready with both antivenom *and* the proper course of action? Or would we have chosen a hospital where there was no antivenom? (They don’t *all* keep it on hand.) Might I have received the ice bucket and subsequent fasciotomy treatment from inept staff at a different hospital? I almost got that kind of treatment from the best! All this to say I agree with any judgement call to get to the hospital as soon as possible. But if you don’t choose the right hospital, you may not

be as “home safe” as you think. And the final “what if” may have been waiting several hours in the ER before treatment.

There isn’t any way to justify my actions on that day. But what was lost time-wise amounts to roughly eight hours. Even if everything went well at a high noon visit to the very best hospital in the land, how much quicker or better would be my recovery? What was lost during that extra waiting time will never be known. I was in trouble no matter what.

### Regrets and Aftershocks

My biggest regret in all of this is the reason why this bite happened. By attempting to get what amounts to a body temperature 12.7 mm (½ in) deep in the lep’s cloaca, we were trying to gather a *worthless* piece of data. We have learned through the years that even on smaller rattlesnakes, the body temp can vary wildly from head to tail—as much as 10°C or more. (Think of a snake warming the first six inches of its body in the sun, while the distal portion remains in the cool underpinnings of its shelter.) What is it with herpetologists and their butt-probing? What are we trying to prove? That snakes thermoregulate? Don’t we already know that? In these days of fungal disease potentially being spread by research, I can think of no better vector than the business end of a cloacal thermometer bringing ruin upon entire populations. Researchers everywhere, please heed my words. You prong in haste, while your subjects suffer at leisure. What do *you* get out of it? A chart buried in a paper? Maybe 30 seconds in a PowerPoint presentation?

Other, lesser regrets include the total collapse of my tennis game. I had been playing league tennis at a high level just previous to the bite. Booming serves and a powerful forehand swing. Post bite, I worked my way back up to less than half the power. My “game for life” was never the same, and eventually, ended prematurely. Another regret is stated in the title of this piece. Righty used to perform an efficacious sweep and flick-away of even the most offensive and stubborn crusty that was lodged in either nasal passage. Lefty has *still* never gotten got the hang of it, and any picking done requires a visit to a mirror to monitor any boogers having an out of my body experience on the underpinning’s of both nostrils. Gross! My career choice often had me turning screws in or out by hand. Before Repp’s lep, I used the index finger and thumb to perform this task. After the love tap, I switched to the more awkward middle finger and thumb. The total bill, all of it, came to \$13,000. Thanks to Mass Mutual, my portion was 20% of that. Either number is dirt cheap by today’s standards. Now days, a vial of antivenom is over \$3,000. And it’s not the good horse stuff. It’s the sheep stuff. Wyeth quit producing their product simply because it was not profitable. The healing effects of CroFab® are, in my estimation, not as good. You need a lot more, over a much longer period of time. Were I ever bitten again, I’d get myself to Mexico if possible. They have heap big medicine down their way! And it’s a *lot* cheaper. Another regret is that my actions threatened the early phases of a natural history scientific project of not just one but *two* very cool species of rattlesnake. No harm done, but I did take one for the team in order to minimize my wrongdoing to team willie. As an active member of the Tucson Herp Society’s Board of Directors (THS BOD), I faced a gentle but firm rebuk-

ing for “handling a protected species without a permit” from our president. The fact is that we *had* permits. But those who should have been there to emphasize this were not present. Two of these permit holders were also on the THS BOD—and consequently *should have been* at that meeting. But I just took it on the chin for them, and five minutes later, I was no longer in any trouble. It was handled well by the people involved.

In short, the stupidest part of this day—the *shameless* cloacal probing—is my biggest sin in all this. All the rest, all of it, from top to bottom, came about as a willingness to continue on with the hunt post-envenomation. Despite the aftereffects of the sting of nature (which continue to haunt me today), the warm afterglow of the extra field time made it seem worthwhile at the time. *I was immersed in ecstasy* on that day. How do I feel about the delayed treatment now? I can only tell the reader that climate change and old age have eliminated the possibility of any day where five leps and four willies are found in a four-hour time period. Those days are over for me. There are no do-overs in

life, only “what ifs.” What if I *did* have it to do all over again? That’s easy—I wouldn’t be bitten by this snake in the first place! But in retrospect, as my herping days draw to a leisurely close, I’m glad I kept herping. Despite the distractions, it was one of the best damn days of my life. There! **EYE DID IT!** I maintained stupid for over 9,000 words. After all that, I think I’ll kick John Wayne’s ass here with my own quotable quote: “What’s the sense in being stupid if I can’t prove it?” End of story, but not the end of stupid. There’s still this:

This here is Roger Repp, signing off from Southern Arizona, where the turtles are strong, the snakes are handsome, and the lizards are above average.

#### Acknowledgment

The author is indebted to Mary Boehler for her insights as a nurse, and for her excellent questions in response to an early version of this article.

#### Suggested Further Reading (on snakebites and stupidity)

Repp, R. A. 2018. Tiger by the tail and the “first ouch.” *Bulletin of the Chicago Herpetological Society* 53(7):159-162.

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### A Note on the Current State of the Field: The Evolution of Chromosome Number in the Neotropical Poison Frog Family (Dendrobatidae)

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Poison frogs of Central and South America (family Dendrobatidae) include over 300 species (AmphibiaWeb, 2022). About one-third of poison frog species use flashy colors to warn predators of distasteful skin alkaloids they sequester from their diet of arthropods, a defensive strategy known as aposematism. The remaining 200 species are drab-colored and (for the most part) lacking in chemical defenses (Gonzalez et al., 2021). We still do not understand how molecular evolution has enabled this extraordinary ability to sequester toxic chemicals as well as other unusual life history parameters (beyond the scope of discussion for this note, but briefly, these include diverse modes of parental care, with male and biparental care more common than in other vertebrates, variable levels of chemical defense and bright color, and diverse population sizes [e.g., see Fischer et al., 2019]). Although whole-genome sequencing and gene expression studies are badly needed to understand the unique suite of traits we observe in poison frogs, a modest body of literature has emerged over the past 30 years to explain one component of their genomic evolution: chromosome number. The ancestor of Dendrobatidae most likely had 24 chromosomes (12 pairs, written as  $2n = 24$ ), a reduction from 26 in *its* ancestor. Since the origin of dendrobatids, multiple reductions in chromosome number have occurred (Grant et al., 2006). In addition to losses of chromosomes, living dendrobatids also boast a diverse array of chromosome morphologies, such as changes in size and additions of new centromeres to hold chromosome pairs together.

Despite the best efforts of researchers, we currently do not know if life history parameters underlie chromosome number evolution in vertebrates. Hypotheses proposed to explain chromosome number evolution to date mostly concern natural selection acting on genes rather than on animals themselves. The most famous theory is meiotic drive, where selection acts on selfish genes to manipulate the meiotic process, so that selfish elements are transmitted into germline cells that are more likely to be inherited (the egg versus the degraded polar bodies in females and robust versus weak sperm in males). Selfish genes can thus become overrepresented in a population (Nachman and Searle, 1995). In addition to broad evolutionary questions in vertebrates, specific mechanisms that explain changes in chromosome number in poison frogs (e.g., fusions, transversions, and translocations) remain concealed. Some experts claim that the ubiquity of telocentric chromosomes (where the centromere is closer to the end rather than the middle of the chromosome arms) in Dendrobatidae implicates fusion events as the putative major player (Veiga-Menoncello et al., 2006). As we accumulate more knowledge of dendrobatid biology, we will likely be able to disentangle the relative contributions of life history and genomic processes in explaining poison frog and more broadly vertebrate chromosome evolution (Grant et al., 2017).

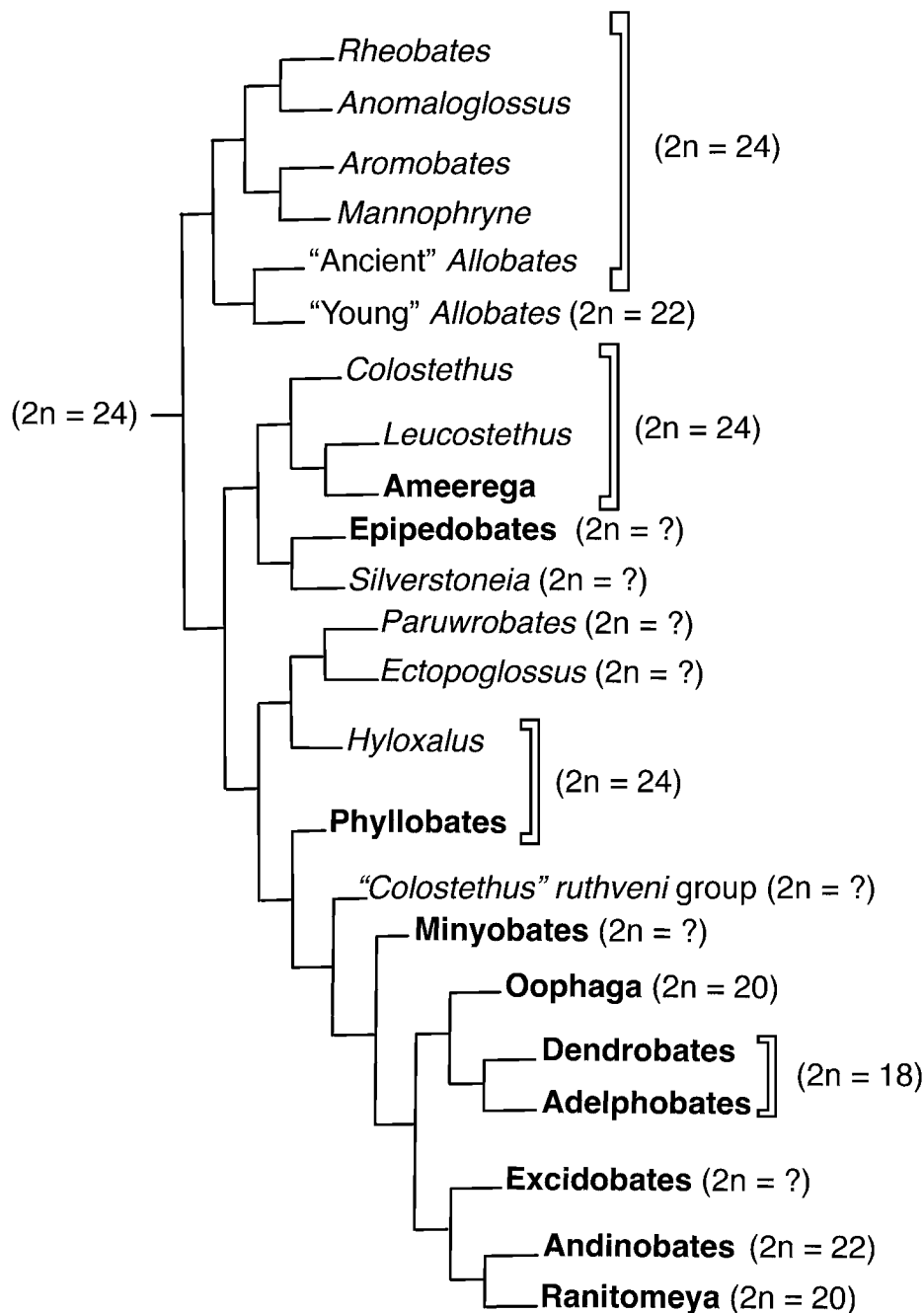
On a more auspicious note, progress in taxonomy and systematics of poison frogs in the last 15 years has resolved a

controversy: chromosome numbers are shared within poison frog lineages (see Aguiar-Jr. et al., 2002; Kaiser et al., 2003; Rasotto et al., 1987). Before modern advances in phylogenetics, chromosome evolution in dendrobatids was thought to be fast, with chromosome number varying among closely related species. This misconception persisted because unrelated, non-aposematic dendrobatid lineages—clustered into single genera (usually *Colostethus*) based on physical resemblance—varied in chromosome numbers (Aguiar-Jr. et al., 2004; Veiga-Menoncello et al., 2006; Rodrigues et al., 2011). Evidence included variation between “*Colostethus leopardalis*” (*Aromobates leopardalis*) and “*Colostethus chalcopis*” (*Allobates chalcopis*), now known

to be distantly related (Kaiser et al., 2003). Current knowledge enables a proper framework to accommodate forthcoming chromosome data (Santos et al., 2003; Grant et al., 2006).

Information on chromosome number is still absent in several genera, so further description will be useful for (1) confirmation that chromosome number reflects evolutionary relationships in poison frogs and (2) correlative studies to determine what aspects of poison frog biology drive chromosome evolution and vice versa. In Figure 1 below, I list chromosome numbers of poison frog genera on the current topology (as proposed by Grant et al., 2017), and I note genera for which karyotype data are still needed.

**Figure 1.** Topology of all Dendrobatidae genera is adapted from Grant et al. (2017). Diploid chromosome number is shown in parentheses at the tips. Bars indicate chromosome number is the same for all included genera and question marks signify that chromosome number is unknown. Names for genera known to include aposematic (highly chemically defended, warningly colored) species are bolded (Santos et al., 2003). Putative chromosome number of the dendrobatid ancestor ( $2n = 24$ ) is displayed at the base of the tree. Chromosome data are from references cited in the text, and also Koch (2022).





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## Herpetological Art at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium — November 2021

Photos and story by  
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Inside the front entrance of the Columbus Zoo is a sign that reads INFORMATION, which shows a map of the zoo and a silhouette of a long snake that is colored red.

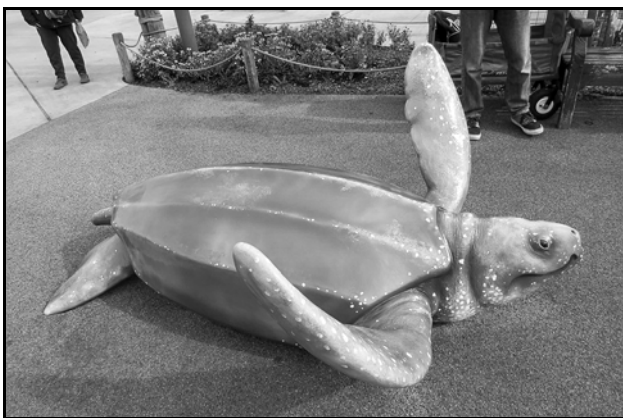
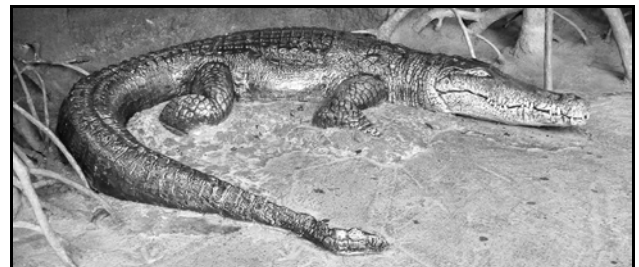
Near the aquarium is an open area called Shores Play Park, where children can play, and there are several statues. There are statues of several Beluga whales (one of them is squirting water out of its mouth), the head and tail of a baleen whale and a statue of a leatherback sea turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea*, that is the size of an adult sea turtle. I gently tapped on the turtle statue, and I think it is either fiberglass or plastic.



theme is Manatee Coast, I think the statue of the crocodile probably represents an American crocodile, *Crocodylus acutus*. I tapped on this statue, and it feels very hard—unlike the sea turtle statue. It was like tapping on a brick.

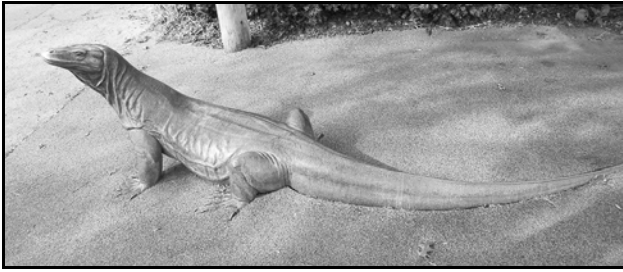
At a building housing the Australian animals there is a piece of old roofing tin with the painted images of a turtle and what may be a lizard. One of the large rooms in this building has Australian birds flying loose in this room, and against one wall is a bench that loosely resembles a crocodile.

This bench is long enough that maybe four people can sit on it. There is some damage on the side of the bench, which I examined, and I found that this bench is made of wood.



Inside the aquarium is a large room called Manatee Coast that features a very large tank with manatees and lots of fish. Across the aisle from this tank there is a replica of a mangrove swamp with a statue of an adult-size crocodile. Because the





Near the reptile building is a bronze statue of an adult Komodo dragon, *Varanus komodoensis*. This was positioned in such a way as if a real dragon heard something and is in the process of turning its head to see what made the sound. Right above the dragon statue is a sign that shows a tri-colored snake, with red, yellow and black bands (the red bands are touching the yellow bands), with text that reads KOMODO SCULPTURE A GIFT FROM VICTOR AND MARIAN FELDMILLER DEDICATED JUNE 1999. CAUTION . . . SCULPTURE MAY BE HOT. This bronze sculpture is outdoors sitting in the sun and probably gets hot during the summer months.



Across the walkway from the Komodo dragon is a small shelter that has a large statue of some kind of horned frog, maybe *Ceratophrys*. Right above this frog is a sign that says WE HAVE AMPHIBIANS TOO! DISCOVER MORE INSIDE.



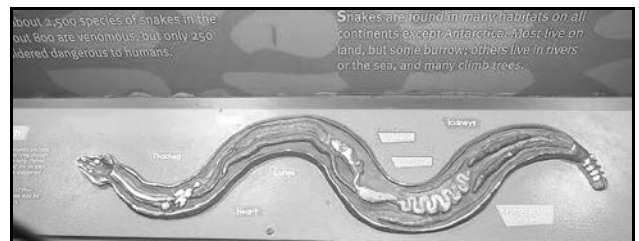
Right behind this frog's enclosure is a sign above the walkway that shows another tri-colored snake (this also has the red bands touching the yellow bands) with a silhouette of a crocodilian, a turtle, and a lizard. The doors of the reptile building have bronze door handles in the image of some kind of lizard and there are images of snakes on the glass doors.



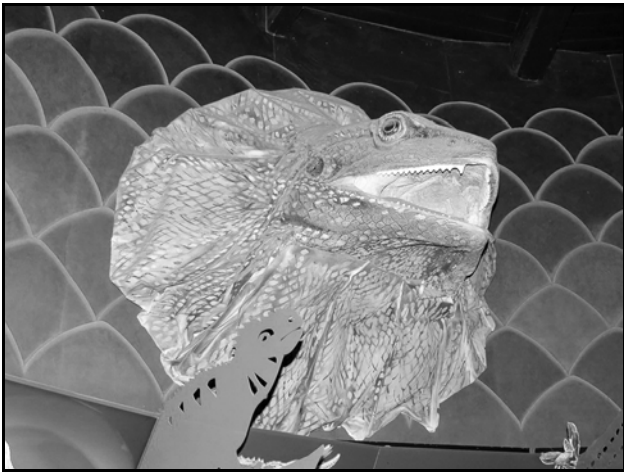
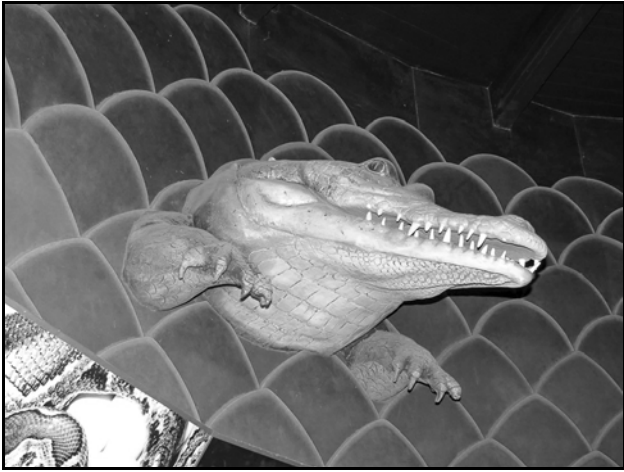
Inside the reptile building is a statue of an adult hellbender. This might represent the eastern hellbender, *Cryptobranchus*



*alleganiensis*, because that species is the only hellbender in any of Ohio's rivers. Near some of the displays of live animals is a three-dimensional model of a snake that shows the internal organs and labels them. This model might be three feet long. Up near









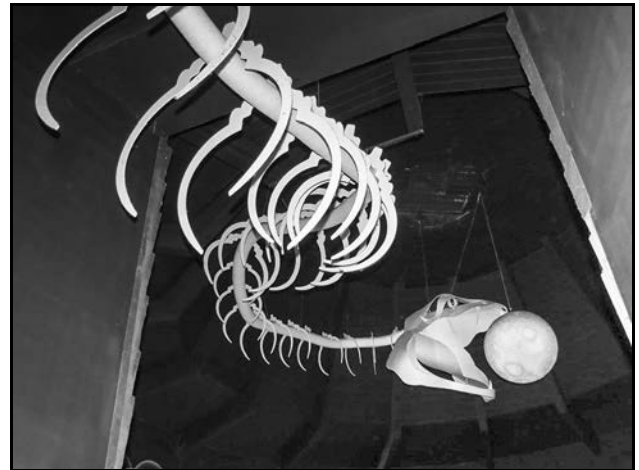


the ceiling there are figures of the front part of a crocodilian (I didn't look closely enough at this figure to determine if it represents an alligator or some kind of crocodile), a box turtle (I think this one represents an eastern box turtle, *Terrapene carolina*), and an Australian frilled lizard, *Chlamydosaurus kingii*. Right below these images, but still out of reach, are silhouettes of five different animals, a lizard that is colored red, a Jackson's chameleon, *Trioceros jacksonii*, that is colored blue, a sea turtle that is colored orange, a turtle that is colored yellow and which, because of the shape of the head, I think represents an alligator snapping turtle, *Macrochelys temminckii*, and some kind of crocodilian that is colored green. These five silhouettes might be steel plates. In the middle of the floor there is a pillar with a metal globe on top of it and climbing the pillar is a much larger than life statue of a Solomon Islands skink [AKA prehensile-tailed skink, monkey-tail skink], *Corucia zebrata*. This is a very



good representation of this skink with a green body and the typical markings that are colored brown. I tapped on this statue and, like the crocodile statue in the aquarium, this seems to be made of a very hard and dense material. Past this room are hallways with more live animals on display but no more herpetological art.

As you walk through the front door of the reptile house, hanging from the ceiling is a long "skeleton" of a snake that starts right above the front door, covers the length of the hallway, to the large room with the Solomon Islands skink. This skeleton must be hundreds of feet long. This isn't an accurate representation of a snake skeleton, the ribs, vertebrae, and skull don't represent real bones. I think of it as a kind of caricature, but it is still interesting.



## Minutes of the CHS Board Meeting, September 6, 2022

A virtual meeting of the CHS board of directors via Zoom conference video/call was called to order at 7:35 P.M. Board members Rich Crowley and Stephanie Dochterman were absent. No nonmembers of the board were in attendance. Minutes of the August 16 board meeting were read and accepted.

### Officers' reports

Treasurer: No report was made.

Vice-president: Rachel Bladow has prepared a survey asking members about what they would like to see in the future for the CHS. The survey will be sent to members online, and hard copies will be available to be filled out at the general meeting.

Membership secretary: Mike Dloogatch read through the list of those whose memberships have expired.

Sergeant-at-arms: Tom Mikosz reported 18 attendees in person at the August 31 meeting, plus 9 online.

### Committee reports

Adoptions: Margaret Ann Paauw is looking to find a member to help out with the computer/administrative stuff.

### New business

ReptileFest: John Archer reported that Northeastern Illinois University will allow us to use our own caterer to feed the volunteers. John will be checking to see if we can once again borrow the electrical equipment from U.C.

General liability insurance: We will wait to reinstate this insurance until we know the status of ReptileFest.

There was discussion of a speaker gift that could be personalized.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 P.M.

*Respectfully submitted by recording secretary Gail Oomens*

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## NEW CHS MEMBERS THIS MONTH

Quentin Johnson  
Alexandra Posnock

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## Advertisements

For sale: **highest quality frozen rodents**. I have been raising rodents for over 30 years and can supply you with the highest quality mice available in the U.S. These are always exceptionally clean and healthy with no urine odor or mixed in bedding. I feed these to my own reptile collection exclusively and so make sure they are the best available. All rodents are produced from my personal breeding colony and are fed exceptional high protein, low fat rodent diets; no dog food is ever used. Additionally, all mice are flash frozen and are separate in the bag, not frozen together. I also have ultra low shipping prices to most areas of the U.S. and can beat others shipping prices considerably. I specialize in the smaller mice sizes and currently have the following four sizes available: Small pink mice (1 day old—1 gm) , \$25 /100; Large pink mice (4 to 5 days old—2 to 3 gm), \$27.50 /100; Small fuzzy mice (7 to 8 days old—5 to 6 gm), \$30/100; Large fuzzy mice / hoppers (10 to 12 days old—8 to 10 gm), \$35/100 Contact Kelly Haller at 785-224-7291 or by e-mail at [kelhal56@hotmail.com](mailto:kelhal56@hotmail.com)

Line ads in this publication are run free for CHS members — \$2 per line for nonmembers. Any ad may be refused at the discretion of the Editor. Submit ads to [mdloogatch@chicagoherp.org](mailto:mdloogatch@chicagoherp.org).

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

**From now on the monthly meetings of the CHS will be held in the afternoon on the third Sunday of each month. The meetings will begin at 2:00 P.M.** The next meeting will take place on November 20. The program has not yet been confirmed. Please try to join us online or *in person* at the Notebaert Nature Museum, 2430 N. Cannon Drive, Chicago..

**The December 18 meeting will be a holiday party.** The CHS will provide soft drinks and snacks. If you would like to bring something edible to share with the group, you are invited to do so. If you would like to bring an animal to show off to the group, you are encouraged to do that as well. This will be a chance to socialize and get to know your fellow members a little better

Please check the CHS website or Facebook page each month for information on the program. Information about attending a Zoom webinar can be found here:

<[https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115004954946-Joining-and-participating-in-a-webinar-attendee->](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115004954946-Joining-and-participating-in-a-webinar-attendee-)

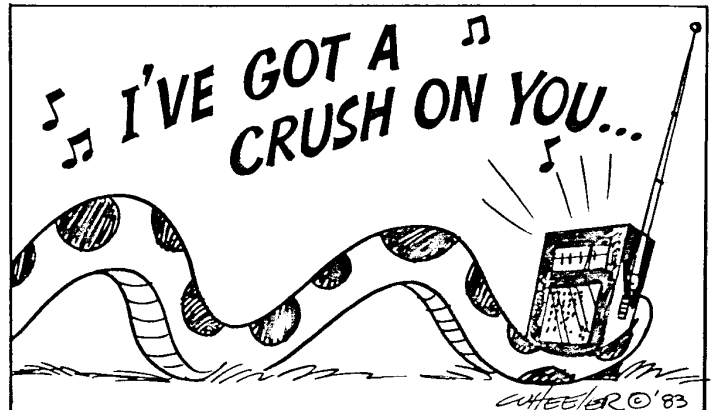
### Board of Directors Meeting

Are you interested in how the decisions are made that determine how the Chicago Herpetological Society runs? And would you like to have input into those decisions? The next board meeting will be held online. If you wish to take part, please email: [jarcher@chicagoherp.org](mailto:jarcher@chicagoherp.org).

## REMINDER

When you shop AmazonSmile and select the Chicago Herpetological Society as your charity, Amazon will make a donation to the CHS. <<https://smile.amazon.com/>>

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