

Aquarium Snake's Tooth Aches

How do you treat a rattlesnake's toothache? V-E-R-Y carefully.

Husbandry Curator Stuart May and Educator Jenifer Hoskins at the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, currently housed in its temporary location in Atlantic Station Shopping Center, noticed a droopy lip on the Aquarium's resident eastern diamondback rattlesnake.

The snake continued to eat with its usual irregularity, but the droop didn't improve. Photos were e-mailed to consultants at the North Carolina Zoo and the North Carolina State College of Veterinary Medicine (NCSU-CVM). They recommended continuing to monitor the condition. If there was no noticeable improvement an examination would be necessary.

After a few weeks, the aquarium called in Dr. Craig Harms, NCSU-CVM assistant professor for aquatic and zoo animals, for a closer look. Joining the exam would be Aquarium Curator Hap Fatzinger and Aquarist Technician Keith Farmer, both from the Aquarium at Fort Fisher. The team manipulated the rattler into a clear Plexiglas tube, where Dr. Harms was able to diagnose an abscess behind an upper fang.

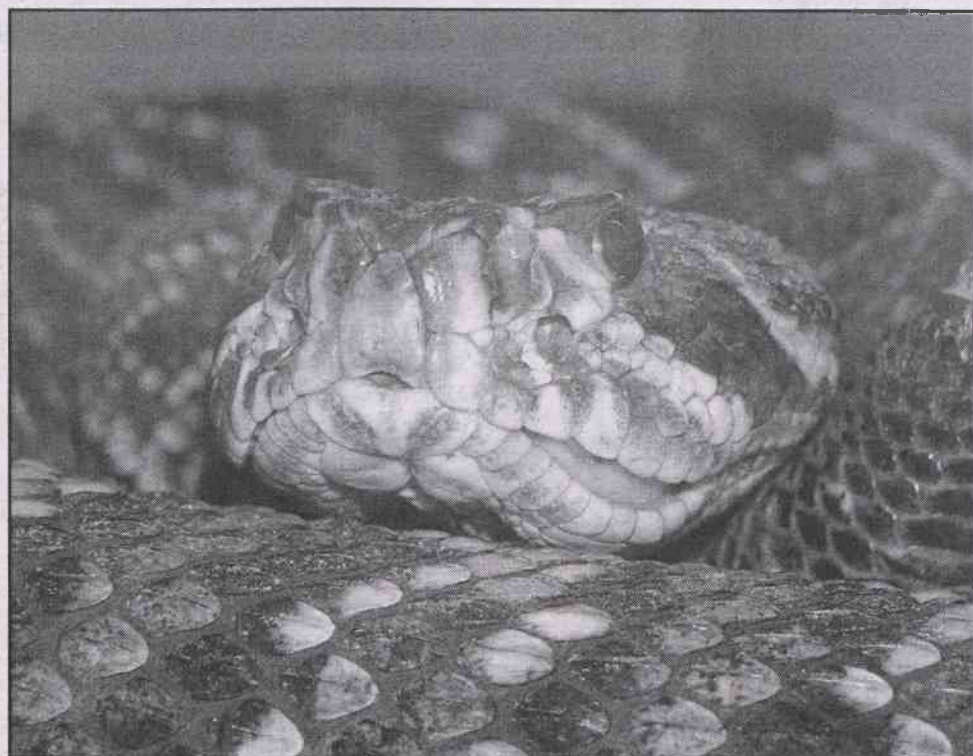
The rattler was transferred to Fort Fisher for treatment. Dr. Harms anesthetized the snake, cleaned the wound and removed the left rear fang. Follow-up required antibiotics administered by the Fort Fisher staff.

A recent check-up by Dr. Gregory Lewbart, NCSU-CMV Associate Professor, Aquatic, Wildlife, and Zoologic Medicine, found the snake to be in great shape. As is common in snakes, a new fang was growing to replace the old one.

"The snake has eaten twice without any problem and is getting back to its old self," said Fatzinger.

Snakes have the ability to replace lost teeth, and venomous snakes maintain a never-ending cycle of fangs that grow and move forward. Each one eventually becomes the functional fang of the moment. The shedding of an old fang and replacement with a new fang occurs every 60 days or so. Normally only one fang is fixed in place, but when a new fang is moving into the socket it is not unusual to find the old fang remaining alongside the new one for several days.

In addition to taking care of its animals, the Aquarium continues to offer programs and field trips from its off-site location in Atlantic Station Shopping Center. Trips such as canoe outings, onboard collecting cruises, Cape Lookout explorations, Newport River excursions and other activities are ongoing. For dates, times and details, click on the Programs & Events link on the Aquarium website at www.ncaquariums.com, or call 247-4003.



The droopy lower lip of the Aquarium's eastern diamondback rattlesnake indicated a health problem. (photo by John Mauser)

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

On this one-year anniversary issue of *The Shoreline*, we at The Shopper sincerely thank our family of Shoreline advertisers for making the publication's first year an amazing success. Your support of this community paper has allowed us to establish truly unique relationships with you and the fine people of Carteret County.

We extend a thank you, also, to the editors of *The Shoreline* who have unselfishly given their time and talents to this publication, consistently providing pertinent and refreshing content for our readers. Without you, there would be no *Shoreline*. You are the foundation and backbone of this publication...and all of us at The Shopper are grateful to you.

We look forward to many more years of *The Shoreline* and, to learning more about the Pine Knoll Shores "slice of paradise."

Sincerely,

Paul Young
Christie R. Lane
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Chad Ryan
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Christy Ballant
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