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Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum

Topic: : rattlers

Re: rattlers

Author: : vern

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URL:

I like snakes, in general.

I include rattlesnakes in that group.

The only native snake in Pa. that I really fear are copperheads - especially when climbing a steep trail in the middle of a low-bush blueberry patch, on a utility line clearing, and I have to grab onto rocks and plants and the ground is too close to my face.

I have a copy of, and found very informative, the Pennsylvania Wild Resource Conservation Fund (WRCF) video, "The Timber Rattlesnake: Shadow of Misunderstanding"

It is still available through the Pa WRCF video page, along with other videos sponsored through the program.

The host Web site is the Pa. Department of Conservation of Natural Resources (Pa.DCNR).

My personal endorsement:

As a result of watching the video, I have adopted a better sense of security in traveling potential rattlesnake habitat. I did this after picking up on key behavioral characteristics of the rattlesnake presented in the video, such as its specific vibratory sensing method of hunting (in addition to thermal sensing) and hunting site location selection.

Given a prerequisite cursory understanding of water drainage, solar exposure, and habitat needs sufficient to host a rattlesnake supporting community, I believe the information presented in the video is enough from which to deduce some personal behavior changes.

I feel it helps me figure out likely den site locations and otherwise gauge the potential risk/opportunity to come into proximity with a rattlesnake.

Of course, I could be wrong, but I walk with increased confidence!

And I pay close attention when crossing downed limbs and logs on trails in likely rattlesnake hunting grounds.

I also stay aware for evidence of high ground rodent populations in July through September, stay aware of rainfall conditions (the snakes follow the mammals which follow the water), stay observant when in the vicinity of a south to south west facing rubble pile (including the edges of fields, mountain faces, ridges, and other topographical and terrestrial features, depending on the time of the year.

Historically, annual late spring rattlesnake hunts were held across the state and nation by European –descent communities. The timing was done so that the snakes would be on or near the surface, but not yet dispersed.

In early through late spring, the snakes have not yet spread out far, if at all, from their over-wintering den area to foray out into their seasonal territories.

For example, in Potter County, the Cross Fork Rattlesnake Hunt traditionally is held late June. Other communities held or continue to hold their respective hunts based on non-competition with other hunts and the desires of the snake hunting community and business sector of the host community.

For myself, I find nothing wrong with rattlesnake hunting, when done as bird watching, or even for temporary display and then release where found, which seems to be the intent of current snake hunting law. A common, though no longer allowed, practice for late spring rattlesnake "hunters" was to find a den area and pull it apart,

rock by rock, or even blast it open, if necessary.

I am against the destruction of its habitat and the senseless killing of individual specimens, especially when it is done out of culturally driven fear. But I'm not against eating one now and then.

The rattlesnake in Pennsylvania is to be understood for being the non-aggressor it is.

I feel that all snakes in Pennsylvania need to be protected, and those currently in critically low population (haven't been seen for 20 to 30 years) may need to be bred and re-introduced.