



Southern Nevada WILD

Volume 1, Issue 3
Fall 2007

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Learn About Wildlife—Symbols	1
Endangered Fish	1
Gila Monster	2
The Food Chain	2
Tarantula	3
Storytime	3
Project Wild	4
Word Scramble	4

Let's Learn About Wildlife – Symbols

Get ready to celebrate Nevada Day in October with Nevada's state wildlife symbols. Here are the animal representatives of our state.

Bird - Mountain bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) – This bird is the most brilliant of the state symbols, with bright blue coloring over most of its entire body.

Reptile - Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) - This hard-shelled reptile is the best known federally threatened species in the state. Making its home in the Mojave desert, the tortoise brumates, or hibernates, in the winter, coming out of its burrow in early spring.

Mammal - Bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) – Bighorn sheep make a stately silhouette against the sky with their large curved horns.

Fish - Lahontan cutthroat (*Salmo clarki henshawi*) – A large species of trout, this fish is named for an orange to red marking at the throat and can reach up to forty pounds.

There are two more state symbols that could fit in the wildlife category. Nevada's state fossil is the Ichthyosaur (*Shonisaurus*) – a marine reptile, or "fish lizard" from the dinosaur age. The state artifact is the Tule duck – a Native American canvasback decoy, crafted of bullrush, or "tule" stems.

Endangered Fish in the Desert



It might seem obvious that fish could be endangered in the desert. In fact, the thought of fish surviving in a desert may not seem practical at all. Water is a scarce resource. But bodies of water like Lake Mead are home to many species of fish. Some fish are considered game fish and are not native to the area, but are good for eating. These fish include striped bass, catfish and rainbow trout. There are also fish that are native to the lower Colorado River (including Lakes Mead and Mohave) that are having trouble competing with some of the non-native fish. These include the bonytail chub and the razorback sucker. NDOW fisheries biologists are raising these species in the Lake Mead fish hatchery and in refugiums in local ponds. A refugium is a place set aside for endangered species to live and grow without other species competing with them. The fisheries biologists monitor these populations and sometimes can release them into their native habitat, when the native fish are big enough to survive and compete with the introduced game fish. That way the numbers of native fish in Lake Mead can grow.

"Wildlife is like a beautiful painting; if we smear it, it will not only lose its color, but also its purpose."

--Niles Crow



Gila Monster



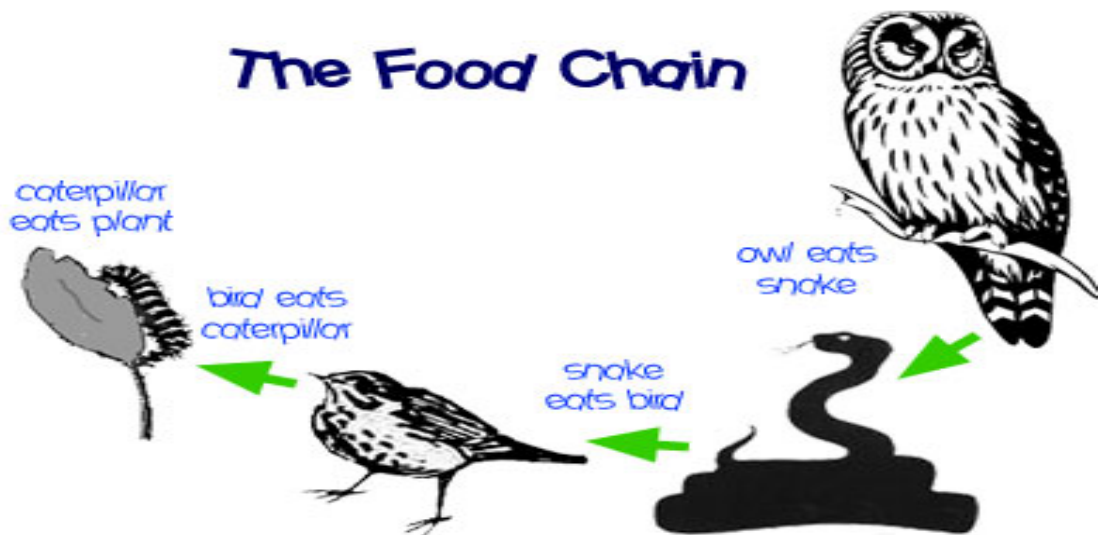
One of the most colorful animals in the desert is the Gila monster. But few people ever get to see it because it spends 99 percent of its life underground. The Gila monster is a large, wide-bodied lizard with bright colorings of pink, orange or yellow along with black. The scales on its body are raised, or beadlike, and its scientific name actually means “warty skin.” Its legs are short, keeping the body low to the ground, and it has strong claws for digging. This lizard uses that digging skill to expose meals like bird and reptile eggs, other lizards, insects and small mammals. Grooved teeth release venom into the prey with a gnawing motion, then the meal is swallowed whole. In times when food is scarce, the “monster” can live off the fat stored in its thick tail. Because of its unique appearance and its venom, people have called it a “monster,” but its bite is rarely fatal to humans. The Gila monster is the slowest lizard and the largest one native to the U.S. It is also one of only two venomous lizards in the world. They can live 20 to 30 years. All of this makes the animal very special, and the Nevada Department of Wildlife has rules to protect it. Gila monsters cannot be collected in Nevada. So if you should be lucky enough to run across one, you’ll be sure to remember the experience!

What is a Food Chain?

The **food chain** shows how each living thing gets its food and how each living thing is linked to another. For example, a simple food chain links the trees & shrubs, the deer (that eat sagebrush, grass and forbs), and the mountain lions (that eat the deer).

Each link in this chain is food for the next link. A food chain *always* starts with plant life and ends with an animal. Animals that eat only plants are called *herbivores*. Animals that eat other animals are called *carnivores*. Animals that eat both plant and animals are called *omnivores*. In the food chain world, animals are either **predators** or **prey**. Both predators and prey are an important part of nature. A **predator** is an animal that likes to eat other animals. **Prey** is an animal that is eaten by other animals.

The Food Chain



Desert Tarantula

Though not technically considered wildlife by biologists, tarantulas are a commonly sighted animal in the desert. Tarantulas are a member of the Arachnid, or spider family. That means they are animals with an exoskeleton – their skeleton is on the outside of their body. Spiders and tarantulas are not insects, but more closely related to Crustaceans like crayfish. Tarantulas are about two inches long with black hairs all over them. They have eight legs and eight eyes. They live in a burrow, or hole, with webbing, but they don't spin webs to catch their prey. Tarantulas are nocturnal and come out at night to search for insects, lizards and other small animals to eat. There is also an insect that preys on the tarantula – a wasp called the tarantula hawk.

Tarantulas got their name from Taranto, Italy. People used to do a dance called the Tarantella to cure them from tarantula bites. But the bite from a tarantula is really not very harmful, just painful. Sometimes the spider can flick its hairs onto your skin, which can be irritating. That's a defense mechanism and you may see a bare spot on a tarantula's abdomen where it lost its hair.

In the fall you can see male tarantulas crossing roads – they are looking for a mate. It's not a good idea to trap it under a jar to have a look at it. The glass magnifies the heat and can kill the tarantula. If you get to see one of these creatures, it's best to let it go on its way – remember it is beneficial!



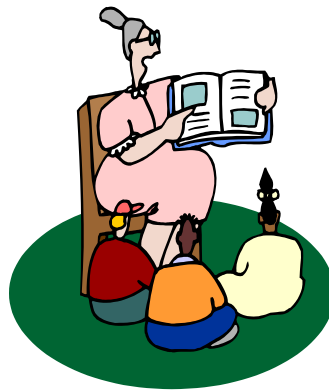
Storytime: How to Live With Wildlife

Do you have a pet, a cat or a dog?
A bird or a hamster?
A fish or a frog?

A pet is an animal that lives with you.
Most animals live outside.
They fend for themselves
And they like to hide.

So be nice to animals where they live.
Don't yell or make a face
Or chase them all over.
The animals need space!

They have to find food and water.
They have to have a place to run.
They have to find a bed when day is done.



Don't get too close.
Be quiet. Move slow.
They aren't used to people, you know.

If it runs off quickly,
Sigh a sigh of relief.
For it's keeping itself safe.
But you got to see it – isn't that great?

Remember the animal
And where it was when you saw it.
This was its home.
It'll be good to know it.

Then you can tell others
The special friend you made.
The two of you didn't talk,
You left it safe in its glade.



**Project WILD and
Aquatic WILD**



The first Project Wild workshops of 2007 have now taken place and new ones have been scheduled. 15-hour workshops are scheduled for the fall for both Project Wild, which deals with land-based wildlife, and Aquatic Wild, which deals with water-based wildlife. The dates are October 13 and 20 for Project Wild, and December 1 and 8 for Aquatic Wild. Teachers will be able to earn 1 full CCSD PDE credit. Registration will be available through Pathlore. A few seats may be reserved for non-CCSD educators who do not wish to receive credit.

Attendees at the first workshops had lots of fun, as well as learning a lot about wildlife in southern Nevada. One participant remarked, "I thought the workshop ... was very rewarding. Though I could have gotten paid \$120.00 for four hours of sharing and listening (in another workshop), I thought this workshop was much more beneficial for the hundreds of students I'll have in the future."

The demand for these trainings is higher than the room available, so register as soon as they are announced in the PDE catalog and the "hotline," in order to pay for and guarantee your seat. See you there...

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Desert Animal Word Scramble

1. TCOYOE



2. NIMLNOTUNAOI



3. DWORTOA



4. LRIIANTG



5. LUQIA



6. AIALPOHNPEP



7. NVIEDR



8. SWETCCAURN



9. HPIGHSEBORNE



10. CLAKLUCHAW



Answers 1. coyote, 2. mountain lion, 3. woodrat, 4. ringtail, 5. quail,

6. Phainopepla, 7. verdin, 8. cactus wren, 9. bighorn sheep, 10. chuckwalla