



We, as individual reptile enthusiasts, are all marginally aware of the desperate need for a well run, not-for-profit reptile rescue, rehab, shelter and adoptions center in our area. Many of us already take in rescues, get them back to health, and find them appropriate homes, or end up with an unadoptable specimen on our hands that we care for the remainder of its natural life. The expenses are something we gladly shoulder, as reptile lovers, even when it means going without little extras for ourselves for a month or two to get a particularly heart wrenching neglect or abuse case back to health.

I am proposing a centralized location for a shelter that is well stocked with needed supplies, enclosures and rotating shifts of volunteers. Not only would this allow us, as reptile enthusiasts, to centralize and mainstream our individual efforts into a group effort, but would allow for owner-surrenders, publicity, fundraising, and corporate donations.

To put it all into perspective and show the plausibility of my proposition, I've done some research, crunched some numbers, and compiled it all into a handful of pages. To make this happen we need the solid commitment of no less than eight people to form a committee and get this launched; I am hoping for at least triple that number of eager volunteers.

In compiling figures for this proposal, I defined the region as Coeur d'Alene/Spokane and the surrounding areas, up to 250 miles in any direction. Though there are reptiles in need, without viable resources, further away than 250 miles, it is a good sized area to start with. We can, of course, re-evaluate the need in the future and expand these loose boundaries as we see fit.

The Need

In the past three weeks there have been a total of 132 owner-surrender reptile, arachnid, and amphibian ads on craigslist in our region. This does not include the ads from breeders or from high-end collectors offering an occasional animal for sale or trade. These are the snakes, lizards, crocodylians, turtles, spiders, frogs, and scorpions that are being given away or sold because they got too big, the owner is moving, didn't know what they were getting into with the purchase, can no longer afford to feed, or the kids lost interest type of ads.

In speaking with Wendy of *Reptile Addictions*, she has accepted 7 reptiles as rescues in the past three weeks; I have taken in 3, *Northwest Seed and Pet* and *Evergreen Pet* have both turned away over a dozen reptiles, arachnids and amphibians, and I know that many of you have also accepted rescue animals in the past few weeks. These are animals in addition to the ones listed on craigslist, kijiji, kingsnake, and the local papers.

In addition to operating as a rescue and shelter, the need for a centralized, recognized, accessible source of good husbandry information is sorely lacking in this area. The animals that are purchased kept by



owners who are new to reptiles would definitely benefit from proper husbandry and nutrition information. When the instruction given to most new reptile owners via local vendors is absolutely incorrect, there is 0% chance that those reptiles will live a natural lifespan.

One of the leading causes of neglected, improperly cared for, and owner-surrendered reptiles is the dissemination of faulty husbandry information, adult sizes, enclosure and diet needs, and basic facts regarding temperaments, defensiveness, and aggressiveness inherent in particular species. A reptile specific shelter that focuses on not only caring for and re-homing reptiles, but on educating vendors, owners, and prospective owners would solve many of the minor problems we see all too often.

The Costs of Construction

In looking at the wide variety of options available for this project, the simplest, most cost-effective structure will be a steel building. Though not the most inexpensive, an insulated steel building with an enclosed lean-to will be the longest lasting with the least maintenance expenses, and can be easily added to as needed.

The costs below are for a completed building constructed on 5 acres of land just outside of Plummer, Idaho, with a prepared building site; power, water, telephone, and sewer are already installed at the site. This location is rather centrally located, the land cost is one-half to one-eighth of a comparable piece in the immediate Coeur d' Alene, Spokane, Moscow, or Lewiston areas, and is only 1.75 miles off of the state highway on a county maintained, paved road. The fact that the building site already graded, rocked and has utilities in is significant as those costs would be about half of the total construction costs listed below.

The quote is for a newly constructed steel building measuring 20 by 36 feet with a 12 by 36 foot enclosed lean-to (Fig. 1), and includes the actual construction costs. Please note that after speaking with the supplier and contractor, and discussing what the building will be used for, the costs below reflect a significant discount in the original retail prices. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 1



As you look over the construction costs, please note the charge for a permanent turtle pond in the lean-to portion of the building – this reflects the completed price of a 700 gallon, triple filtered, heated pond with numerous basking areas, for those turtles that have been through quarantine, declared healthy and awaiting adoption. (Fig. 3) It will measure, including barriers to keep turtles in, 12 by 18 feet, leaving an additional 12 by 18 feet of space in the lean-to for other reptiles requiring big enclosures and that require, or are tolerant of, high humidity.

Construction Costs	
5 acres land	\$28,900.00
Building Kit (built on-site)	10,440.18
Wiring (installed)	1,906.55
Plumbing (installed)	873.29
Insulation (installed)	4,387.56
Permanent Turtle Pond (in the lean-to)	976.84
TOTAL	\$47,484.42

Fig. 2

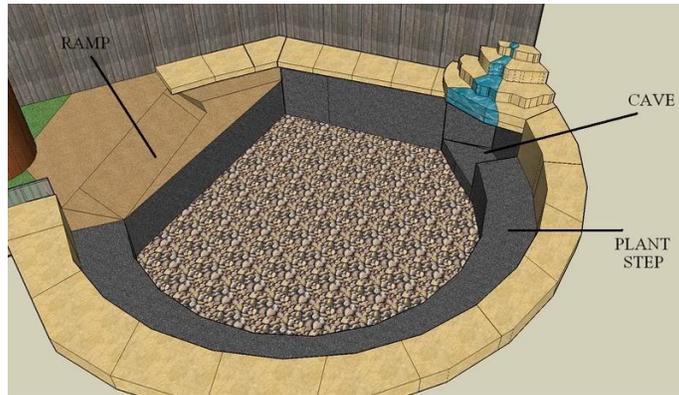


Fig. 3

Funding

A major concern, and the first question everyone will be asking, is where will the funding come from. After speaking with several well respected breeders and dealers throughout the United States, I believe there is a very feasible solution to the funding issue. The following amazing companies are willing to donate the listed livestock and equipment for auction, raffle, or resale:

- Pete Kahl Reptiles – an '09 Heterozygous Candy female ball, retail value \$6,500
- Applegate reptiles – an unsexed Beaded Lizard, value \$1,000
- NERD – an '09 male Anthrax reticulated python, value \$3,250
- SalmonBoa – five (2.3) '09 salmon 66% possible triple het bloody sharp sunglows, value \$500/ea
- ProExotics – an unrelated pair of '09 yellow belly balls, value \$600
- Wisheart – a gorgeous male '10 Sorong GTP, value \$400
- ProExotics – a trio of unrelated, sexed red ackies, value \$780
- ProExotics – 24 PE-1 Temp Guns, value \$30/ea
- LLL Reptile – 4 gift certificates for \$250/each
- RodentPro – multiple gift certificates totaling \$800 + free shipping
- Pinellas County Reptile – juvie green tree monitor, value \$450
- Exotic Pets – 2 unsexed '10 Ionides, value \$160/ea



- Wild Rhino – sub-adult black dragon, female, value \$1,500
- Draggintails – female '10 Citrus Tiger beardie, value \$275

I also have numerous donors who wish to remain anonymous for fear of being approached for donations from the general public. Anonymous donations include several breeding groups of high-end Crested Geckos, a gorgeous yellow Timor python, several Granite Burm hatchlings, numerous skinks, geckos and chameleons, a spectacled caiman, the prettiest bush viper I've ever seen in captivity, uros, tortoises, Mata Matas, and even a sub-adult croc monitor. The list of dry goods is just as impressive and includes everything from a custom, made to order enclosure to heating systems, light fixtures to Boophile cages in an assortment of sizes. Total retail value of promised donated livestock and dry goods is \$38,851. If we get just the retail value for each item, we are within \$1,000 of our construction expenses.

Two pet stores have agreed to donate 5% of all reptile livestock and reptile related dry goods sales to help us meet expenses for this project. In addition, during our monthly get-togethers we can donate to this project rather than, or in addition to, the monthly group we choose to donate to. All contest monies could also be set aside for the shelter.

Operating Expenses

A portion of our operating expenses would, of course, come from adoption fees. Realistically those amounts will not support the shelter and we will need to seek out additional funding opportunities. In speaking with Aimee Kenoyer of PNWHS, several great ideas were discussed. Two of our monthly meetings each year could be black-tie events where we not only partake of wonderful food, but hold a live and silent auction, and we can showcase some of our prized cold-blooded captives. When we organize a board and committee for this project we can also organize a local herpetological society with yearly dues and events that directly benefit the shelter. A.E. Nash suggested we encourage owner donations for taking owner surrendered reptiles, especially large snakes, monitors, and iguanas. A youth summer day camp, with a set camp fee per camper, is a way to not only educate and inform, but raise monies for operating costs.

Feeding several reptiles gets expensive quickly, as many reptile keepers know. There are multiple grocery stores in the region that would be willing to donate produce, beef hearts, and ground turkey on a regular basis (once to several times per month). Eventually constructing a small, separate building to house breeder rodents to supply feeders would be a feasible goal, reducing the cost of feeder rodents dramatically. Establishing a productive colony of dubia roaches for the shelter would cost less than \$250 and it would pay for itself within a month; establishing a productive colony of mealworms would be less than one-third that price. Establishing additional colonies of feeders to sell to the general public will bring in additional monies for overhead expenses. In speaking with Wendy regarding her profits from feeder sales, we could easily expect to bring in an additional \$10,000 annually, after expenses of course,



by marketing feeders locally. Currently Wendy is unable to keep up with the demand for quality feeder prey; the niche market is definitely there.

The majority of the positions at the shelter will be, by necessity, volunteer. Of course many of us would jump at the opportunity to spend a few hours a week surrounded by cold-blooded creatures. A salaried, full-time position for a shelter manager will be required to keep things running smoothly. The median wage in Idaho for such a position is \$21,731 annually, or \$1,781 per month. The monies for the salaried position will be put aside annually or semi-annually, scheduling such deposits to coincide with our biggest fundraisers. The shelter manager position would need to be filled shortly after we decide to move forward as it would be the manager's responsibility to coordinate volunteers, work with the construction crews daily, and arrange for publicity.

Advertising will be a necessary expense as well. With the incorporation of a 501(3)c we will qualify for, among other things, WalMart product grants. These grants, of \$1,000 each, are smaller donations in the form of store credit which we could then use to buy advertising materials. Printing of our own newspaper inserts would save us 2/3 the cost of having them printed by the local newspapers and inserted into Sunday or weekly papers. As a non-profit, we would also be eligible for free or drastically reduced costs for radio and television promotions, production of vinyl banners, etc. Contacting reporters, video and print, to run stories on our efforts would provide far-reaching free publicity.

Conclusion

We live in a country where pet ownership is the norm. According to the American Pet Products Association (APPA), 71.4 million American homes have at least one pet; of those pet households, 4.7 million households keep reptiles. There are currently 13.6 million captive reptiles in the United States. For most other pets there are several shelters or rescue organizations within a 90 minute drive; this is not the case with reptiles who are often, for lack of alternatives, re-homed via classified advertising, allowed to die from neglect or improper husbandry, released into the wild to either perish quickly or wreak havoc on the local flora and fauna, or surrendered to people claiming to be part of a rescue but actually get the animal looking good (though not necessarily healthy) and then sell it to an unsuspecting consumer. There were over 150 reptiles, amphibians, turtles, crocodilians, and arachnids looking for a new home over the past three weeks in our region. The need is very obviously here, the current resources are lacking, and this is a feasible undertaking that will save the lives of untold hundreds of cold-blooded creatures in the first twenty-four months alone.

We, as serious reptile keepers, breeders, and hobbyists need to step up and create a positive change for these animals. We each do a little bit on our own, but if we were to combine efforts, establish a herpetological society, form a 501(c)3 for a reptile rescue, construct and operate a shelter, we could do so much more. The need is definitely obvious and to not respond to such a need only ensures that the situation will continue. As captive reptiles continue to grow in popularity the incidences of crippled,

Inland Northwest Reptile Shelter Proposal



malnourished, dying and dead animals in our region will grow as well. The impact not only on the animals themselves but on us, as hobbyists, will worsen as more animals are purchased by uninformed (and misinformed) keepers; it is only a matter of time until a local tragedy occurs due to keeper negligence. We need only to look to Florida to see what our future might be: Irresponsible owners setting up instinct-driven predators to cause a tragedy, the continuing release of unwanted pets into the wild, and public misinformation combine to create too tight of laws, entire species banned from the state, and public outrage at all reptile keepers. I know we all fought hard and donated a lot of money to our lobbyists in Washington DC to prevent nation-wide species bans and knee-jerk laws being passed over the last twelve months, just imagine what we could do, the voice we could have, if we accomplish the successful implementation of a large, diverse herpetological society and a successful reptile shelter that not only cares for animals in need, but educates and informs.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. If you have any questions, suggestions, or want to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me at bail2620@vandals.uidaho.edu. I am looking forward to our December gathering of reptile enthusiasts so that we can discuss this issue as a group and move forward with the plans for a much needed facility.