

Don't Tread On Me

by Roy Stewart

"Don't Tread on Me" was the motto of the 1775 Continental Marines and the rattlesnake was its emblem. This is also the name of the new rattlesnake exhibit in the Stonyford Museum, which opened on Sunday, August 25, 2019, to an admiring museum audience. The exhibit was spearheaded by Mary Hester, along with her Museum Display Committee helpers Elizabeth Poulson and Maudrie Smith. The display material came from several local sources and was arranged by Paul Ustach, Professor of Biology at the San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton. Paul is Mary Hester's son-in-law.



Professor Paul Ustach alongside his exhibit of rattlesnake articles and artifacts

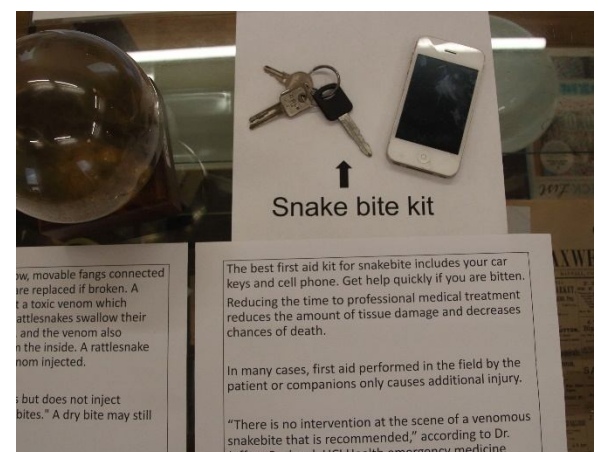


Live rattlesnake captured by Paul Ustach and Richard Hester. It is about four feet long and has ten rattles.

The Rattlesnake Exhibit is temporary and will be on display through December 2019. The exhibit is chock full of informative articles, photographs, and artifacts that document this critter's existence from birth through death. The rattlesnake is uniquely native to North and Central America. They are especially prevalent in Stonyford and in the adjoining Mendocino Forest.

As proof of this fact, Paul and Richard Hester went on a hunt the night before and found a live snake that he showed in the museum parking lot on Sunday. This part of the exhibit was a one-time thing that will not be repeated.

The exhibit's written material lays to rest three myths about rattlesnakes: bite treatment, increased danger of a baby snake, and that rattles indicate age. As shown in the associated photo, the only method for safely dealing with a rattlesnake bite is with professional help—tourniquets and sucking out the venom do not usually work. The keys are to your car and the phone is to call ahead so that the medics know you are coming and are ready to treat you. Another myth that a baby rattler is more dangerous than an older snake is not true, according to Paul. The danger in a rattlesnake's bite solely depends on the amount of venom discharged into the wound. The baby snake has far less venom than does its adult counterpart. The third myth debunked is that the number of rattles signify the age of the snake. This is only partly true. While the snake generates a new rattle every time it changes its skin, the juvenile snake changes skin as often as four times a year until it reaches adulthood. The adult snake then changes its skin annually; consequentially, the number of rattles is only a general indicator of the snake's true age.



How to deal with a snake bite.

The Stonyford Museum is located on Market Street, next door to the Stonyford Post Office. It is open from 1 to 4 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Sundays April through October, and only on the 2nd Sunday, November through March. However, it can be visited anytime by appointment, by calling (530)570-5591 or (530)963-3141. Admission is free, but donations and memberships are gratefully accepted and much appreciated.

